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## Santhi Sujatha Mary

Professor, HOD of Community Health Nursing, Sulur, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India

## Janani K

IV B.Sc Nursing Students, RVS College of Nursing, Sulur, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India

## Jebisha Jane JT

IV B.Sc Nursing Students, RVS College of Nursing, Sulur, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India

## Jeevitha V

IV B.Sc Nursing Students, RVS College of Nursing, Sulur, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India

## Jenifer Rose A

IV B.Sc Nursing Students, RVS College of Nursing, Sulur, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India

## Kesiya Mol KR

IV B.Sc Nursing Students, RVS College of Nursing, Sulur, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India

## Manimaran M

IV B.Sc Nursing Students, RVS College of Nursing, Sulur, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India

## Menaga M

IV B.Sc Nursing Students, RVS College of Nursing, Sulur, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India

## Mohammed Ahamed

IV B.Sc Nursing Students, RVS College of Nursing, Sulur, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India

## Corresponding Author:

### Santhi Sujatha Mary

Professor, HOD of Community Health Nursing, Sulur, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India

## Knowledge and attitude on factors influencing substance abuse and its ill effects among higher secondary students

**Santhi Sujatha Mary, Janani K, Jebisha Jane JT, Jeevitha V, Jenifer Rose A, Kesiya Mol KR, Manimaran M, Menaga M and Mohammed Ahamed**

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### Abstract

Substance abuse among adolescents is a growing public health concern. This study aimed to assess the knowledge and attitude of higher secondary students regarding factors influencing substance abuse and its ill effects in a selected school in Coimbatore. A quantitative survey approach with a non-experimental descriptive research design was adopted. The study was conducted at RVS Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Sulur, Coimbatore, with a sample of 60 male students selected through a non-probability convenience sampling technique. Data were collected using a self-administered structured questionnaire comprising demographic details, multiple-choice questions to assess knowledge, and a Likert scale to assess attitude. Ethical approval was obtained, and confidentiality was assured. Findings revealed that 53.3% of students were aged 17-18 years. Most students 78.3% had an average level of knowledge about substance abuse, 15.0% had a good level, and 6.7% had a poor level. Attitude assessment showed that 65.0% had a positive attitude, 33.3% had a neutral attitude, and only 1.7% had a negative attitude. A weak but positive correlation ( $r = +0.115$ ) was found between knowledge and attitude, indicating that as knowledge increases, students' attitudes toward substance abuse improve. There was no significant association between demographic variables and knowledge and attitude levels. The study concludes that although most students had an average knowledge level and a positive attitude, regarding factors influencing substance abuse and its ill effects. The study findings highlight the need for targeted educational interventions to improve students' understanding further and reinforce positive attitudes, ultimately contributing to substance abuse prevention efforts among adolescents.

**Keywords:** Substance abuse, adolescence, knowledge, attitude, ill effects of substance abuse, higher secondary school students

### Introduction

Substance abuse during adolescence is a serious problem that requires urgent attention, as this developmental stage often marks the first signs of misuse. The target demographic for the use of illegal drugs is students. Early substance abuse among schoolchildren is primarily caused by psychological factors, including feelings of inferiority in school, low self-worth, inadequate impulse control, isolation, unmet needs, and pleasure-seeking, as well as social factors like peer pressure and the accessibility of drugs.

According to the Magnitude of Substance Use in India 2019 report by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, the estimated number of users of various substances among individuals aged 10-75 years was approximately 150 million people using alcohol, approximately 29 million people using cannabis, approximately 18.6 million using opioids and approximately 29 million people using sedatives, which highlight the significant prevalence of substance use in India.

The National Survey on Extent and Pattern of Substance Use in India, conducted in 2018 by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in collaboration with NDDTC, and AIIMS, provides significant data on psychoactive substance use among different age groups. The survey revealed that among children and adolescents (10-17 years), 1.30% use alcohol (30 million users), 0.90% use cannabis (20 million users), 1.80% use opioids (40 million users),

0.58% use sedatives (20 million users), 1.17% use inhalants (30 million users), 0.06% use cocaine (2 million users), 0.18% use amphetamines (4 million users), and 0.07% use hallucinogens (2 million users). In contrast, among adults (18-75 years), alcohol use is prevalent at 17.10% (151 million users), cannabis at 3.30% (29 million users), opioids at 2.10% (19 million users), sedatives at 1.21% (11 million users), inhalants at 0.58% (6 million users), cocaine at 0.11% (1 million users), amphetamines at 0.18% (2 million users), and hallucinogens at 0.13% (2 million users).

A report from the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2024 highlights that 2.6 million deaths per year were attributable to alcohol consumption, accounting for 4.7% of all deaths, and 0.6 million deaths to psychoactive drug use. Notably, 2 million of alcohol and 0.4 million of drug-attributable deaths were among men. Globally, 23.5% of all 15-19 year olds were current drinkers.

