



A Study On Raising Awareness About Substance Abuse Among Children Of Marginalized Communities In Lucknow

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the effectiveness of a comprehensive awareness program aimed at raising awareness about substance abuse among children from marginalized communities in Lucknow. Conducted over 53 days in collaboration with Pehchaan NGO, the study involved various interactive and educational activities designed to enhance understanding and resistance to substance abuse. Pre-test and post-test evaluations were done to measure changes in awareness and knowledge about substance abuse. The findings reveal significant improvements in the children's understanding of substance abuse and their ability to resist peer pressure, highlighting the importance of engaging and educational interventions.

KEYWORDS

Substance Abuse, Children, marginalized communities, education, awareness, prevention

INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse is the misuse of substances such as alcohol, drugs, or other psychoactive compounds in a manner that leads to addiction and harmful consequences. It significantly affects an individual's health, behavior, and overall well-being, often resulting in negative impacts on their social and personal life. Substance abuse poses a significant threat to children, especially those from marginalized communities where resources and educational opportunities are limited. National data reveals that substance abuse among youth is

a growing concern in India. The National Survey on Extent and Pattern of Substance Use in India (2019) reported that approximately 14.6% of the population aged 10-17 years had used substances in their lifetime, with alcohol, cannabis, and opioids being the most commonly used substances. This alarming trend underscores the urgent need for effective preventive measures.

Substance abuse not only affects the physical and mental health of children but also impedes their academic performance and social development. Children from marginalized communities are particularly vulnerable due to factors such as lack of education, family support, and access to healthcare services.

The Government of India has taken various initiatives to combat the issue of substance abuse. Notably, the Nasha Mukti Bharat Abhiyan was launched on 15th August 2020, by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment in 272 identified most vulnerable districts. This Abhiyaan aims to reach out to the masses and spread awareness about substance use, with a focus on higher educational institutions, university campuses, and schools. It also seeks to provide counseling, treatment facilities in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and capacity-building programs for service providers.

Internationally, organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) have also been actively involved in initiatives to combat substance abuse. These initiatives include educational campaigns, support for national drug policies, and programs to reduce demand and harm.

To address this critical issue, this study implemented a targeted educational awareness program designed to raise awareness and empower children to resist substance abuse. The program was carried out in partnership with Pehchaan NGO in Lucknow, utilizing interactive and creative learning methods to engage children effectively. This study aimed to contribute to these efforts by evaluating the effectiveness of an awareness program specifically tailored for children in marginalized communities in Lucknow. Through a combination of pre-test and post-test assessments, teaching sessions, and creative activities, this research sought to enhance the understanding and resistance to substance abuse among these vulnerable children.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY :

1. To assess the level of awareness of Children of marginalized community on Substance Abuse.
2. To educate Children about the Harmful Effects of Substance Abuse.
3. To empower Children with Knowledge and Skills to Resist Substance Abuse.
4. To raise Awareness Among Children About the Importance of Healthy Living.
5. To engage Children in Creative Activities to Promote Awareness About Substance Abuse.
6. To Compare the Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Children on Substance Abuse.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY :

Substance abuse among youth and children is a pressing global issue with profound implications for individuals and communities. The problem is particularly acute in marginalized communities, where limited access to resources exacerbates vulnerability to substance use.

Nationally, the extent of substance abuse among children and adolescents is alarming. According to recent data, a substantial number of young individuals are affected by drug and alcohol abuse. The National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC) estimates that approximately 7.5% of adolescents aged 12-17 years in India are involved in substance use, with a notable rise in prescription drug abuse and illicit drug use among this demographic. Such substance abuse can lead to severe consequences, including academic failure, mental health issues, and social problems.

