

Drug Abuse Among Adolescents in India: An Urgent Call for Intervention

Mr. Sreejith S, Research Scholar, LNCT University, Bhopal.

Dr. Aradhana Chaurasya, Research Supervisor, LNCT University, Bhopal.

Introduction

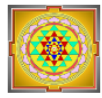
In recent years, the escalating problem of drug abuse among adolescents in India has been attracting increasingly urgent attention. This significant public health issue poses dire consequences not only for the wellbeing of the youths involved but also for the society at large. To better understand this problem and identify potential solutions, it's crucial to unpack the root causes, impacts, and possible interventions related to adolescent drug abuse in India.

Drug Abuse Landscape Among Adolescents in India

India's geographical location and socioeconomic conditions contribute significantly to the high incidence of drug abuse among its adolescent population. Situated between the Golden Crescent (Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan) and the Golden Triangle (Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand) - two of the world's largest opium-producing regions - India is a major transit point for drug trafficking. Consequently, accessibility and exposure to drugs have been dramatically increasing, particularly in border states like Punjab, Manipur, and Mizoram.

As per the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment's 2019 survey on drug abuse in India, around 14.6% of people (aged 10-75 years) are current users of alcohol and drugs. Among these, adolescents are particularly vulnerable, with an estimated 2.8% of this population using opioids and 1.8% consuming cannabis.

Causes of Adolescent Drug Abuse



The reasons behind adolescent drug abuse in India are multifaceted, encompassing social, psychological, and economic factors.

Social pressures, peer influence, and the desire for social acceptance are leading factors contributing to adolescent drug use. Simultaneously, family dynamics, such as neglect, abuse, or parental drug use, can heighten the risk. Besides, the stigma surrounding mental health often prevents adolescents from seeking help for psychological distress, leading them to self-medicate with drugs.

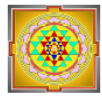
Economic hardship can also propel adolescents towards drug use. In some impoverished communities, drug trafficking becomes a tempting, albeit dangerous, means of income. This, in turn, increases their exposure to, and likelihood of using, drugs.

Impact of Adolescent Drug Abuse

The implications of adolescent drug abuse are far-reaching, affecting individuals, families, and communities. Adolescents who abuse drugs face numerous health issues, including physical harm such as lung damage, liver disease, and neurological impairment. Moreover, the risk of mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, and psychosis, is substantially elevated among drug users.

Drug abuse can also derail an adolescent's education, leading to poor academic performance, school dropouts, and decreased job prospects. This, coupled with potential criminal involvement, can pave the way for a life of instability and hardship. On a societal level, the rise in drug addiction leads to increased healthcare costs, crime rates, and overall societal unrest.

Interventions to Address Adolescent Drug Abuse



Prevention and early intervention are key to mitigating the drug abuse problem among adolescents in India. The government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), schools, and parents all have critical roles to play in this effort.

Government initiatives, such as the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR), aim to reduce the adverse consequences of drug abuse through awareness generation, capacity building, rehabilitation, and research. Furthermore, stricter regulations on drug trafficking and more stringent border controls can also help curb the supply of drugs.

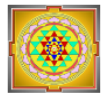
Schools can serve as crucial platforms for drug education and prevention programs. By providing factual information about the risks and consequences of drug use, fostering life skills to resist peer pressure, and promoting healthy coping mechanisms, schools can significantly influence students' attitudes towards drug use.

NGOs, like the Narcotics Anonymous, are instrumental in providing support services, including counseling, rehabilitation, and community outreach programs. These services are vital for recovery and reintegration of adolescents into society.

Finally, parents need to maintain open lines of communication with their children about drug use, be aware of the warning signs, and seek professional help if necessary.

Conclusion

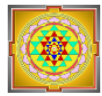
The increasing incidence of drug abuse among adolescents in India is a grave concern that calls for concerted efforts from all sectors of society. A holistic approach, encompassing prevention, education, treatment, and rehabilitation, is



crucial to address this issue effectively. While the challenge is substantial, collective commitment and action can help safeguard.

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