According to the 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), sponsored by SAMHSA report, 46.3 million people aged 12 or older (or 16.5 percent) had a substance use disorder (SUD) in the past year, including 29.5 million had alcohol use disorder, 24.0 million had a drug use disorder, and 7.3 million people had both an alcohol use disorder and a drug use disorder. Among adolescents aged 12 to 17 in 2021, 12.7 percent (or 3.3 million people) had serious thoughts of suicide, 5.9 percent (or 1.5 million people) made a suicide plan, and 3.4 percent (or 892,000 people) attempted suicide in the past year.

Neupane S, and Darshandhari G. (2023) conducted a study to assess knowledge and attitude on substance abuse among higher secondary school students in Kathmandu District. Their findings revealed that more than half of respondents had inadequate knowledge (59.2%) whereas only 8.6% had an adequate understanding of substance abuse. N Tyagi *et al.* (2023) <sup>[1]</sup> conducted a study to assess the level of awareness and attitude regarding the ill effects of substance abuse among students in selected schools of Gurugram, Haryana. The study results indicated that 58% of the participants had prior awareness of substance misuse, whereas 43% lacked such awareness.

Substance abuse among adolescents is a growing public health concern, influenced by various risk factors such as poverty, parental disengagement, family conflicts, and substance use by family members or peers. Additionally, adverse childhood experiences, including parental substance use, divorce, and the loss of a parent, significantly increase the likelihood of substance misuse. Other contributing factors such as early aggressive behavior, lack of parental supervision, academic struggles, undiagnosed mental health issues, and peer pressure further escalate the problem. The consequences of substance abuse extend beyond physical health issues, such as liver disease, to severe mental health disorders, including anxiety, depression, and psychosis. Moreover, substance abuse affects social functioning, leading to strained relationships, involvement in criminal activities, and a decline in academic performance.

The increasing prevalence of substance use among school students highlights the urgent need for research in this area. Adolescents often initiate substance use with tobacco and alcohol, which progress to the misuse of more harmful drugs.

### Statement of the problem

A study to assess the knowledge and attitude on factors

influencing substance abuse and its ill effects among higher secondary students in selected schools at Coimbatore.

### Objectives

- To assess the knowledge on factors influencing substance abuse and its ill effects.
- To assess the attitude toward factors influencing substance abuse and its ill effects.
- To correlate the level of knowledge and attitude regarding factors influencing substance abuse.
- To associate the knowledge on factors influencing substance abuse and its ill effects with selected demographic variables.
- To associate the attitude toward factors influencing substance abuse and its ill effects with selected demographic variables.

### Operational definition

**Knowledge:** It refers to the awareness and understanding of higher secondary students regarding the factors influencing substance abuse and its ill effects.

**Attitude:** It refers to the perceptions, beliefs, and predispositions of higher secondary students toward substance abuse and its consequences.

### Assumption

- Students may have varying levels of knowledge regarding the factors influencing substance abuse and its ill effects.
- Attitudes toward substance abuse may be influenced by personal experiences, peer pressure, family background, and social environment.
- Adequate knowledge about the factors influencing substance abuse and its consequences may lead to a more positive attitude toward substance use.

### Delimitation

- The study was delimited to higher secondary students
- The study was delimited to only one school

### Scope of the study

Studying the factors influencing substance abuse and its ill effects is highly relevant for nursing professionals, as they play a crucial role in health education, prevention, early identification, and intervention. This study equips nurses with the knowledge to educate students, parents, and communities about substance abuse risks, promoting awareness and preventive measures. It also enhances their ability to assess and counsel individuals at risk, integrating substance abuse prevention into school health programs and community outreach.

### Materials & Methods

**Research Approach:** Quantitative survey approach

**Research Design:** A non-experimental descriptive research design

**Setting of the Study:** The study was conducted at RVS Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Suler, Coimbatore, which was established in 1985. The school offers classes from Pre-KG to Std. XII.

**Population:** All male students in the higher secondary section.

**Sample Size and Sampling Technique:** A sample of 60 higher secondary male students was selected using a non-probability convenience sampling technique.

**Sampling Criteria:** The inclusion criteria for the study required participants to be male students aged between 15 to 18 years and willing to participate in the study. Exclusion criteria included students who were absent during data collection and those who were physically challenged.

**Description of the Tool and Technique:** A self-administered structured questionnaire was used for the data collection. It was divided into three sections. Section A included a structured questionnaire designed to collect demographic data such as age, class, family type, religion, parental occupation, family income, awareness regarding substance abuse, and family history of substance abuse. Section B consisted of an 18-item multiple-choice questionnaire to assess knowledge regarding factors influencing substance abuse and its effects. Each correct response was awarded one point, making the maximum possible score 18. Section C utilized a 10-item Likert scale to evaluate attitudes towards substance abuse, with responses rated on a three-point scale (Agree-3, Neutral-2, Disagree-1) and a maximum score of 30. Knowledge assessment was categorized as poor, average, and good. Attitude assessment was classified as negative, neutral, and positive.