Empowering children with knowledge and skills to resist substance abuse is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, awareness and education about the dangers of drugs can significantly reduce the likelihood of initial experimentation and ongoing use. Secondly, by understanding the harmful effects of substances, children are better equipped to make informed decisions and resist peer pressure. Thirdly, educational programs that promote healthy living and coping mechanisms can provide alternative strategies for dealing with stress and adversity, reducing the appeal of substance use.

there is a need for comprehensive awareness and empowerment programs as essential components in combating substance abuse. Such initiatives will not only address immediate risks but also contribute to long-term prevention by fostering resilience and informed decision-making among children. Therefore, By focusing on marginalized communities, this research aims to bridge gaps in resources and support, ultimately leading to healthier, substance-free futures for affected youth. This study focuses on children from such communities in Lucknow, aiming to address the significant challenges posed by substance abuse through targeted educational interventions.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY :

The delimitations of this study are the boundaries within which the research was conducted, focusing on specific aspects of substance abuse awareness among children from marginalized communities in Lucknow. The key delimitations of this study include:

- The present study was confined to Lucknow city only, specifically targeting marginalized communities residing in the Malhaur and Chinhat areas of the study.
- The study involved 27 children from marginalized communities which is relatively small sample size to generalize the results to a larger population
- The awareness program and data collection were carried out over a period of 53 days. This timeframe may not capture long-term effects or the sustainability of the program's impact on substance abuse awareness.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE :

The review of related literature provides a comprehensive analysis of existing research on the topic of substance abuse awareness among children in India. This chapter summarizes relevant studies, highlights key findings, and establishes the context for the current research study. The review is organized thematically to cover various aspects of substance abuse prevention and awareness programs targeted at children.

- Gupta and Sharma (2018) conducted a study to evaluate the effectiveness of substance abuse prevention programs implemented in Indian schools. The purpose of the study was to determine how well these programs could mitigate substance use among students. Employing a cross-sectional design, the researchers included participants from various states across India. The findings revealed that prevention programs incorporating interactive elements, such as peer-led discussions and role-playing, were particularly effective in reducing substance use among students. The study emphasized the need for culturally relevant programs and highlighted the importance of integrating these initiatives into the regular school curriculum to ensure sustained impact.
- A study conducted by Patel and Kumar in 2019, explored the influence of family dynamics on substance abuse prevention among Indian adolescents. The purpose of the study was to identify how family interactions could mitigate the risk of substance use among young people. The research involved 200 families with children aged 10-17 from both urban and rural areas. The findings indicated that open communication, parental supervision, and family bonding activities were critical factors in preventing substance use. Based on these results, the study recommended implementing family-based intervention

programs to strengthen these protective factors and enhance children's resilience against substance abuse.

- Singh and Verma (2020), examined the impact of community-based substance abuse prevention initiatives in Indian communities. The purpose of this study was to assess how community involvement could help reduce substance abuse among adolescents. The sample included five communities with high rates of substance abuse. The results showed that programs involving community leaders, local organizations, and educational workshops led to a marked decrease in substance use among adolescents. The study highlighted the importance of a collaborative approach that leverages community resources and fosters a supportive environment for youth.
- Iyer and Joshi (2017), in their study analyzed the effectiveness of media campaigns in raising awareness about the dangers of substance abuse in India. The purpose of the study was to evaluate how media campaigns could impact substance abuse awareness among youth. The sample included a review of ten national and regional campaigns targeting youth aged 12-18. The findings indicated that campaigns utilizing social media, television, and print media effectively increased awareness and knowledge about substance abuse. However, the study also noted that sustained exposure and message reinforcement were necessary to translate awareness into behavior change.
- Rao and Menon (2021), in their study published evaluated the effectiveness of peer education programs in middle and high schools in India. The purpose of the study was to assess the impact of peer-led sessions on substance abuse prevention. The researchers conducted a longitudinal study involving 400 students who participated in these sessions. The results showed significant improvements in students' knowledge and attitudes toward substance use. Peer educators were found to be effective role models, enhancing the credibility and relatability of the program content.
- Nair and Bhat (2019), in their study investigated the use of interactive digital tools in substance abuse prevention among Indian adolescents. The purpose of the study was to assess the impact of mobile apps, online games, and virtual reality simulations on middle school students' understanding of substance abuse risks. The study's sample included middle school students who utilized these digital tools. The findings demonstrated that these tools significantly enhanced student engagement and learning outcomes regarding substance abuse risks. The study recommended developing culturally appropriate digital tools to maximize their effectiveness in the Indian context.

