



## **Growing Tendency of Drug Abuse and Narcotics Use in Students**

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**Abstract:** The present study aims to examine the growing tendency of drug abuse and narcotic use in students in secondary schools in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Using snowball sampling technique, population was divided among 8 targeted areas/districts. On the bases of convenient sampling 1600 addicted students, 800 from schools/colleges and 800 from Madaris (private religious institutions) i.e. 200 students from each district were selected. The data were collected through questionnaires from students, teachers and parents during the academic years 2020-21. The combine response rate was more than 87%. The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS V32). Chi-square test was used. More than 90% of the 3 categories of respondents reported continuous increase in the number of addicted students. They observed tremendous increase in the use of sleeping pills and ice. The school students found a gradual increase while madrasa students felt gradual decrease in the use of the remaining drugs/narcotics in this study. The views of teachers and parents were similar to school students on the remaining 6 drugs under study. Fifty seven percent students and 80% teachers found the institution not played its role regarding drug abuse. However there were differences on the level of use. It was noted that the two easily available and cheaper drugs are snuff and sleeping pills. The use of snuff is on decrease percentagewise and use of sleeping pills is on increase. The finding recommended that drug and substance abuse needs involvement of all stakeholders, with a coordinated approach.

**Key words:** Drug, growing tendency, students, secondary schools, parents, teachers, questionnaire

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### **1. Introduction**

Drug abuse refers to the consumption of drugs in excess or for purposes other than those prescribed by a doctor, which has a detrimental impact on a person's physical, mental, and social well-being (Kuria, 1996). Drug abuse is described as a maladaptive practice or drug use that results in clinically substantial damage or suffering (Gelder *et al.*, 2001). Conversely, a drug is any substance that alters how individuals feel, believe, see, or act and is not water or food (Lewinsohn, 2007). It is a well-known fact that college and university students initially experiment with snuff, nicotine, munching and smoking tobacco. According to studies conducted in Pakistan, adolescents are becoming more and more likely to use alcohol, drugs, and opioids (Nicklin, 2000; Wechsler, Lee, & Nelson, 2002).

This may be as a result of peer pressure, poverty, social media, the educational system and the surrounding community, especially the role played by the educator and the parent. Substance addiction is a widespread issue everywhere (Shafique *et al.*, 2006). Numerous groups in society regularly use alcohol, but the poor and extremely low group are particularly notable in this regard. Given that culture and values, attitudes, and sentiments about drug use vary widely between cultures and geographical areas, it appears that the epidemiological of substance abuse in a given community is influenced by these factors (Emmanuel, Akhtar, & Rahbar, 2003).

The United Nations office on Medicines and Crime has classified drug dependency as a global problem that includes alcohol, prescribed substances, and illicit drugs (UNODC, 2012, & 2014). The current research has also regarded it to be a social pandemic (Fischer *et al.*, 2012). Additionally, a lot of studies and medication reports have shown that it is a global issue (Burns, 2014; Degenhardt *et al.*, 2011). The chronic incapacity to carry out social tasks in daily life in a safe manner has been a hallmark of substance use. The biochemical nature of drugs, that are absorbed by eating, inhaling, smoking, ingesting, rubbing just on skin, and injecting, impacts physical, mental, and behavioral functioning.

In Pakistan, 125,000 individuals inject drugs, while 500,000 people use heroin. In only four of Pakistan's largest cities, there are 40,000 street kids who take drugs. In Pakistan, there really are 7.6 million drug users, 78% of whom are men and 22% of whom are women. This figure rises by 40,000 per year (Shadman, 2017; Sajid *et al.*, 2020). Among the most important exogenous drivers of pressure for children's addictions is family pressure and involvement. The door, however, swings both ways for parents. Parents may impact their children about stress and drug dangers by having a constructive conversation with them. Families want their children to succeed as adults and resist caving in to their requests. Children pick up on how dads respond negatively to pressure, and this sends a strong message to them. The pressure from the grownups spills onto the kids (Ali, & Khan, 2020).

## 1.2 Research Objectives

To find out the growing tendency of drug abuse among students: managerial role of the school/ institution in addressing drug abuse.

