

International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research Descriptive study to assess the Level of awareness of substance abuse among college students, Hosur.

**Dr. Sangeetha.C¹, Dr. Sumathi Sampath², Anju saji³, Jubin Kunjumon⁴,
Nandana V. R⁵, Hemapriya K⁶**

¹PhD (N), Vice principal, Department of of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Nursing, St. Peter's Nursing College and Research Institute, Hosur, Tamil Nadu, India

²Dean, Faculty of Nursing St Peter's Nursing College & Research Institute. Hosur, Tamil Nadu, India

^{3,4,5,6}Final year B.Sc. Nursing Students, St. Peter's Nursing College and Research Institute, Hosur, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract:

Substance abuse is a major public health concern that adversely affects the physical and mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being of college students. Assessing students' level of awareness regarding substance abuse is important for identifying gaps in knowledge and understanding.¹ Such information can guide the development of appropriate educational and preventive strategies, promote healthy lifestyle choices, and strengthen student welfare programmes. Therefore, assessing the level of awareness regarding substance abuse among college students is essential for planning effective health education and prevention initiatives. A non-experimental descriptive design was adopted. One hundred and ten students were selected using a simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire on substance abuse. The results reported that most students had adequate knowledge regarding the meaning and ill effects of substance abuse; only 8.18 % of students had inadequate knowledge. There was a significant association identified between awareness and type of residence. Hence, enhancing knowledge is important for promoting healthy behaviours and preventing addiction among college students.

1. Introduction:

Globally, college students are considered a vulnerable population for substance abuse. Substance abuse refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs. Substance abuse can have serious negative effects on physical and mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being.² In addition, substance use can place a substantial financial burden on individuals, families, and society.³ Students at this age face heightened risk due to peer pressure, academic stress, curiosity, social influence, and emotional challenges during the transition from adolescence to adulthood.⁴

Mental health is a major public health concern in India, particularly among college students. Various factors, including academic pressure, peer influence, stress, and other social and personal challenges, may contribute to substance use among students. Substance abuse can have devastating effects on students' mental health and overall well-being.⁴ It may contribute to mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, and psychosis, while also impairing academic performance and social functioning. In addition, prolonged substance abuse can result in serious physical health consequences, including liver disease, other chronic health problems, and addiction. Therefore, increasing awareness about the harmful effects of substance abuse is essential for promoting healthy behaviours and preventing substance use among college students.⁵. Hence, the present study aimed to assess the Level of awareness of substance abuse among college students.

2. Methodology:

The non-experimental descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted among selected colleges in Hosur. Formal permission was obtained from the committee. Informed consent was obtained from the participants after an adequate explanation of the study. One hundred and ten students were selected using a simple random sampling technique. The structured questionnaire was administered to the students using the interview method. The students were asked to choose the correct response from the given options. The tool consisted of twenty-five questions on the awareness and ill effects of substance abuse. The aspects included meaning, causes, features, ill effects, and prevention of substance abuse. For a correct response, a score of one was given, and for an incorrect answer, a score of zero was given. The tool was validated by four nursing experts.

3. Results:

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of demographic variables among college students.

N= 110

Variables	Category	F	%
Age	17-20 yrs	68	61.8
	21-22 yrs	37	33.6
	Above 23 yrs	5	4.5
Gender	Male	24	21.8%
	Female	86	78.2%
Place of Living	Hostel	59	53.6%
	Paying Guest	32	29.1%
	Home	19	17.3%
Year of Study	1st year	13	11.8%
	2nd year	32	29.1%
	3rd year	32	29.1%
	Final year	33	30.0%

Table 1 depicts the sociodemographic characteristics of the students. Most students (68; 61.8%) were in the 17–20 age group. Most of the students were female, 86 (78.2%). Regarding accommodation, 59 (53.6%) students stayed in the hostel, while 32 (29.1%) resided in paying guest accommodation. With respect to the year of study, students from the different academic years constituted approximately equal proportions, except for first-year students, who comprised 11.8% of the total participants.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution of level of awareness on substance abuse among college students.

N= 110

Level of Knowledge	F	%
Adequate knowledge (>50)	101	91.81%
Inadequate knowledge (<50)	9	8.18%

Table 2 demonstrates that most students (91.81%) demonstrated adequate awareness regarding substance abuse, while a small minority (8.18%) had inadequate awareness.

Table 3. Percentage distribution of aspects-wise level of awareness on substance abuse among college students.

N= 110

Aspect	Adequate knowledge	Inadequate knowledge
Definition	100 (91%)	10 (9%)
Causes	287 (87%)	43 (13%)
Signs & Symptoms	294 (89%)	36 (11%)
Ill Effects	305 (92%)	25 (8%)

Table 3 shows that most of the students showed adequate knowledge in the aspects of definition, causes, symptoms and ill effects among students.

Concerning association, a significant association was found between the level of awareness and the place of residence at $p < 0.001$. and there is no association found with other demographic variables.

4. Discussion:

The present study results showed student awareness was adequate, the study findings align with similar study conducted among 110 BSc Nursing students in Hosur. The findings revealed that the majority of students (91.81%), had adequate awareness, while a small proportion, 9 students (8.18%), had inadequate awareness. This high level of awareness may be attributed to the nursing curriculum, which regularly exposes students to health-related content, including substance abuse and its consequences⁶.

Students in the present study showed the strongest awareness of ill effects (92%), followed by signs and symptoms (89%), definition (91%), and were comparatively weakest in causes (87%) — though all four domains remained well above 80%. This pattern is consistent with the broader literature, where studies have similarly emphasized that health-impact education tends to be more strongly retained by students

than causal or risk-factor knowledge, likely because ill-effects content is more heavily emphasized in structured health education and media campaigns⁶.

The present study found that type of residence was the only demographic variable significantly associated with awareness level ($\chi^2=14.6$, $p=0.001$), with students living in hostels or as paying guests showing different awareness patterns compared to those living at home. Age ($p=0.091$), gender ($p=0.920$), and year of study ($p=0.141$) showed no significant association. This finding aligns with research emphasizing that a student's living environment and independence from direct family supervision can influence their exposure to peer groups, informal information sources, and risk behavior's — a pattern discussed in relation to knowledge and attitude differences based on students' consumption patterns and personal circumstances. The lack of association with age, gender, and year of study in the present study is also consistent with prior research, which similarly found no significant demographic predictors of awareness beyond environmental and residential factors⁶.

This finding exceeds the results reported in several comparable studies. For instance, a smaller study conducted among 30 college students in Bangalore reported only moderate levels of knowledge, though it identified a statistically significant correlation between students' knowledge and their attitude toward substance abuse — a pattern consistent with the present study, wherein higher awareness scores were accompanied by a coherent understanding across all assessed domains (definition, causes, signs and symptoms, and ill effects), thereby reinforcing the association between structured knowledge acquisition and overall preparedness to identify substance abuse. The comparatively higher awareness percentage observed in the present study (91.81%) may be attributed to the specialized health-science curriculum undertaken by nursing students, which likely provides more consistent and structured exposure to health-related content relative to the general college populations examined in the aforementioned studies⁷.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that Nursing students have adequate understanding of substance abuse, its causes, signs, and consequences. Continued health education, especially targeting causes and at-risk residential groups, can further strengthen prevention efforts. Demographic factors such as age, gender, and year of study showed no significant association with awareness, except for type of residence, suggesting that environmental and residential factors may influence students' awareness regarding substance abuse.

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