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## Substance Abuse and Its Impact on Youth Education: A Review Study

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20680357>

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### ARTICLE DETAILS

**Research Paper**

**Accepted:** 21-05-2026

**Published:** 10-06-2026

### Keywords:

*Substance Abuse, Youth Education, Academic performance, addiction, students, mental health, Peer Pressure.*

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### ABSTRACT

Substance abuse among youth has become one of the major social and educational problems in modern society. The increasing use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and other addictive substances among students negatively affects their physical health, mental well-being, academic performance, and social relationships. This review study examines the causes, effects, and preventive measures related to substance abuse among youth and its impact on education. The study is based on secondary sources such as books, journals, reports, research articles, and online resources. Findings from previous studies indicate that substance abuse leads to poor academic achievement, absenteeism, indiscipline, school dropout, psychological disorders, and social isolation among students. Factors such as peer pressure, family conflict, stress, media influence, and lack of awareness contribute significantly to the rise of substance abuse among youth. The study emphasizes the role of family, educational institutions, government, and society in preventing addiction among students. Awareness programs, counselling services, moral education, and supportive family environments are essential for reducing substance abuse and promoting healthy educational development among youth.

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### Introduction

Education is considered one of the most important tools for personal, social, and national development. It helps individuals develop knowledge, skills, values, and positive attitudes necessary for successful living.



However, the growing problem of substance abuse among youth has become a serious threat to educational development and the future of society. Young people are increasingly becoming involved in the use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and other harmful substances, which negatively affect their academic performance, mental health, behavior, and social life.

Substance abuse has become a major global problem affecting individuals, families, and society. In India, drug and alcohol addiction has emerged as a serious concern, especially among young people. Modern life stress, peer pressure, and social influences have made youth more vulnerable to substance abuse. Addiction not only harms physical and mental health but also creates social and economic problems.

Recognising the seriousness of the issue, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has implemented the National Action Plan on Drug Demand Reduction, which focuses on awareness, counselling, treatment, rehabilitation, and community-based prevention programmes.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2018), adolescence and early adulthood are the most critical periods for the initiation of substance use, particularly among individuals aged 12–25 years. The National Survey on Extent and Pattern of Substance Use in India (2019) revealed alarming statistics regarding substance abuse in the country:

- Around 16 crore people (14.6%) aged 10–75 years are current alcohol users, and 5.2% are alcohol dependent.
- Approximately 3.1 crore individuals (2.8%) use cannabis, while nearly 72 lakh people suffer from cannabis-related problems.
- About 2.06% of the population use opioids, and nearly 60 lakh people require treatment.
- Around 1.18 crore people (1.08%) are users of sedatives for non-medical purposes.
- Inhalant use is more common among children and adolescents (1.7%) compared to adults (0.58%), and nearly 18 lakh children need help for inhalant addiction.
- It is estimated that about 8.5 lakh individuals inject drugs.

The increasing prevalence of substance abuse among youth has become a major challenge for India. Therefore, schools, families, and communities must work together to create awareness about the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol. Effective prevention programmes, counselling services, and educational



initiatives are necessary to develop self-confidence among students and protect them from peer pressure and risky behaviour.

This review study seeks to analyze the impact of substance abuse on youth education by examining existing literature, reports, and previous research studies. The study also highlights the major causes, educational effects, and preventive measures related to substance abuse among students.

### **Objectives**

1. To identify the major causes of substance abuse among students.
2. To examine the impact of substance abuse on youth education.
3. To analyse the role of family, school and society in preventing substance abuse.
4. To suggest preventive measures for reducing substance abuse among youth.

### **Review of Literature**

A review of literature is a summary and evaluation of previous research studies, books, journals, and other sources related to a particular topic. It helps the researcher understand existing knowledge, identify research gaps, and provide a theoretical base for the study.

According to the World Health Organization (2021), substance abuse among adolescents is increasing rapidly in developing countries, leading to serious mental health and educational problems. The report stated that addiction affects concentration, memory, emotional stability, and social relationships among students.

Dr Amandeep Singh and Gagandeep Singh(2023) conducted a study on the effects of drug and substance abuse on students' academic performance among the age group of 16 to 21 years. The study aimed to identify the major causes of substance abuse and examine its impact on students' educational achievement. The findings revealed that students become involved in drug abuse due to factors such as personal pleasure, exam stress, sports competition, recreational activities, poor family environment, unstable relationships, emotional stress, and anxiety about future results. The study further found that substance abuse negatively affects students' academic performance by reducing concentration, memory, learning ability, and interest in studies. Drug-abusing students were more likely to avoid classes, perform poorly in academics, and even drop out of school. The study also highlighted that substance abuse creates moral, physical, psychological, and social problems affecting individuals, families, and society.



