

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF NURSING STUDENTS TOWARDS THE ILL EFFECTS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE

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ABSTRACT

Substance abuse continues to pose a significant public health challenge worldwide. Assessing the knowledge and attitude of future healthcare professionals is essential for effective prevention and early intervention. This study aimed to evaluate the knowledge and attitude of nursing students regarding the ill effects of substance abuse, and to determine the association of these variables with selected demographic characteristics. A descriptive research design was adopted and conducted at KMCT College of Nursing, Manassery, Kozhikode. A total of 100 nursing students were selected using a convenience sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results indicated that 75% of the students possessed good knowledge, 20% had average knowledge, and 5% had poor knowledge regarding the ill effects of substance abuse. Additionally, 77% of the participants demonstrated a favourable attitude, while 23% exhibited an unfavourable attitude. The study highlights the need for continuous education and awareness programs to further enhance understanding and promote positive attitudes among nursing students toward substance abuse prevention.

Keywords: Substance Abuse; Nursing Students; Knowledge; Attitude; Public Health; Prevention; Awareness Programs; Descriptive Research; Healthcare Education; Ill Effects of Substance Abuse

INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse is a widespread phenomenon that has emerged as one of the most significant social problems globally. It represents a maladaptive pattern of drug use that leads to adverse physical, psychological, behavioural, and social consequences, and is characterized by a range of cognitive, behavioural, and psychological symptoms. Over the past two decades, substance misuse has become increasingly prevalent in India, affecting diverse segments of society. The rising incidence of psychoactive drug use among youth is particularly alarming and has become a major issue of national concern. Substance abuse contributes to the deterioration of health, escalation of crime, disruption of interpersonal relationships, erosion of social and moral values, and hinderance of societal progress.¹

Drug abuse, a form of substance-related disorder, is often associated with criminal or antisocial behaviours, especially when individuals are under the influence of substances. Prolonged use can also lead to significant and lasting personality changes. The commonly abused substances include alcohol, amphetamines, barbiturates, benzodiazepines, cannabis, cocaine, hallucinogens, and opioids.²

Substance abuse continues to exert profound effects on individuals, families, and communities, making it a critical public health concern. Nurses, as frontline healthcare providers, play a pivotal role in health promotion, prevention of substance use, early detection of abuse, and patient counselling. Their knowledge and attitudes toward substance abuse significantly influence the quality of care they deliver and the effectiveness of prevention and intervention efforts. Assessing the knowledge and attitudes of nursing students—future members of the healthcare workforce—is therefore essential for strengthening their competence in addressing substance-related issues. The present study aims to evaluate nursing students' knowledge and attitudes regarding the ill effects of substance abuse and to examine the association between these factors and selected demographic variables.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

A descriptive study to assess the knowledge and attitude towards the ill effects of substance abuse among nursing students in a selected college, Kozhikode.

OBJECTIVES

- To assess the knowledge on the ill effects of substance abuse among nursing students in a selected college, Kozhikode.

- To assess the attitude on the ill effects of substance abuse among nursing students in a selected college, Kozhikode.
- To find out the association between knowledge of the ill effects of substance abuse and selected demographic variables.
- To find out the association between attitude on the ill effects of substance abuse and selected demographic variables.

HYPOTHESIS

- H1 - There is a significant association between knowledge of the ill effects of substance abuse and selected socio-demographic variables.
- H2 - There is a significant association between attitude on the ill effects of substance abuse and selected socio-demographic variables.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of the study is based on Revised Health Promotion Model by Nola J Pender (2006).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design and Setting

A descriptive research design was adopted for the present study. The investigation was carried out at KMCT College of Nursing, Manassery, Kozhikode, a well-established institution offering undergraduate and postgraduate nursing programs.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The study sample comprised 100 nursing students selected using a non-probability convenience sampling technique. Data collection was conducted over a period of two consecutive days to ensure adequate participation.

Data Collection Tool

A structured questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument. The tool consisted of sections assessing demographic characteristics, knowledge related to the ill effects of substance abuse, and attitudes toward substance use. The questionnaire was designed to capture both factual understanding and perceptual responses.

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the appropriate institutional authorities. The purpose of the study was clearly explained to the participants, and informed consent was secured from each respondent. The structured questionnaire was then distributed to the students in a classroom setting, ensuring adequate time for completion. Filled questionnaires were collected on the same day and checked for completeness before analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data were coded, tabulated, and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the levels of knowledge and attitude among the participants. Inferential statistical tests were employed to determine associations between knowledge, attitude, and selected demographic variables. Results were presented in tabular form for clarity and ease of interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

The research proposal was presented before the Research Review Committee of KMCT College of Nursing, and approval was obtained. Ethical clearance for the study was also secured. Subsequently, permission was obtained from the KMCT Research Review Committee. Informed consent was obtained from the participants.