## 2. Literature Review

The use of drugs and substances is reportedly thousands of years old and it has been an essential part of those societies. All over the world parents has a concern that their children should excel in their education, but still some children start substance abuse which can affect them psychologically, physically and emotionally. The use of illicit drugs has spread at an alarming rate and has entered all parts of the world. (Kundwei, & John, 2020)

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Drug and substance abuse has been talked about worldwide. Teachers, parents, church officials and other stakeholders have been at the fore front trying to find out the causes and ways of controlling it (Ongwae, 2016). According to UN (2004); World Drug Report 2004, UNODC, 3.3 to 4.1 percent of people worldwide use drugs, as shown in a United Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP) study from 2004. In Pakistan, the proportion of people who first used heroin between the ages of 15 and 20 has increased to account for about 24% of the sample. Similar to the United States, China is seeing an increase in drug usage.

Approximately 275 million people worldwide have used drugs in the last year; up from 226 million in 2010. This increase was partly due to a 10 percent rise in the population. The number of drug users in Africa is projected to an increase in the 10 years by 40 percent. It was reported from Afghanistan, 37 percent increase of land used for illicit cultivation of opium poppy during 2020 as compared with the year 2019. It produced 85 percent of the worldwide total opium production. Most countries have observed rise in the use of cannabis and non-medical use of pharmaceutical drugs. In a survey of 77 countries, a rise in the nonmedical use of sedatives was reported by 64

percent, and increase in the use of cannabis was 42% (UNODC, 2021)

Globally drugs and substance abuse continuous to be a challenge, especially among the youth in school and out of school (Ondigo, Birech, & Gakuru, 2019). According to LeBron *et al.*, (2018) those with poor socioeconomic conditions are more likely to experience harmful drug health effects. In large metropolitan centers, poverty and drug addiction are particularly prevalent. For instance, 235,000 Canadians experience homelessness each year, the majority of whom live in metropolitan areas. A substantial percentage of these people also report using alcohol or other drugs and having mental health issues.

Researchers have found that drinking and drug use are becoming more common among university students, and they have also noticed an increase in the number of arrests and other ego liquor outcomes between 1993 and 2001 (Nicklin, 2000; Wechsler *et al.*, 2002). Substance abuse is a critical challenge among youth in South Africa today. The substance abuse among young students may increase rather decrease. If necessary measures are not put in place to curtail the trend. LikisaK'Donis (2021), found in the literature review that there was a high prevalence of drug abuse among university students worldwide.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in former tribal regions or FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Area), in addition to urban areas, it has been commonly noticed that the rate of drug misuse is rising day by day as time passes. The drug users vary from young kids sniffing glue to hardened heroin and cocaine users in their teens (NACADA, 2005). As in Pathan (Pukhtun tribe of KPK) uneducated community, the usage of snuff or nicotine eating is widely known, although this practice has recently gained popularity in the city's educated populations. Over than 70% of men and roughly 20% of women in rural regions frequently use snuff, based to several field surveys. Snuff is frequently a major contributing element or the first step in the abuse of drugs, opioids, etc.

### 3. Methodology

The study was conducted in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The population of study included the students enrolled in the public sector higher secondary schools/madaris in the the districts of Peshawar, Charsada, Mardan, Nowshera (settled areas), Khyber, Mohmand, Kurram & Orakzai (previously tribal areas). On the basis of snowball sampling technique, population was divided among the targeted areas. Initially on the basis of non-probability sampling i.e. convenient sampling 1600 respondents i.e. 800 from public schools and colleges and 800 from private religious educational institutions were selected. The study selected 200 students from each of 8 districts.

The data were collected through questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed to the respective schools / Madaris and collected when filled by teachers, parents and students. The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS V24). The non-parametric test, chi-square was used to check the significance of the response of reach item in the questionnaires. Regression model was also used to check the effect of selected factors on the student's drug abuse.

### 4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: The number of addicted students is continuously increasing

Response	School Frequency (%)	Madrassa Frequency (%)	Parents Frequency (%)	Teachers Frequency (%)
Strongly Disagree	7 (1)	0	0	0
Disagree	57 (7)	0	31 (8)	0
Undecided	0	2	0	0
Agree	421 (53)	327 (41)	237 (59)	211 (53)
Strongly Agree	315 (39)	471 (59)	132 (33)	189 (47)
Total	800 (100)	800 (100)	400 (100)	400 (100)
<i>t-value</i>	34.9	50.89	49.24	14.98
<i>p-value</i>	.000	.000	.000	.000

More than 90% school students and parents and 100% madrasa students and teachers reported continuous increase in the number of addicted students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The responses were examined for significant

relationship. Since the value of  $\chi^2$  were much higher than the table value in all four cases, it meant significant association between the responses with the proposition that the number of addicted students is continuously increasing. These results are in line with the findings of Fatima (2017). These high numbers are alarming for the society as a whole particularly teachers, parents and government drug control agencies. One should not forget the tragedy of narcotic use in China in the previous century.