The literature review underscores the importance of multifaceted approaches to substance abuse prevention among children in India. School-based programs, family involvement, community initiatives, media campaigns, peer education, and interactive digital tools all play crucial roles in raising awareness and preventing substance abuse. These studies provide a foundation for the current research, which aims to implement and evaluate a comprehensive awareness program for children in marginalized communities of Lucknow.

METHODOLOGY:

1. The study employed pretest-posttest educative interventional design. Before the intervention, a pretest on substance abuse awareness was conducted on community children. Interventions consisted of teaching sessions and activity-based sessions on raising awareness regarding substance abuse among children. After the intervention, a repeated posttest was conducted to assess the awareness level of children. The detailed procedure is shown in Table 1 and discussed below –

Table 1 showing the design of the present study -



SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES :

Sample of the Study: The study constituted the sample size of 27 participants. The age range of the participants was 5-18 years, indicating that the study focused on school-going children and adolescents.

Area: The study was conducted in Kashiram Colony, Lucknow, which is the specific geographic location where the data collection took place the researcher.

Sampling Technique: The sampling approach used in this study was convenience sampling, which involves selecting participants who are easily accessible and available. The convenience sampling technique was employed to select the 27 participants for this study. This approach was chosen due to its feasibility and practicality, allowing for quick and easy data collection.

TOOLS USED IN THE STUDY :

A pre-test and post-test questionnaire was prepared by the researcher to assess the level of awareness of community children regarding substance abuse. A Substance Abuse Knowledge Questionnaire (SAKQ) was developed and administered to 27 students before and after the prevention program. The questionnaire consisted of 11 questions, including 3 open-ended questions (Q1, Q3, and Q6), aimed at measuring knowledge and understanding of substance abuse. Self-reported measures were used, and the data collection tool was a structured questionnaire ensuring consistency and reliability. By comparing pre-test and post-test scores, the study evaluated the effectiveness of the prevention program in enhancing the children's awareness of substance abuse.

INTERVENTION ACTIVITIES PLANNED:

Week	Purpose	Type of session	Teaching Session/ Activity Session Details
1.	Orientation by NGO and Interaction with children	Teaching and assessment Session.	Orientation done by Pehchaan NGO and Teaching session done at Prathimik Vidyalaya Thasemau. Using posters and charts to visually explain the dangers of substance abuse.
2.	- To assess the level of awareness of children on substance Abuse. - To educate childrens about harmful effects of Substance Abuse.	Activity	- Assessment test to check the level of awareness of Children. - Healthy choice creaddle.
3.	To empower children with knowledge and skills to resist Substance Abuse.	Activity session	- Game Session to identify harmful and healthy substance. - Drug Free Pledge : have children sign a pledge. - Peer to peer discussion . - Organize reality store.
4.	To raise awareness among children about the importance of healthy living.	Activity session and teaching session.	- Poster making activity will be conducted by the researcher. - Story Time : to raise awareness among children.

5.	To engage childrens in creative activities to promote awareness against substance abuse.	Activity session.	Children's quote session to foster their creativity and confidence.
6.	To assess the level of awareness of children on substance abuse	Teaching Session	Demonstration and awareness through Animated videos and documentaries .
7.	To evaluate the effectiveness of the awareness and education sessions • Compare the pre-test and post-test scores of children.	Activity session.	Conduct a post-test to assess children's understanding and retention of the information.

WEEK WISE SESSIONS CONDUCTED AS PART OF INTERVENTION

Week 1: Orientation and Interaction with Children

In the first week of the intervention, the researcher focused on orienting the children to the substance abuse prevention program and establishing a positive learning environment. The researcher began with an introduction to the program's objectives and the importance of substance abuse prevention. Icebreaker activities were used to build rapport and make the children feel comfortable, followed by interactive games and group activities that facilitated initial interactions. The use of simple materials, such as icebreaker props and program overview handouts, ensured an engaging and informative session. By the end of this week, the researcher successfully established a positive relationship with the children, creating a welcoming atmosphere for the upcoming sessions.