RESULTS

SL. NO	SOCIO DEMOGRAPHIC CHARECTERISTICS		FREEQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	AGE	18years	18	18%
		19years	42	42%
		20years	23	23%
		21years	7	7%
		21above	10	10%

2	GENDER	MALE	19	
		FEMALE	81	81%
		NOT PREFER TO SAY	-	-
3	RELIGION	HINDU	56	56%
		ISLAM	36	36%
		CHRISTIAN	12	8%
		OTHERS	-	-
4	TYPEOF FAMILY	NUCLEAR	80	80%
		JOINT	17	17%
		EXTENDED	2	2%
		BLENDED	1	1%
5	TYPE OF STAY	HOME	43	43%
		PAYING GUEST	9	9%
		HOSTEL	48	48%
		OTHERS	-	-
6	FAMILY INCOME	<20000	30	30%
		21000-30000	29	29%
		31000-40000	19	19%
		>40000	22	22%
7	EDUCATIONAL STATUS-MOTHER	PRE-PRIMARY	2	2%
		PRIMARY	27	27%
		PRE-DEGREE	41	41%
		DEGREE	26	26%
		PG AND ABOVE	4	4%
8	EDUCATIONAL STATUS- FATHER	PRE-PRIMARY	5	5%
		PRIMARY	36	36%
		PRE-DEGREE	38	38%
		DEGREE	19	19%
		PG AND ABOVE	2	2%
9	OCCUPATION MOTHER	SELF EMPLOYED	12	12%
		PRIVATE EMPLOYED	11	11%
		GOVERNMENT EMPLOYED	17	17%
		UNEMPLOYED	60	60%
10	OCCUPATION FATHER	SELF EMPLOYED	48	48%
		PRIVATE EMPLOYED	18	18%
		GOVERNMENT EMPLOYED	28	28%
		UNEMPLOYED	6	6%
11	DISCUSS DAILY EXPERIENCE WITH PARENTS	EVERY DAY	59	59%
		FEW TIMES IN A DAY	38	38%
		NEVER	3	3%
12	PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE	YES	83	83%
		NO	17	17%
13	IF YES, SOURCE	CLASS	54	54%
		PEER GROUP	21	21%
		OTHERS	25	25%

Knowledge Level of Nursing Students

Among the 100 nursing students who participated in the study, the majority (75%) demonstrated *good* knowledge regarding the ill effects of substance abuse. Additionally, 20% of the students possessed *average* knowledge, while 5% exhibited *poor* knowledge in this area.

Attitude Level of Nursing Students

With respect to attitude, 77% of the participants displayed a *favourable* attitude toward preventing and understanding the ill effects of substance abuse. In contrast, 23% of the students showed an *unfavourable* attitude.

Association between Knowledge, Attitude, and Demographic Variables

No statistically significant association was found between knowledge level and selected demographic variables.

DISCUSSION

The present study assessed the knowledge and attitude of nursing students regarding the ill effects of substance abuse. The findings revealed that the majority of participants (75%) possessed good knowledge, while a smaller proportion demonstrated average (20%) and poor (5%) knowledge levels. Additionally, most students (77%) displayed a favourable attitude toward preventing substance abuse, indicating a generally positive orientation toward health-promoting behaviours.

These findings align with previous research highlighting the effectiveness of educational exposure in enhancing awareness about substance abuse. For instance, a quasi-experimental study conducted in selected schools in Maharashtra (2024) demonstrated a significant increase in knowledge following a planned teaching programme. In that study, pre-test results showed that 73.33% of students had average knowledge, while only 20% had good knowledge and 6.67% had very good knowledge. After the intervention, 70% achieved excellent knowledge, 20% had very good knowledge, and the remaining 10% had good knowledge. The improvement emphasizes the potential impact of structured educational interventions on students' understanding of the consequences of substance use.

In comparison, the nursing students in the present study already exhibited a relatively high baseline level of knowledge and favourable attitudes. This may be attributed to prior academic exposure, health-related coursework, or increased general awareness due to the nature of their professional training. Despite these positive findings, the presence of poor knowledge in a minority group and the existence of unfavourable attitudes in 23% of participants indicate the need for continued and enhanced educational reinforcement.

Overall, the results suggest that strengthening formal education, incorporating practical workshops, and integrating substance abuse prevention modules within nursing curricula could further enhance both knowledge and attitudes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the present study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Larger-scale studies** should be conducted to validate the findings and improve generalizability.
2. **Research in diverse settings**, such as schools, colleges, and tribal communities, may provide a broader understanding of substance abuse perspectives.
3. **Qualitative or mixed-methods studies** could explore challenges, barriers, and facilitators to substance abuse prevention among college students.
4. **Development and validation of standardized assessment tools**, such as attitude scales or rating scales, are recommended to enhance the precision of measuring perceptions related to substance abuse.
5. Implementation of **regular educational and awareness programmes** within nursing institutions to ensure continuous reinforcement of knowledge and safe practices.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the knowledge and attitude of nursing students regarding the ill effects of substance abuse using a descriptive research design and a non-probability convenience sampling technique with a sample size of 100. The findings demonstrated that 75% of students possessed good knowledge, 20% had average knowledge, and 5% had poor knowledge regarding the ill effects of substance abuse. Attitude assessment revealed that 77% had a favourable attitude, while 23% exhibited an unfavourable attitude.

These results underscore the importance of incorporating structured educational and preventive programmes into the nursing curriculum. Strengthening students' knowledge and shaping positive attitudes are essential steps toward fostering a more informed, responsible, and proactive nursing workforce capable of addressing

substance abuse effectively. Enhancing awareness at the academic level may ultimately contribute to reducing substance use and promoting healthier behaviours among students and the broader community.

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