Werere Francis and Muwonge Umar (2025) conducted a study titled *The Impact of Drug Abuse on Students' Academic Performance in Selected Secondary Schools of Kapchorwa District*. The study found that drug abuse among students is influenced by several factors such as family background, peer pressure, social environment, emotional stress, and lack of mental health support. The researchers observed that substance abuse negatively affects students' academic achievement, behavior, and overall well-being. The study also emphasized the need for effective preventive measures, including awareness programmes, counselling services, family support, educational guidance, and community participation to help reduce drug abuse and improve students' academic performance and mental health.

Rahul Garg and Dr. Sapna (2025) conducted a study titled *the growing problem of drug abuse among youth in India* and described it as a serious social and public health issue. The study revealed that factors such as socio-economic conditions, cultural influences, psychological stress, and emotional instability contribute significantly to substance abuse among young people. The researchers observed that drug addiction negatively affects the health, social life, and economic condition of individuals, families, and communities. The study further emphasized the need for awareness campaigns, mental health support services, educational programmes, family participation, and community involvement to control drug abuse among youth. It also highlighted the importance of cooperation among government agencies, schools, non-governmental organisations, and communities to develop effective preventive and rehabilitation strategies for improving the well-being of young people.

### **Methodology**

The present study is descriptive and review oriented in nature and is completely based on secondary sources of data. Information for the study has been gathered from books, scholarly journals, research papers, government publications, newspapers, magazines and online educational resources related to substance abuse and youth education. Various relevant studies and literature were analysed to understand the causes, impact and preventive measures associated with substance abuse among students.

### **Concept of Substance Abuse**

Substance abuse means the harmful or excessive use of psychoactive substances that adversely affect a person's physical, mental, emotional, and social health. It involves the misuse of alcohol, tobacco, cigarettes, narcotic drugs, prescription medicines, and other illegal substances. The problem becomes severe when individuals become dependent on these substances and are unable to control their consumption. Youth are especially vulnerable to substance abuse due to curiosity, peer influence,



emotional stress, social pressure, and psychological instability. Many young people begin using drugs or alcohol for pleasure, relaxation, or to reduce stress, but continuous use may eventually lead to addiction. Addiction negatively affects a person's behavior, decision-making ability, self-control, and overall lifestyle, creating difficulties in maintaining educational and healthy living standards. Commonly abused substances among young people include alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, marijuana, opioids, inhalants, synthetic drugs, and the misuse of prescription medicines. Substance abuse can also lead to serious physical, psychological, and social consequences such as poor health, mental disorders, family conflicts, antisocial behavior, and criminal activities. Long-term use may even result in personality and behavioral changes. The causes of substance abuse are varied and complex. Factors such as genetic predisposition, family background, mental health problems, physical or emotional abuse, stressful life situations, and early exposure to drugs can increase the risk of addiction. Social and environmental conditions also strongly influence individuals' attitudes toward drug use. Due to its harmful effects on individuals, families, education, and society, substance abuse has become a significant global issue.

### **Causes of Substance Abuse among Youth**

#### *Peer Pressure*

Peer pressure is one of the leading causes of substance abuse among youth. Many adolescents start using drugs or alcohol to gain acceptance from friends or social groups. According to WHO (2023) and NIDA, young people are more likely to experiment with substances when influenced by peers. Weak parental supervision further increases the impact of peer pressure on adolescents.

#### *Social Media Influence*

Social media also contributes to substance abuse among youth. Exposure to online content that promotes alcohol, smoking, or drug use can influence adolescents to imitate such behaviours. Movies, music, and social networking platforms often portray substance use as fashionable or socially acceptable, encouraging young people to experiment with addictive substances.

#### *Stress and Mental Health Issues*

Stress, anxiety, depression, and emotional problems often lead adolescents toward substance abuse. Many students use drugs or alcohol to escape academic pressure and emotional distress. NIDA (2022) reported that untreated mental health problems increase the risk of addiction among youth. Long-term substance abuse may further worsen mental health and risky behaviour.



### *Family Environment and Parental Influence*

Family environment greatly influences adolescent behaviour. According to UNODC (2021), lack of parental supervision, family conflict, and exposure to substance use at home increase the risk of addiction among youth. On the other hand, strong family relationships, emotional support, and active parental involvement help prevent substance abuse among adolescents.

### *Lack of Awareness*

Insufficient knowledge about the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol can lead students to engage in substance abuse without understanding its serious consequences.

### *Genetics and Biological Factors*

Genetic and biological factors can also contribute to substance abuse among individuals. Some people may inherit a higher risk of addiction due to family history or hereditary traits. Biological factors such as brain functioning, hormonal imbalance, and mental health conditions may increase a person's vulnerability to drug or alcohol dependence. Individuals with a family background of substance abuse are often more likely to develop addictive behaviours.

### *Impact of Substance Abuse on Youth Education*

Young people who continuously abuse substances often face many problems such as poor academic performance, physical and mental health issues, unhealthy peer relationships, and involvement in criminal or juvenile activities. Substance abuse also negatively affects family members, the community, and society as a whole.

### *Academic Problems*

Adolescent substance abuse negatively affects education by causing poor academic performance, absenteeism, low interest in studies, and school dropout. It also creates cognitive and behavioral problems that interfere with learning.

