

## Perception of General Public about Drug Abuse – A Study Conducted in Salem District of Tamil Nadu

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**Abstract:** Along with other social issues, the drug abuse is one of the serious problems nowadays in India. The data estimates that about 10.7 million Indian are drug abusers. Similarly the available data indicates that 12 per cent of drug addicts in India are below the age of 15 years, as are 31 per cent in the age group of 16-15 years and 56 per cent in the age group of 25-35 years. According to National Crime Records Bureau, there was 3674 person committed suicide in India in 2014, of which Maharashtra reported the highest, at 1372. This was followed by Tamil Nadu, with 552 cases and Kerala, with 475. The unnecessary deaths of these persons are to be considered as wastage of the existing human resources in India and such deaths also affect the family and society at large. The present study conducted among the general public in Salem district of Tamil Nadu about their perception on drug abuse as well as drug abusers and also about the present legal mechanism is sufficient to curb the drug abuse.

**Keywords:** Perception, Drug Abuse, Legal Measures, Counselling.

### INTRODUCTION

The use of illicit drugs is a serious public health problem in both developed as well as developing countries. The latest available data estimate that 10.7 million Indians – more than the population of Sweden – are drug abusers.

India has witnessed a five-time (455 %) increase in drug hauls over three years from 2011 to 2013, according to data released by government to Parliament. More than 25,000 people committed suicide due to drug abuse in the 10 year period between 2004 and 2013, according to National Crime Records Bureau.

Mizoram, Punjab and Manipur are among the states where people are most vulnerable to drug abuse. One reason could be their proximity to porous international borders and international drug-trafficking zones, such as the ‘Golden Triangle’ (Myanmar, Thailand and Laos) and ‘Golden Crescent’ (Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan). Studies revealed that 12 per cent of drug addicts in India are below the age of 15 years, as are 31 per cent in the age group of 16-15 years and 56 per cent in the age group of 25-35 years.

Regular drug use increases the likelihood of addiction. Effects of addiction include harmful consequences to mental health [1, 2]. Chemical dependency affects users and their relationship with the world, their families, and friends, with harmful consequences to studies, work, friendships and especially self-esteem [3]. Adolescents start on drugs for several reasons, from curiosity, recreation for pleasure, and as a need to cope with stress [4]. In India

approximately 5500 children and adolescent start using tobacco products daily, some as young as 10 years old [5]. The above reviews clearly indicate that the adolescent and youth period are crucial period for initiation of the consumption of drugs. Prior to study the prevalence of the drug abuse among the various sections of the population, it is important to study their perception about drugs and drug abuse. Therefore in the present study the researchers studied the perception of general public on drug abuse and abusers with following objectives.

### Objectives

1. To study the socio-economic conditions of the public who are living in the Kottagoundanpatty Panchayat in Omalure Taluk of Salem District.
2. To find their perception on various issues regarding drug abuse.
3. To know their opinion about the effectiveness of existing laws to control the problems of drug abuse.

### METHODOLOGY

The present study is conducted among the general public who are living in the Kottagoundanpatty Village Panchayat, Omalure Taluk in Salem district. From this village panchayat, 100 respondents selected by accidental sampling method. The respondents

responses measured with questionnaire and it contained the questions about their socio-economic conditions, perception of drug abuse, impact of drug abuse on the social relationships, perception about ready to give counseling to the drug abusers, laws related to controlling the drug abuse and whether any one of the family members are using the drugs. These questions were measured with appropriate scales and options. The respondents' responses were analyzed with percentile score.

## **RESULTS**

Among the total respondents, 60 per cent are males and 40 per cent of the respondents are females. As far as the age of the respondents, 35 per cent belongs to the age category of 25-30 years, 30 percent are aged between 35-40 years, 25 per cent are aged between 30-35 years and only 10 per cent of the total respondents belong to the age group of above 40 years. With regard to education level of the respondents, 28 per cent completed degree level, another 28 per cent completed secondary level, 24 per cent completed higher secondary level and 20 per cent of the respondents post graduation level. While considering the community of the respondents, 49 per cent of the respondents comes under the category of MBC community, 24 per cent of the respondents don't mention their community, 22 per cent of the respondents belong to SC community and remaining 7 per cent of the respondents are from BC community. Out of the total respondents, 52 per cent are unmarried and the 48 per cent are married. With regard to religion of the respondents, 82 per cent belongs to Hindu religion, 8 per cent belongs to Christian religion and remaining 10 per cent doesn't want to mention their religion.

