

"Uncovering the Level of Knowledge and Attitudes on Drug Issues Among College Students – A Cross-sectional Study"

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Abstract

This study aimed to evaluate the knowledge and attitudes regarding drug-related issues among college students in the Cuttack district of Odisha. The selected research design was descriptive. The study was conducted at Jawaharlal Nehru Degree College of Arts and Science, located in Kuanpal, Cuttack. The study was conducted during the period of June to July 2022. Samples were selected using a purposive sampling technique. A total of 100 samples were collected, and a structured knowledge questionnaire served as the instrument to gather data, while knowledge and attitude levels were evaluated using rating scales. The data collection technique employed was the self-reporting questionnaire method. The data that was collected underwent analysis using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study results indicate that 58 percent of the participants exhibited moderate knowledge concerning drug-related issues, while 41 percent demonstrated adequate knowledge on the subject. The study revealed that a significant majority of the samples, 89 percent, exhibited a favourable attitude towards the issues related to drugs. The study concludes that integrating comprehensive education on substance abuse prevention and management into the curriculum is essential. The efforts of the psychiatric nurse to inform and support individuals in handling drug dependence and overcoming substance-related thoughts are crucial steps in addressing substance abuse.

Introduction

According to the Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health, over 25% of people aged 15 to 19 globally currently drink, and a sizable minority (almost 14%) participate in heavy episodic drinking (HED). The prevalence of HED was notably elevated at 20% among young adults within the age bracket of 20 to 24 years, surpassing that of the overall population. While the proportion of current drinkers in the South East Asian region is lower than that in the European region, it is noteworthy that the estimated prevalence exceeds one in five among adolescents. In absolute terms, the figure reached an astonishing 35 million. A significant proportion of this demographic resides in India.(1) Studies show that substance abuse is most common among young people, who make up one-fifth of the population. In India, the issue of substance abuse is escalating significantly, with approximately 2.8% of the population having reported using cannabis products within the past year. According to a report from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, in collaboration with the Narcotics Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC) at AIIMS in New Delhi, cannabis and opioids are identified as the second most commonly abused substances in the country, trailing only

behind alcohol. (0)

Research in the field of public health has consistently demonstrated that university students are prone to engaging in various high-risk behaviors. These behaviors include excessive consumption of alcohol, use of tobacco and illicit drugs, sedentary lifestyles, poor dietary choices, and participation in unsafe sexual practices.(2)

Understanding the interplay of knowledge, attitudes, and various factors is crucial in shaping health behaviour. These elements have been identified within the frameworks of health education theories, such as the rational knowledge attitude practice (KAP) model. The KAP model assesses health knowledge, attitudes, and practices. Certain studies have incorporated beliefs, especially misconceptions that restrict acceptable behaviour (4). In health behaviour studies, KAP surveys gather information on individuals' knowledge, beliefs, and actions regarding a specific issue. These surveys assist in the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs by pinpointing knowledge, cultural, and behavioural gaps that could facilitate or impede program success.

The prevalence of alcohol consumption among university students raises significant concerns. The widespread deficiency in understanding among students regarding alcohol and safe consumption practices positions them as a particularly vulnerable group. Students commonly view alcohol as a social beverage, frequently consuming it to enhance social interactions and align with peer norms. Students at universities typically exhibit increased levels of alcohol consumption and partake in riskier drinking behaviours, leading to a higher incidence of alcohol use disorders when compared to those who do not attend university. Considering the possible negative effects linked to alcohol consumption, it is crucial to enhance our comprehension of the prevalence and trends of alcohol use among college students in order to recognise and mitigate the dangers associated with excessive drinking. Nursing personnel in Odisha emphasised the importance of gaining a deeper understanding of alcohol use within their context to effectively prevent alcohol abuse and encourage healthy behaviours among students.(3) The study examined the knowledge and attitudes concerning alcohol use among college students at arts and college in Cuttack, Odisha.