### *Physical Health Problems*

Substance abuse among adolescents can lead to serious health problems such as accidents, diseases, disabilities, and drug overdoses. Teenagers who use alcohol and drugs are at greater risk of death from accidents, suicide, and illness. It also increases risky behaviors that may lead to HIV/AIDS and other



sexually transmitted diseases. Moreover, alcohol-related road accidents continue to cause many youth deaths, creating social and economic burdens on families and society.

### *Mental Health Problems*

Substance abuse among adolescents is strongly linked to mental health issues. Youth who use alcohol and drugs are more likely to suffer from depression, emotional problems, social withdrawal, behavioral disorders, and suicidal thoughts. The use of marijuana can also harm memory, learning ability, motivation, and emotional development.

### *Peer Related Problems*

Youth involved in substance abuse are often isolated or stigmatized by their peers. They may lose interest in school and community activities, which prevents them from making positive contributions to society and maintaining healthy social relationships.

### **Family Problems**

Substance abuse among adolescents can lead to conflicts within the family and disturb family harmony. Parents and siblings are greatly affected by the addiction of young people. It also creates emotional stress and financial burdens, which may result in family problems and instability.

### *Social and Economic Consequences*

Substance abuse among youth causes serious social and economic problems. It increases healthcare expenses, crime-related financial losses, and the demand for treatment and rehabilitation services. Adolescents involved in substance abuse may also face difficulties in becoming self-dependent, creating additional burdens on families and society.

### *Delinquency and Crime*

Substance abuse is closely linked with juvenile delinquency and crime. Adolescents who use alcohol and drugs are more likely to become involved in violence, theft, gang activities, drug trafficking, and other criminal behaviors. These activities often create school and family problems, negative peer influence, and involvement with the juvenile justice system, increasing fear and pressure on society.

### *Role of Educational Institutions*



Educational institutions have a vital role in protecting students from drug abuse and addiction. Schools, colleges, and universities serve as important centres for spreading awareness about the negative effects of drugs and alcohol on physical health, mental well-being, academic performance, and future career opportunities. Through seminars, awareness campaigns, workshops, and educational programs, students can gain proper knowledge about the dangers of substance abuse. Teachers play an essential part in guiding students and observing changes in their behavior that may indicate early signs of addiction. Institutions should provide counselling facilities and emotional support to students dealing with stress, anxiety, depression, or other personal problems. Timely guidance and counselling can help students avoid harmful habits and make better life decisions.

Educational institutions should also encourage students to engage in sports, cultural events, extracurricular activities, and moral education programs. These activities help students develop discipline, confidence, teamwork, and healthy lifestyles, reducing the likelihood of drug involvement. Schools and colleges can organize special drug prevention initiatives such as awareness sessions, counselling programs, and interactive workshops that use practical examples and student participation. Peer education programs, where students themselves help spread awareness, can create a friendly and supportive atmosphere for discussing issues related to substance abuse.

In addition, cooperation among teachers, parents, and community members is important in creating a safe and drug-free environment. Parent education programs and community awareness activities can help families recognize warning signs of addiction and provide proper care and support at home. Thus, educational institutions must promote a positive, disciplined, and supportive atmosphere that discourages substance abuse and inspires students to lead healthy and responsible lives.

## **Preventive Measures**

### **Awareness Programmes**

Schools, colleges, and local organisations should organize awareness campaigns to inform students about the harmful consequences of substance abuse and addiction.

### **Counselling and Guidance**

Educational institutions should offer counselling and guidance services to support students in dealing with stress, anxiety, and emotional problems effectively.

### **Family History**



Individuals with a family background of alcohol or drug abuse are more likely to develop substance use disorders. Although genetic factors do not guarantee addiction, understanding hereditary risks can help individuals take preventive measures and avoid substance abuse.

### **Community Support**

Strong support from family, friends, and the community plays an important role in preventing addiction. During stressful situations, emotional support and guidance from loved ones can help individuals avoid substance abuse. Active participation in community activities also encourages responsibility and positive behaviour.

### **Strict Rules and Policies**

Governments and educational institutions should implement strong rules, regulations, and disciplinary measures to control drug and substance use among students.

### *Encouraging Healthy Activities*

Involvement in sports, music, cultural events, and social service activities can help young people reduce stress and stay away from substance abuse and addiction.

### **Conclusion**

Substance abuse among youth has become a major social and educational concern that affects both individuals and society as a whole. The review study shows that addiction has harmful effects on students' academic achievement, mental health, behaviour, and social relationships. Several factors, including peer pressure, family issues, stress, media influence, and lack of awareness, contribute significantly to substance abuse among young people. To address this growing problem, educational institutions, families, governments, and communities must work together. Awareness programmes, counselling services, moral education, parental support, and

a healthy social environment are essential for preventing substance abuse and encouraging positive educational development. Since youth are the future of the nation, protecting them from substance abuse is important for social welfare, educational progress, and national development.



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