**Development and Validity of the Research Tool:** The tool was designed with clarity, simplicity, and organization in mind. Expert opinions were sought from three faculty members of RVS College of Nursing to validate the tool. Their feedback was incorporated to enhance the tool's reliability and relevance to the study objectives.

**Ethical Considerations:** Ethical approval was obtained from the School Principal before initiating the study. The objectives and purpose of the study were clearly explained to the participants, and verbal consent was obtained. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study, ensuring respect and dignity for all participants.

**Data Collection:** The data collection process was carried out after obtaining formal permission from the Principal of the School. The researchers provided a brief introduction to the participants and explained the purpose and objectives of the study. After obtaining consent, demographic information, knowledge, and attitude data were collected using the structured questionnaire. The participants took approximately 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. At the end of the data collection process, the researchers expressed gratitude to the participants and assured them of their data privacy. Throughout the study, participants were treated with respect, and their cooperation was well-received. There were no refusals or unwillingness to participate.

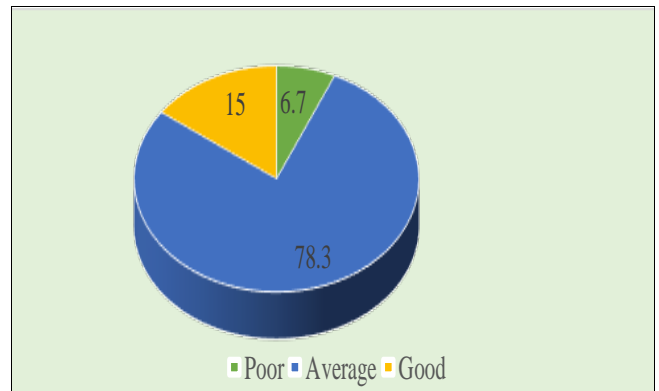
**Statistical Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize demographic data and assess knowledge and attitude levels. Inferential statistics,

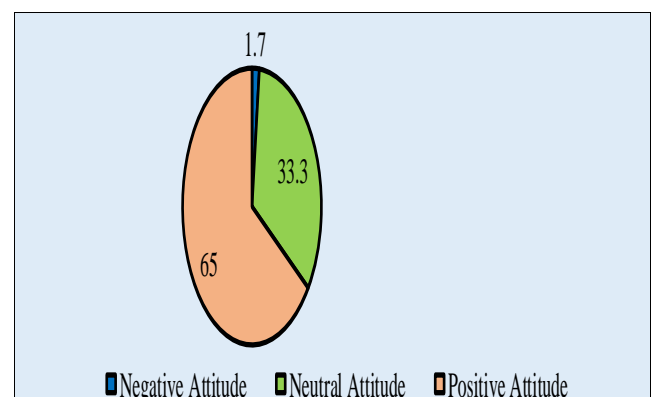
specifically the chi-square test, were used to determine associations between selected variables. A P-value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant. The data were systematically organized and presented using tables and graphs for clarity. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software.

**Result**

The study findings revealed that more than half 53.3% (32) of the students were aged 17-18 years, and the rest 46.7% (28) were 15-16 years old. An equal number of students, 50.0% (30) each, were from 11th and 12th standard. The majority, 86.7% (52), belonged to nuclear families, and 65.0% (39) were Hindus. Among fathers, 41.7% (25) were private employees, 28.3% (17) were businessmen, 8.3% (5) were government employees, 6.7% (4) were coolie workers, 11.7% (7) had other occupations, and 3.3% (2) were unemployed. Among mothers, 46.7% (28) were housewives, 35.0% (21) were private employees, 8.3% (5) were coolie workers, and 5.0% (3) each were government employees and businesswomen. In the aspect of monthly family income, 43.3% (26) earned between Rs. 10,000-25,000, 26.7% (16) between Rs. 25,000-50,000, 20.0% (12) had an income below Rs. 10,000, and 10.0% (6) earned above Rs. 50,000. Regarding awareness regarding types of substance abuse, 86.7% (52) had no knowledge, while 1.7% (1) knew about alcohol, cool lip, ganja, or tobacco, and 6.7% (4) were aware of all types. Also, 80.0% (48) reported no family history of substance abuse.



**Fig 1:** presents the percentage distribution of samples according to the level of knowledge regarding factors influencing substance abuse and its ill effects.



**Fig 2:** presents the percentage distribution of the sample according to the level of attitude toward factors influencing substance abuse and its ill effects.