The respondents are also asked about the reasons behind for the initiation of drug abuse by the youth, among the total respondents 37 per cent thinks that the youth used drugs for having fun followed by 35 per cent believes that the youth initiate due to social/peer pressure, 18 per cent said that the youth used drugs because of lack of role in the society/school and 10 per cent thinks that because of parental influence the youth are initiate the drug consuming behavior. With regard to the side effects of drug addiction on the users, 57 per cent mentioned that drugs abuse causes ill health followed by 25 per cent reported the drug abuse brings depression among the users, 15 per cent revealed that it causes tiredness, remaining 3 per cent of the respondents mentioned the negative effects of drugs on individual are bad temper, anxiety/fear, disturbed sleep and failure to do well at work. The respondents are also asked about the negative impact of drugs on the users' family, 60 per cent of the respondents revealed that illicit drugs break down the family relationship, 25 per cent mentioned it causes quarreling in the family, 10 per cent caused loss of confidence on the child/children, remaining respondents replied the negative effects of drugs on family are disgrace (3 %) and anxiety/fear (2

%). As far as the respondents' responses on the negative impact of drugs over the friendship, 52 per cent of the respondents mentioned it break down the relationship, 32 per cent revealed it causes quarreling between the friends and remaining 16 per cent revealed it brings anxiety/fear in the friendship circle.

With regard to respondents' responses on the negative impact of drugs over the society, 49 per cent reported that it increases crime in the society, 27 per cent replied that the usage of drugs brought violence in community/society, 14 per cent said that usage of drugs increasing accidents, remaining respondents the negative effects of drugs in the community are break down in work relationship (6 %) and ill health (4 %). Among the total respondents, 86 per cent of the respondents responded that using of drugs is increasing nowadays among the youth and remaining 14 per cent of the respondents expressed their negative opinion about this statement. When the respondents asked about their satisfaction over the role Government to control the drug addiction, 72 per cent are not satisfied with the Government Programme to control drug addiction, 28 per cent are satisfied with the Government Programme to control drugs. While considering the respondents responses on their willingness to give counseling to the drug addicts, 46 per cent said they are willing to give counseling to drugs addicts and the remaining 54 per cent are not willing to give counseling to drugs addicts. As far as the respondents responses over to allow the drug addicts to stay nearby, 36 per cent respondents said they still accept drugs users to stay nearby, 64 per cent of the respondents express their feelings that they hesitate to stay nearby drugs addicts.

The respondents are also asked about whether the society is given a fair chance to the drug addicts to get involved, 58 per cent of the respondents said drugs addicts are not given a fair chance to get involved in our society and 42 per cent of the respondents replied our society still give chance to involves in different activities to drugs addicts. Among the total respondents, 70 per cent of the respondents mentioned that the present legal mechanism is not sufficient to control drug abuse and 30 per cent of the respondents accepted that the present mechanism is enough to control drug abuse. Around one-sixth of the respondents (14 %) revealed that any of their family members have the habit of drug addiction, 86 per cent of the respondents mentioned that none of the family members use the drugs.

## **CONCLUSION**

The above results shows that 46 per cent of the respondents are ready to give counseling to the drug abusers, 36 per cent of the respondents ready to accept the drug abusers to stay nearby, 58 per cent of the respondents mentioned that the drug abusers are not given a fair chance to get involved in our society. Surprisingly 14 per cent of the respondents mentioned that any one of their either family members or relatives

is using illicit drugs. So it is urgent need to conduct more awareness programme either display in the media or show in the public places about the impact of the using of illicit drugs on abusers, family and society at large. Because 72 per cent of the respondents are not satisfied with the government programmes to control the drug abuse and similarly 70 per cent of the respondents are not satisfied with the present legal mechanisms to control the drug abuse. Hence it is concluded that government must punish severely the drug smugglers without any bias as well as more awareness should be conducted as well as more counseling centre should be opened where there is more prevalence of drug abuse taking place.

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