Week 2: Preparation and Data Collection

The second week was dedicated to preparation and data collection. The researcher developed a pre-test questionnaire to assess the children's knowledge and attitudes toward substance abuse, forming a baseline for later evaluation. The week also involved the creation of a detailed action plan for the awareness sessions. During the teaching sessions, the researcher educated the children on the meaning, identification, and harmful effects of substance abuse using charts, posters, and A4 sheets. This week's outcomes included the completion of the pre-test questionnaire, the formation of a week-wise action plan, and the collection of pre-test data, which showed that children had gained a basic understanding of substance abuse concepts.

Week 3: Poster Making and Interactive Game Session

The third week featured two key activities: Poster Making and an Interactive Game Session. During the Poster Making session, the researcher guided the children in expressing their understanding of harmful and healthy substances through visual aids, using materials such as chart papers, markers, and glue. The Interactive Game Session allowed children to engage in games designed to differentiate between harmful and healthy substances, with the use of flashcards and demonstration posters to enhance learning. The week concluded with visually compelling posters created by the children and an improvement in their critical thinking and decision-making skills regarding substance abuse.

Week 4: Substance Abuse Awareness Campaign

Week four centered around a comprehensive Substance Abuse Awareness Campaign. The researcher aimed to educate children about the dangers of substance abuse, its consequences, and the importance of making informed choices. The session included an introduction, presentation, and group discussion, supported by the distribution of informative materials such as posters and pamphlets. Audio-visual tools like laptops and speakers were utilized to deliver impactful content. The outcomes of the campaign were significant increases in knowledge about substance abuse, better identification of risks, and encouragement for children to seek help if needed.

Week 5: Extension and Preparation for Upcoming Activities

In the fifth week, the researcher focused on reviewing and extending the objectives and activities from previous weeks. The progress was assessed, areas needing further development were identified, and new objectives and activities were brainstormed with the team. Preparation for the following week's activities was also a key task to ensure a smooth transition and continuity. This week resulted in updated objectives, a refined plan for future sessions, and enhanced readiness for the upcoming activities.

Week 6: Story Collection and Story Time

Week six was focused on story collection and selection, followed by a Story Time session. The researcher gathered stories related to substance use prevention, selecting those that were most engaging and age-appropriate. During Story Time, the researcher shared these stories with the children to stimulate discussion and reflection on substance abuse prevention. The outcomes of this week included a collection of compelling stories and active participation from the children in discussing substance use prevention.

Week 7: Reality Store Simulation and Report Preparation

The final week featured the Reality Store Simulation and the preparation of the research paper draft. The Reality Store Simulation was a practical activity where the researcher set up a mock store and children used play money to make budget decisions, illustrating the financial impact of drug use. This simulation aimed to educate children on how substance abuse can affect their lives financially. Concurrently, the researcher prepared the report, documenting the progress and outcomes of the program. The week concluded with the

administration of a post-test to assess the effectiveness of the intervention, revealing an enhanced understanding of the financial and personal impacts of substance use.

Data Collection Procedure and Analysis

Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire to assess the knowledge and awareness of community children regarding substance abuse before and after interventions. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended and open-ended questions. The assessment of the knowledge was based on dichotomized yes/no, or presence/ absence responses. Responses for open-ended questions were collected in words. All the data was analyzed using frequency and percentage for the responses received for close-ended questions. Responses received open-ended questions were analyzed qualitatively.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS :

PRE-TEST ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE –

Question Number	Number of Responses (Yes)	Number of Responses (No)	Percentage of Correct Responses
2	0	27	0%
4	9	18	33.3%
5	4	23	14.8%
7	6	21	22.2%
8	6	21	22.2%
9	10	17	37.0%
10	6	21	22.2%
11	8	19	29.6%

From Table 1.1, it is clear that prior to the intervention, children had varying levels of awareness about substance abuse, with correct responses ranging from 0% to 37.0% across different questions.

- **Quantitative Analysis:** The researcher found that the pre-test data revealed baseline knowledge levels regarding substance abuse among children. On average, the correct response rate for questions related to substance identification and harmful effects was around 40%. This indicated that while children had some awareness, their understanding of substance abuse and its prevention was limited.

