

## To Establish the Pattern of Drug Abuse among Children and Attempts to Derive the Reasons for Adoption of Such Abusive Behaviour

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The first experience of substance abuse often starts in adolescence and the drug use is mainly related to cigarette and alcohol consumption. The objective of this study was to establish the pattern of drug abuse among street children and attempts to derive the reasons for adoption of such abusive behavior in the street children.

**Materials and Methods:** The study was conducted among 50 street children over a period of two months. These children were interviewed based on a pre-decided proforma. The interview was conducted in their own mother tongue. Information regarding their families, personal ties, work, habits and pattern of drug abuse was collected. The data was compiled and subjected to statistical analysis. Statistical analysis was done by using SPSS, version 22 (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL) and  $p < 0.05$  was considered statistically significant.

**Results:** The study was conducted among 50 street children. The result of the study shows that habit of alcohol consumption was more prevalent in children due to any of the problems faced at home. Depression was the main risk factor for alcohol

consumption. Abuse by the friends or siblings was the main reason for polysubstance abuse and cannabis use.

**Conclusion:** Substance abuse is relatively high in the adolescent therefore it requires attention and prompt and immediate intervention.

**Keywords:** Substance Abuse, Street Children, Drug Abuse.


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### INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse is a common phenomenon in the world and has invaded the human society as the most important social damage.<sup>1,2</sup> Substance abuse is a nonadaptive model of drug use, which results in adverse problems and consequences, and includes a set of cognitive, behavioral, and psychological symptoms.<sup>3</sup> The World Health Organization's report in 2005 shows that there are about 200 million opiate addicts in the world, reporting the highest prevalence in Iran and the most frequency in the 25–35 year-age group.<sup>4</sup> Street children in India constitute a group of marginalized population in most urban centers of the country. They constitute children living in streets permanently, who are detached from their families and live on the streets temporarily, children who belong to poor families and spend most of their time on the streets, children living with their families on the streets etc.<sup>5</sup> Poly substance abuse is common among these children and often solvents are the first psychoactive substance

they attempt to try.<sup>6</sup> The objective of this study was to establish the pattern of drug abuse among street children and attempts to derive the reasons for adoption of such abusive behaviour in the street children.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted among 50 street children over a period of two months. These children were interviewed based on a pre-decided proforma.

The interview was conducted in their own mother tongue. Information regarding their families, personal ties, work, habits and pattern of drug abuse was collected.

The data was compiled and subjected to statistical analysis. Statistical analysis was done by using SPSS, version 22 (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL) and  $p < 0.05$  was considered statistically significant.

## RESULTS

The study was conducted among 50 street children. The result of the study shows that habit of alcohol consumption was more prevalent in children due to any of the problems faced at

home. Depression was the main risk factor for alcohol consumption. Abuse by the friends or siblings was the main reason for polysubstance abuse and cannabis use.

**Table 1: Percentage Prevalence of problems faced at home by the Street children**

Sr.No.	Problems faced at home	Polysubstance users	Cannabis users	Alcohol users
1.	Poor economic situation	34	60	85
2.	Alcoholic parents	40	64	90
3.	Forced to work for family	32	56	78
4.	Lack of care and protection	38	63	74
5.	Not interested in studies	39.6	62.7	71.2

**Table 2: Percentage Prevalence of risk factors for substance abuse in the Street children**

Sr.No.	Risk factors	Polysubstance users	Cannabis users	Alcohol users
1.	Parental addiction	40	53	87
2.	Parental neglect	37	74	70
3.	Abuse by friends/siblings	42	89	76
4.	Low self esteemed	38	48	68
5.	Depression	25	53	97
6.	Early experimentation with alcohol/ others	38.4	52.6	78

## DISCUSSION

There are an estimated 100 million street children worldwide of which 30 million are in Asia and 10 million in Africa. India alone has an estimated number of 414,700 street children in its major cities.<sup>5</sup> The present study was conducted among 50 street children. The result of the study shows that habit of alcohol consumption was more prevalent in children due to any of the problems faced at home. Depression was the main risk factor for alcohol consumption. Abuse by the friends or siblings was the main reason for polysubstance abuse and cannabis use. Benegal et al found that majority of them took to substance abuse to feel happy, and felt it as form of relief from various problems. They started with tobacco, solvents and proceeded to use of cannabis and alcohol.<sup>6</sup>

Kautilya VD et al concluded that the most of the children have ended up on the street to escape from exploitation at home. Due to pressure and influence from friends they take to substance abuse. They start with tobacco; proceed to solvent abuse (80%), alcohol (80%), and cannabis (63.3%). Use of tobacco and solvents starts early at an average age of 8 years. Cannabis is taken by older children.<sup>7</sup>

Sharma et al showed that 25.7% of them addicted to tobacco. 17% used alcohol, 15.8% used solvents and 26.3% were involved in poly substance abuse. Peer pressure was considered primarily was considered primarily responsible for driving these children to drug abuse.<sup>8</sup>

Khan et al concluded that 90% of the children have taken to glue sniffing as it is cheap and easily available without any strict regulations. 40% of these children suffer from some form of ill health due to this habit.<sup>9</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Substance abuse is relatively high in the adolescent therefore it requires attention and prompt and immediate intervention.

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