Objectives:

3. To assess the level of knowledge about drug issues among college students.
4. To evaluate the attitudes of college students towards drug-related topics.
5. To examine potential correlations between students' knowledge levels and their attitudes towards drugs.
6. To associate drug-related knowledge and attitudes across different demographic groups within the college student population.

Methodology

Design and Participants

A cross-sectional, descriptive study was carried out by the investigator. The study population comprised all students from arts and science colleges in Cuttack, Odisha. Every student registered at Nehru Degree College of Arts and Science in Cuttack. About 100 students were selected for the current study using a non-probability approach. Purposive sampling was employed. The selection of samples was determined by specific inclusion criteria, including individuals who were present during the data collection period, those enrolled in the chosen degree college of arts and science, and those who were in their first year of studies.

Data Collection

Subsequent to acquiring formal authorisation from the college authorities of the chosen arts and science institution, the researcher secured informed consent from the participants for involvement in the current study. The data collection method employed was a self-reporting questionnaire.

Measurement Tool

The investigator utilized a structured knowledge questionnaire to assess the level of knowledge among college students concerning drug-related issues. Additionally, attitude scales were implemented to evaluate the attitudes of college students regarding matters associated with drugs.

Ethical Consideration

The study received approval from the ethical committee at DRIEMS School and College of Nursing in Cuttack, Odisha. Reference No: DRIEMS/REC/217 and the Department of Student Affairs of the pertinent degree college of Arts and Science. Informed consent was secured through the use of a consent form, following a thorough explanation of the study's purpose, associated risks, and the voluntary nature of participation. Before proceeding to the questionnaire, participants gave their consent. The informants were guaranteed that their data confidentiality would be preserved.

Results

Section – A: Demographic Data

A total of 100 undergraduate arts and science students responded to the structured knowledge questionnaire and attitude scale developed to measure knowledge regarding issues related to drug abuse. In terms of sex, 46 (46.00%) of the college students were male, while 54 (54.00%) were female. In terms of academic year, 79 individuals (79.00%) were in their second year, while 21 individuals (21.00%) were in their first year. In terms of

religious affiliation, the majority of students identified as Hindus (66, 66%), followed by Christians (14, 14.0%) and Muslims (20, 20.0%). No students reported belonging to other religions. In terms of family type, 51 students (51%) were from nuclear families, while 49 students (49%) were from joint families. The distribution of students by location indicates that 36 (36.0%) were from suburban areas, 33 (33.0%) from urban areas, and 31 (31.0%) from rural areas. The majority of students, 51 (51.0%), resided in hostels, while 35 (35%) lived at home, and 14 (14.0%) were in paying guest accommodations. The data regarding family income indicates that 43 (43.0%) of students' families earned between Rs. 5000 and Rs. 10000, 25 (25%) earned below Rs. 5000, and 32 (32%) earned above Rs. 10000. Regarding the sources of information about drugs, the majority of students, 40 (40%), obtained their information from family members, 21 (21%) from media, and the remaining 39 (39%) also from family members.

Table – I: Participants Socio-Demographic Profile

(n = 100)

S. No	Socio – Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Gender		
	a. Male	46	46.00
	b. Female	54	54.00
2.	Year of study		
	a. First Year	21	21.00
	b. Second Year	79	79.00
3.	Religion		
	a. Hindu	66	66.00
	b. Muslim	20	20.00
	c. Christian	14	14.00
4.	Type of Family		
	a. Joint Family	49	49.00
	b. Nuclear Family	51	51.00
5.	Area of Residence		
	a. Urban	33	33.00
	b. Sub - Urban	36	36.00
	c. Rural	31	31.00
6.	Place of Stay		
	a. Home	35	35.00
	b. Hostel	51	51.00
	c. Paying Guest	14	14.00
7.	Monthly Family Income		
	a. < than 5000 Rs	25	25.00
	b. 5001 – 10000 Rs	43	43.00
	c. > 10000 Rs	32	32.00
8.	Source of Information		

a. Family Members	40	40.00
b. Friends	39	39.00
c. Social Media	21	21.00

Section – B: Knowledge

Figure 1. presents a detailed breakdown of students' knowledge levels concerning drug-related issues. The data reveals that a significant 41% of the students demonstrated an adequate understanding of these matters. In contrast, a larger portion, 58%, exhibited moderately adequate knowledge, indicating that while they possess some awareness, there is room for improvement. Notably, a small fraction, just 1%, fell into the category of having inadequate knowledge on the subject. This distribution highlights the varying levels of understanding among students regarding critical drug-related topics.