Qualitative analysis :**Open ended questions :****Question 1 (नशीली दवाओं का दुरुपयोग क्या है?):****Responses: Only 6 out of 27 children provided a response.**

Qualitative Behavior: The responses were generally vague and indicated a limited understanding of substance abuse. Children struggled to articulate what substance abuse entails, often providing incomplete or superficial answers.

Question 3 (आपके अनुसार लोगों को नशीली दवाओं का सेवन क्यों नहीं करना चाहिए?):**Responses: 6 out of 27 children responded.**

Qualitative Behavior: The answers indicated a basic awareness of the negative consequences of substance abuse, such as health problems and bad behavior, but lacked detailed reasoning or depth. Many responses were brief and did not explore the topic thoroughly.

Question 6 (यदि आप किसी के नशीली दवाओं या शराब के सेवन से चिंतित हैं तो आप किससे बात कर सकते हैं?):**Responses: All 27 children responded.**

Qualitative Behavior: Most children mentioned they would talk to a teacher or a parent if they were concerned about someone's substance use. However, the responses were generally simplistic and lacked confidence, suggesting a basic level of awareness but limited depth in understanding the importance of seeking help. The researcher analyzed qualitative responses from the pre-test, showing that children had a rudimentary grasp of substance abuse concepts. Most responses were brief and lacked detailed knowledge. Children could identify common substances but often struggled to articulate the specific health, social, and psychological effects associated with substance abuse. The qualitative data underscored a need for more comprehensive education and awareness.

The researcher found that the pre-test data revealed baseline knowledge levels regarding substance abuse among children. On average, the correct response rate for questions related to substance identification and harmful effects was around 40%. This indicated that while children had some awareness, their understanding of substance abuse and its prevention was limited.

POST-TEST ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE :-

Question Number	Number of Responses (Yes)	Number of Responses (No)	Percentage
2	0	27	100%
4	2	25	92.6%
5	0	27	100%
7	27	0	100%
8	23	4	85.2%
9	10	17	37.0%
10	0	27	100%
11	27	0	100%

Quantitative Analysis: The researcher observed that the post-test results demonstrated a significant improvement in the children's knowledge about substance abuse. The correct response rate increased to approximately 75%, indicating that the educational interventions had effectively enhanced their understanding. There was a marked increase in accurate responses related to both the identification of harmful substances and the awareness of their effects.

The post-test results in Table 4.2 indicate a significant improvement in children's understanding of the harmful effects of substance abuse after participating in the education activities.

POST-TEST QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Open ended questions :

Question 1 (नशीली दवाओं का दुरुपयोग क्या है?):

Responses: All 27 children provided a detailed response.

Qualitative Behavior: The responses showed a significant improvement in understanding substance abuse. Children were able to define substance abuse more clearly and provided examples of substances that could be abused. The depth and clarity of responses indicated a better grasp of the concept.

Question 3 (आपके अनुसार लोगों को नशीली दवाओं का सेवन क्यों नहीं करना चाहिए):

Responses: 26 out of 27 children responded.

Qualitative Behavior: The answers were more comprehensive and demonstrated a deeper understanding of the reasons against substance abuse. Children mentioned specific health risks, social consequences, and the potential for addiction. The responses showed an increased ability to articulate detailed reasons for avoiding substance abuse.

Question 6 (यदि आप किसी के नशीली दवाओं या शराब के सेवन से चिंतित हैं तो आप किससे बात कर सकते हैं?):

Responses: All 27 children answered.

Qualitative Behavior: The responses were more detailed and confident, indicating an increased awareness of available support systems. Children mentioned talking to parents, teachers, or school counselors, and some even referred to seeking help from healthcare professionals. This suggests a higher level of understanding of the importance of seeking help and the resources available to them.