**Table 1:** presents the correlation between knowledge and attitude on factors influencing substance abuse and its ill effects

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	r - Value
Knowledge	9.88	2.92	+ 0.115
Attitude	24.75	3.49	

The study findings also indicated that there was no significant association between the level of knowledge regarding factors influencing substance abuse and selected demographic variables such as age, class studying, monthly family income, and religion. Similarly, there was no significant association between the level of attitude and demographic variables such as age, class studying, type of family, religion, and monthly family income. These results suggest that students' knowledge and attitude toward substance abuse were not influenced by their demographic characteristics.

### Discussion

The findings of the present study were supported by the study conducted by SV Dighe (2021)<sup>[8]</sup>, which assessed the knowledge and attitude regarding substance use among adolescents residing in Lomeshwar Nagar, Loni (Kd), Maharashtra. His study employed a cross-sectional survey design and included 60 adolescents selected through a simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using structured knowledge and attitude questionnaires related to substance use. The results indicated that 73.33% of adolescents had heard about substance use, 53.33% had a good level of knowledge, and 91.66% exhibited a negative attitude toward substance use. A significant association was found between knowledge and the type of family, and a mild correlation ( $r = 0.0031$ ) was observed between knowledge and attitude. This study highlighted the critical role of education in enhancing adolescents' awareness of substance use and its adverse effects.

Also, the findings of the present study align with the study conducted by R Bhawariya (2020)<sup>[10]</sup>, which aimed to assess knowledge related to substance abuse among adolescents at Desh Bhagat University, Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab. This descriptive study included 100 adolescents (50 boys and 50 girls) selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The study revealed that the majority of students (98.33%) had inadequate knowledge regarding substance abuse. Additionally, the mean knowledge score for boys was 41.28%, whereas girls had a mean knowledge score of 39.46%, indicating that boys had slightly more knowledge about substance abuse than girls. These findings underscored the need for educational interventions to improve adolescents' understanding of substance abuse and its associated risks.

### Conclusion

The study concluded that majority of the higher secondary students had an average level of knowledge (78.3%) and a significant portion (15.0%) had a good level of knowledge regarding factors influencing substance abuse and its ill effects. Also, most of the students (65.0%) exhibited a positive attitude toward substance abuse and its consequences. A weak but positive correlation ( $r = +0.115$ ) between knowledge and attitude observed, indicates that increased knowledge enhances students' attitudes toward substance abuse prevention. The study findings highlight the

need for targeted educational interventions to further improve students' understanding and reinforce positive attitudes, ultimately contributing to substance abuse prevention efforts among adolescents.

### Implication

**Nursing Practice:** The study emphasizes the significance of the nurse's role in health promotion and prevention by educating students about substance abuse and its ill effects. Nurses can work in collaboration with teachers, parents, and community health workers to implement preventive strategies and provide guidance on substance abuse prevention. Nurses can implement counselling services to help students who are at risk of substance abuse by offering early intervention and support. Nurses can conduct school health awareness programs to enhance students' knowledge and encourage healthy behavioral choices.

**Nursing Education:** The study emphasizes the need for integrating substance abuse education into the nursing curriculum. Nurse educators should organize workshops, seminars, and simulation-based learning that can be included in nursing education to develop skills in health promotion and school-based interventions. Nursing students can be encouraged to engage in school health programs to assess and address substance abuse issues among adolescents.

**Nursing Administration:** Nursing administrators should develop policies and protocols for school health programs focusing on substance abuse prevention. Nurse administrators should organize regular health screening and counselling services, in schools to identify students at risk of substance abuse.

**Nursing Research:** Further research can be conducted to explore the effectiveness of educational interventions on substance abuse awareness among adolescents. Nurse researchers should encourage community nurses to apply research findings to practice and expand evidence-based practices. Disseminating research findings through conferences, seminars, and publications.

### Limitation

- The sample size was small, limiting the generalizability of the results.
- The samples were selected using a non-probability convenience sampling technique.
- The study was conducted in a specific school setting and area, which may not reflect the diversity of knowledge and attitude.
- Self-reported data have been influenced by individual biases, impacting the accuracy of the results.

### Recommendation

- The study can be replicated on a large sample for generalization of the findings.
- The study can be conducted to find out the effectiveness of structured teaching programs on substance abuse and its ill effects.
- A comparative study can be conducted to assess the knowledge and attitude on factors influencing substance and its ill effects among higher secondary students

between private and Govt schools.

- A comparative study can be conducted to assess the knowledge and attitude on factors influencing substance and its ill effects among higher secondary students between urban and rural schools.

#### Declaration by Authors

**Ethical Approval:** Approved

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**Conflict of Interest:** There were no conflicts of interest related to this study and conducted the research without any external influence or bias.

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