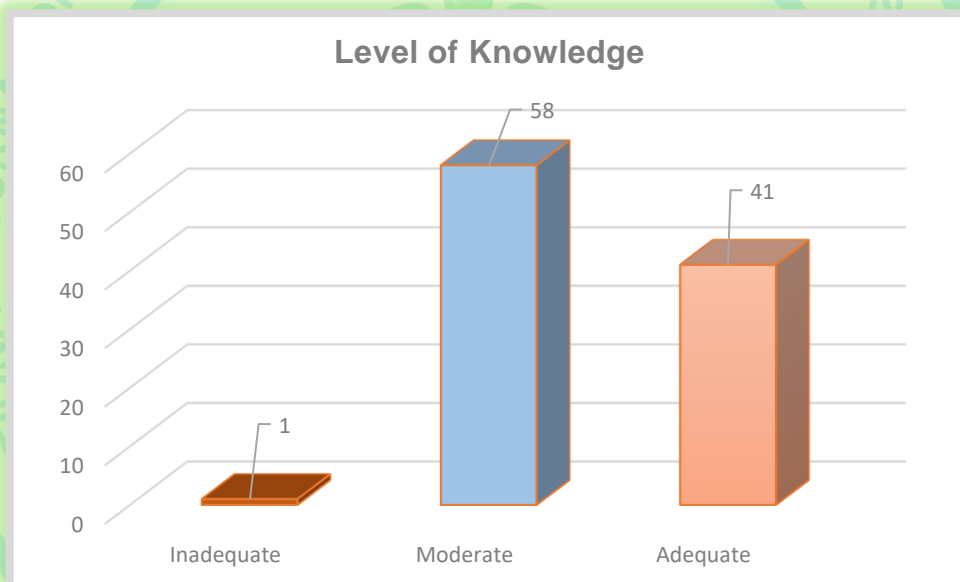


Figure – 1: Percentage Distribution of Samples Regarding Level of Knowledge

Section – C: Attitude

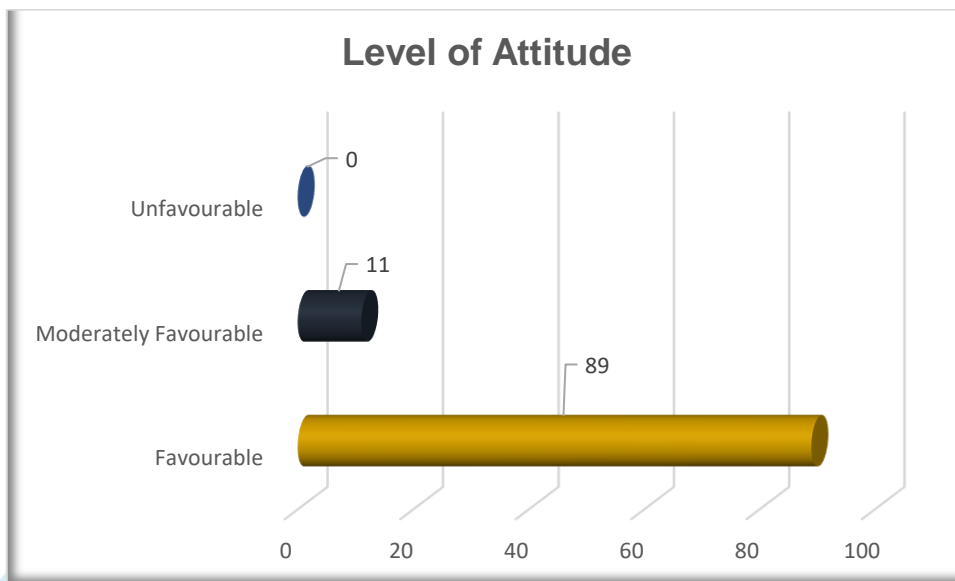


Figure – 2: Percentage Distribution of Samples Regarding Level of Attitude

Figure 2 demonstrates that 89% of the students exhibited a favorable attitude, 11% displayed a moderately favorable attitude, and none of the students showcased an unfavorable attitude concerning issues related to drug issues.