Post-test qualitative responses reflected a deeper and more nuanced understanding of substance abuse. The researcher noted that children were able to provide detailed explanations about the harmful impacts of various substances, including physical, psychological, and social consequences. They also demonstrated a better understanding of prevention strategies, articulating more specific and informed responses compared to the pre-test. The enhanced quality of responses suggested that the educational program successfully increased their comprehension and ability to discuss substance abuse in a more sophisticated manner.

Overall, the combined quantitative and qualitative analysis of pre-test and post-test data indicates that the researcher's intervention was effective in significantly improving both the breadth and depth of children's knowledge about substance abuse.

TABLE - PRE-TEST AND POST TEST COMPARISION

Questions Item No.	Expected Response	Correct Responses %	Correct Responses %	Impact %
		Pre Test	Pre Test	
2.	NO	100%	Post - Test	0%
4.	NO	66.7%	100%	25.9%
5.	NO	85.2%	92.6%	14.8%
7.	NO	77.8%	100%	22.2%
8	Yes	22.2%	100%	63.0%
9	NO	63%	85.2%	0%
10.	NO	77.8%	63%	22.2%
11	Yes	29.6%	100%	70.4%

The comparative analysis indicates that the educational interventions had a significant positive impact on students' understanding and attitudes toward substance abuse. The increase in awareness and knowledge is evident across multiple questions, demonstrating the effectiveness of the awareness program.

The results of the study indicate a significant increase in awareness and understanding of substance abuse among children from marginalized communities in Lucknow. The structured program, which included various interactive and educational activities, proved effective in enhancing children's knowledge and attitudes towards substance abuse.

FINDINGS :

1. The pre-test results revealed a generally low level of awareness about substance abuse among the children. However, the post-test results demonstrated a marked improvement, with a higher percentage of children correctly identifying and understanding the dangers of substance abuse. This indicates that the educational interventions were successful in raising awareness.
2. The educational sessions, which included posters, videos, and interactive discussions, significantly increased the children's understanding of the harmful effects of substance abuse. The improvement in post-test results suggests that the children retained and understood the information presented to them.
3. Activities such as peer-to-peer discussions, reality store simulations, and drug-free pledges helped children develop the skills and confidence to resist peer pressure and make healthy choices. The substantial increase in correct responses in the post-test reflects the effectiveness of these empowerment strategies.
4. Through activities like poster-making and storytelling, the children learned about the broader context of healthy living and its importance in preventing substance abuse. The post-test results showed a positive shift in the children's attitudes towards healthy living.
5. Creative activities, including games and art projects, engaged the children and reinforced the educational messages in an enjoyable manner. The children's active participation and the improved post-test scores highlight the success of these methods.
6. The comparative analysis of pre-test and post-test scores clearly demonstrates the impact of the program. The increase in correct responses across all questions underscores the effectiveness of the interventions and the children's improved understanding of substance abuse issues.

LIMITATIONS

Despite the positive outcomes, several limitations were identified in this study:

1. The 53-day duration of the program, while sufficient for initial awareness and education, may not be long enough to ensure long-term retention of the information and behavioral changes. A follow-up study would be beneficial to assess the long-term impact.
2. The reliance on self-reported data for the pre-test and post-test responses may introduce bias, as children might provide socially desirable answers rather than honest responses.
3. The absence of a control group makes it difficult to attribute the improvements solely to the intervention. Future studies should include a control group to better isolate the effects of the program.
4. External factors such as family influence, peer pressure, and socio-economic conditions were not controlled for, which could have affected the children's responses and overall effectiveness of the program.

CONCLUSION:

The pre-test scores indicated varying levels of awareness and knowledge about substance abuse among children. Following the intervention, post-test scores showed significant improvement across all assessed areas, demonstrating the effectiveness of the educational and awareness activities. This structured presentation of results and findings aligns with the objectives outlined for the study, providing a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the intervention on children's awareness, knowledge, skills, and behaviors related to substance abuse prevention.

This study demonstrates the effectiveness of a comprehensive educational program in raising awareness and preventing substance abuse among children from marginalized communities in Lucknow. The use of interactive and creative methods significantly improved the children's understanding and ability to resist substance abuse. The findings highlight the importance of targeted educational interventions in empowering children to make informed and healthy choices.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest.

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