In case of school students there is a gradual decrease in the use of snuff from 70% in 2012-13 to 55% in 2021. Similarly the use of opium dropped from 3.5% in 2012-13 to 1.5% in 2020-21. The use of heroin remained nearly constant. The use of the remaining 6 drugs/ narcotics increased during these periods, particularly the use of ice and sleeping pills increased by 7 times and 10 times respectively. The use of tobacco and hashish increased nearly 50% in 10 years. It is notable that the use of snuff is on decrease and the use of sleeping pills is on increase. These two drugs are relatively cheaper and easily available.

In case of Madrasa students there is a gradual decrease in the use of snuff from 45% in 2012-13 to 20% in 2021. The use of cigarette dropped from 20% in 2012-13 to 03% in 2020-21. The use of hashish dropped from 20% in 2012-13 to 03% in 2020-21. The use of bhang dropped from 20% in 2012-13 to 5% in 2020-21. The use of alcohol dropped from 01% in 2012-13 to 0.05% in 2020-21. The use of heroin dropped from 0.3% in 2012-13 to 0.01% in 2020-21. Similarly the use of opium dropped from 3% in 2012-13 to 0.5% in 2020-21. The use of the remaining 2 drugs/ narcotics increased during these periods, particularly the use of ice and sleeping pills increased by 20 times and 5 times respectively.

In table parents revealed that snuff, bhang, heroin and opium decreased gradually from the period of, before 1980 and after 2010. Similarly in case of cigarette, hashish, alcohol, sleeping pills and ice a gradual increase is noticed. The decrease in the use of heroin and bhang was nearly 50% but the decrease in the use of opium dropped by 10 times. The use of alcohols and sleeping pills increased nearly 8 times. It is also to be noticed that the use of ice started with 19% in the period 2001 to 2010 and doubled after 2010. If the opinion of parents is compared with the opinion of teachers, there are differences in levels of use, but the overall trends are the same.

In case of teachers the use of snuff and opium in educational institutions decreased gradually from the period before 1980 to the period after 2010. The use of heroin and bhang nearly remained stable around 5% and 10% respectively. The use of the remaining five drugs / narcotics increased significantly, particularly the use of sleeping pills and ice increased 20 and 25 times respectively.

#### **4.1 Role Played by School in Addressing Drug Abuse**

Abuse of drugs is calculated by both the presence of risk factors (e-g. availability of drugs, stress, peer pressure, media) and protective factors with the individual's social and physical environment (attachment with people like family members and peers, life skills, performance capabilities that help people to succeed and availability of resources). Drug abuse among students should be holistic and address both the risks and protective factors.

According to school students observation 67% student respondents revealed that the role played by the educational institutions in their addiction was only 29%. Although 57% of students believed not good environment provided by educational institutions. Eighty five percent of students and 98% teachers did not find enough material in the curriculum which could guide them for not using drugs. Some of the students considered peer/friend pressure main cause of their addiction. Ninety two percent parents and students and 100% teachers saw number of addicted students continuously increasing. The significant number of addicted teachers in schools reflected the role of educational institutions in drug use.

#### **4.2 Summarized Responses of the Teachers**

Summarized responses of the teachers on the role of educational institutions in addressing / controlling drug abuse in students are given here. Two-third of the teachers believed, teacher were keeping distance with students. The behavior of two-third addicted teachers was not normal with students and the number of addicted teachers was significant. Teacher-parents coordination was not operational as reported by 2/3 teachers. Nearly all teachers believed that peers played vital role in drug use and abuse. Nearly 70% teachers were not satisfied with the role of teachers in guiding students on drug abuse. Three-fifth of teachers felt that they did not prepare plan for guiding students on drug abuse. Three-fourth of the teachers felt that they did not award punishment to the students on

using drugs. Fourth-fifth of teachers found the institution did not play role regarding drug abuse. Nearly all teachers found not enough materials in curriculum on drug abuse. Nearly 70% of teachers considered social environment encourage drug abuse. The common drugs used by both students and teachers are snuff, cigarette, hashish and sleeping pills. Seventy eight percent parents were not satisfied with role of institution against drug abuse.