Section – D: Correlation Between Knowledge and Attitude

Table – II: Correlation Between Level of Knowledge and Level of Attitude

(n = 100)

Variables	Mean	S.D	Karl Pearson Correlation Co-efficient	Types of Correlation
Knowledge	23.54	3.112	0.1	Mild Positive Correlation
Attitude	37.95	3.377		

** Significant at $p < 0.01$

Table II presents the correlation between knowledge and attitudes concerning drug dependence issues among college students. The data indicates that the study participants had a mean knowledge score of 23.54 with a standard deviation of 3.112, while the mean attitude score was 37.95 with a standard deviation of 3.377. The calculated Karl Pearson correlation coefficient was 0.1, suggesting a mild positive correlation between the knowledge and attitudes of the subjects with respect to drug dependence.

Association

The study found a significant association between gender and the attitude levels of the samples, indicated by a χ^2 value of 3.55 and a p-value less than 0.05. Other socio-demographic variables did not show any association with knowledge and attitudes regarding drug-related issues.

Discussion

College is a critical period associated with increased risk for problem behaviors, particularly substance use. College-level substance use is linked to numerous negative consequences, ranging from legal and academic difficulties to elevated rates of injury and death. Moreover, drug and alcohol consumption correlates with engagement in other risky behaviors and exacerbation of mental health issues. This study aimed to assess the knowledge and attitudes regarding drug-related issues among students in selected degree colleges in Odisha. Our findings revealed that a significant proportion of participants demonstrated moderate knowledge about drug-related issues. Furthermore, the majority of study participants exhibited a favorable or positive attitude towards drug-related matters. Notably, our analysis indicated an association between participants' gender and their attitude levels towards drug-related issues. These results underscore the importance of targeted interventions and education programs to address substance use and related behaviors among college students, taking into account factors such as gender differences in attitudes.

Kaur et al. conducted a study on alcohol consumption among adolescents aged 17-20 in Amritsar, India, using a pretested questionnaire. They found that 31.6% of students had consumed alcohol at events like weddings and parties, and 76.9% had done so. Friends initiated drinking for 55.7% of students, while 17.8% were introduced by cousins. Furthermore, 91.3% of the adolescents were unaware of the legal limits for alcohol consumption while driving.(4)

A survey-based study was conducted across 8 medical schools throughout India to examine alcohol-related practices. Researchers distributed a pre-tested questionnaire to evaluate the prevalence, knowledge, and attitudes regarding alcohol and tobacco use among medical undergraduates and postgraduate residents. The findings indicated that alcohol consumption rates were 16.6% for undergraduate students and 31.5% for postgraduate students. When asked about the circumstances of their alcohol or tobacco use, the majority of participants reported consuming these substances "with close friends," followed by "during parties" as the second most common occasion.(5)

This research had a drawback: it relied on students filling out questionnaires themselves. This method might not give a completely accurate picture of substance use among students. Some students may have been reluctant to admit using substances, even in an anonymous survey. People often want to present themselves in a positive light, which can lead to underreporting of behaviors that society views negatively. As a result, the study might show lower rates of substance use than what actually occurs among students. This highlights the challenge of getting honest responses when studying sensitive topics like drug and alcohol use.

Conclusion

The study found that both male and female college students had adequate knowledge about drug dependence and a generally favorable attitude towards it. This knowledge enables them to inform friends and family, raising awareness about the issue among a wider audience.

Conflict of Interest: Nil

Funding for the Study: Self

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