#### **4.3 Discussion**

With prevalence estimates rise and a range of 25 to 44% of students admitting use of alcohol and illegal drugs, this issue is a major concern for Pakistani colleges and universities. According to the findings of this research 92% students and parents, and 100% teachers respondents reported continuous increase in the number of addicted students. Similarly 85% parents and 76% students' reported easy availability of drugs. It was found in this study that use of snuff decreased by one-fifth and opium by nearly half during the years 2012-13 to 2020-21. The use of cigarette, hashish, bhang, ice, alcohol and sleeping pills increased during the same period, particularly the use of ice and sleeping pills increased by 7 times and 10 times, respectively. These findings agreed with results of the study in Pakistan by Ali (2013) where he stated, the menace of drug misuse and abuse is increasing worldwide including Pakistan. Drug addiction has tremendously increased in Pakistan during the last decades. Cannabis is commonly used drug partly due to its low price. According to UNODC estimate more than 0.8 million Pakistanis aged 15-64 years use heroin regularly. The total number of drug addicts was nearly 8 million in 2009 and was growing at the rate of 11.5 percent per year and thus Pakistan is one of the most drug affected countries in the world (Wikipedia, 2020). The youth compromise more than one fifth of the population and it is the worst target of drug abuse. Almost 8% of the adult population use drugs. About 60% drug addicts are educated. One out of ten college/ university students is addict (Khattak, Iqbal, & Inamullah 2012).

The increase in the use of these two drugs is noticed particularly after 1990. The drastic increase in the use of these two drugs may be due to its relationship with sleep. Students needs ice use when they would like to remain awake for longer duration during examinations. Similarly they need to use sleeping pills whenever they feel extremely exhausted of their activities. Comparing the opinion of all the groups of respondents i.e. students, parents and teachers, the use of snuff decreased. As far as tobacco and hashish are concerned the increase in their use is nearly the same (30%) according to the parents and students. However the teachers saw the increase in use of these items 2 times. The use of bhang and heroin remained the same in view of teachers and students. The increased use of ice was considered nearly 2-3 times by parents and students and 25 times according to teachers. The larger increase in use was felt in case of sleeping pills. It is nearly 10 times as opined by parents and students and 25 times as taught by teachers. As a whole the views of parents and students seems closer than with teachers. However as a whole trend was the same in all the three cases.

#### **5. Conclusions**

Drug abuse among students was common and on increase worldwide. Substance abuse among public secondary school students was a reality and was spreading at an alarming rate, if not checked, it can destroy youth, who were in their formative stage in life. Underage substance use was most prevalent among high school students. Drug abuse was highly associated with age of respondents, easy availability of drugs and presence of a family member abusing drugs. Drugs are mostly available from low income areas around the school, small shops, school worker and public transport drivers and touts. Snuff/naswar and cigarette were the favourite drugs by the students. It was followed by hashish, ice, bhang and sleeping pills. According to teachers the use of snuff and opium in educational institutions decreased gradually from the period before 1980 to after 2010. The use of the remaining drugs remained stable or increased significantly. The use of sleeping pills and ice increased more than 20 times. Comparing the opinion of all the groups of respondents the use of snuff decreased and the use of ice was considered nearly 2-3 times by parents, 25 times by teachers. Similarly a larger increase was felt in case of sleeping pills. It was 10 times as opined by parents and students and 25 times according to teachers. The views of parents and students seemed closer than compared with teachers. As a whole the trend was similar in all the categories of respondents.

#### **5.1 Future Prospects**



Since the study was limited to secondary schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it is recommended to carry out similar studies in other parts of the country and other levels of education. It is also recommended to investigate the attitude of students and parents towards drug abuse. The parents should regularly watch the friends of their children and help them in choosing good friends. The parents should be encouraged to keep their children away from all sorts of drug use related activities. For curbing drugs and substance abuse requires involvement of main stakeholders, school managers, teachers, students and parents/ guardians alumni and community in anti-drug campaigns. A coordinated approach of all stake-holder should fight against the vice. Keeping close watch on students by teachers, parents and society as a whole. The school heads and teachers should be trained on management of drugs and substances. Drug education should be part of school curriculum. Drugs and substance abuse should be taught as a subject instead of integrating into other subjects. However, initially integrated drug education components into the existing school curricula should be started. The schools should involve local communities and businesses in anti-drugs campaigns.

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