E-ISSN: 2664-603X
P-ISSN: 2664-6021
IJPSG 2025; 7(7): 132-135
www.journalofpoliticalscience.com
Received: 14-06-2025
Accepted: 17-07-2025

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Assessment of adolescents and youth philosophy against drug abuse in Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh

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DOI: https://www.doi.org/10.33545/26646021.2025.v7.i7b.600

Abstract
Present study assessed the philosophy and resistance strategies of 120 participants which comprised of 60 adolescents and 60 youth, against drug abuse in Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh. Comparative analysis revealed notable differences in knowledge, moral opposition, and peer influence. Adolescents demonstrated lower knowledge levels (76.67%) than youth (85%), indicating reduced awareness of drug-related harms. However, adolescents exhibited stronger moral opposition (81.67%) compared to youth (73.33%). Peer influence was strikingly high among adolescents (88.33%) relative to youth (78.33%), which suggests adolescents had vulnerability to social pressures. A parallel assessment of resistance strategies highlighted differentiated preferences shaped by developmental and socio-cultural contexts. Educational seminars and workshops emerged as the most preferred strategy (adolescents: 86.67%; youth: 80%), which reflects that both groups valued structured, expert-led learning for collective commitment against substance use. Peer-led support groups also received high endorsement (adolescents: 76.67%; youth: 75.56%). Adolescents showed greater preference for family discussions (71.67%) and school counsellor sessions (65%) than youth (63.33% and 53.33%, respectively), which indicates continued reliance on parental guidance and institutional support, aligning with Attachment Theory frameworks. Conversely, online resources and materials registered the lowest preference (Adolescents: 51.67%; Youth: 48.89%), exhibiting scepticism toward impersonal, self-directed interventions. These findings emphasize the need for developmentally tailored, culturally sensitive prevention strategies that enhance knowledge, strengthen moral frameworks, and reduce peer susceptibility, particularly among adolescents, to mitigate drug abuse risks effectively.

Keywords: Adolescents, youth, drug abuse, knowledge, peer influence, moral opposition

Introduction
Drug abuse among adolescents and youth remains a significant public health issue (Nath *et al*., 2022) [9]. The Ministry of External Affairs (Government of India) stated, "One of the Youngest Populations in the World, India's Most Valuable Asset." Likewise, Paramasivan and Kumaresan (2016) [10] also claim India as the largest hub for adolescents and youth. These groups are characterized by developmental vulnerability and social transition (Povey *et al*., 2022) [11]. Specifically, Nath *et al*. (2022) [9] reported that adolescents and youth are more prone to alcohol and marijuana use. Supporting this, daily newspapers and local media in Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh, have reported a consistent rise in experimentation with and addiction to alcohol and cannabis among school and college students. Fisher (2011) [2] employed semi-structured interviews combined with content analysis to investigate the moral principles of 90 street-involved drug users. He found 100% of drug addicts used Amphetamine, followed by Alcohol (54%), Cocaine (34%), Heroin (26%), and Marijuana (15%). Additionally, they concluded that analyzing the moral principles of this target group can help mitigate drug abuse. Nahvizadeh *et al*. (2014) [8] emphasize that preventing and controlling drug use begins with actively assessing the prevalence of substance abuse, especially since adolescents often start with cigarettes and alcohol. This problem adversely affects individual health and well-being, with broader negative consequences for families, communities, and society at large. Currently, no region of the world is entirely free from the challenges of drug trafficking and addiction. Dua (2022) [1] revealed that drug addiction is not limited to any specific individual, location, age group, gender, ethnicity, social class, or religion; its prevalence spans all demographics and geographic regions.

Contributing factors include peer pressure, rising societal aspirations, unemployment, and changing social structures, which continue to exacerbate the problem globally. Therefore, a clear understanding of the philosophical foundations of drug abuse among adolescents and youth can help develop effective strategic measures to prevent it.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime and India's Ministry of Social Justice have stated that millions of Indians depend on alcohol, cannabis, and opiates, highlighting the widespread nature of drug misuse in Indian society (Kumar, 2004) [7]. According to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment's National Survey on Extent and Pattern of Substance Use in India (2019), researchers quantified the prevalence of psychoactive substance use among individuals aged 10 to 75 years. They reported that approximately 160 million people (14.6%) are current alcohol users, with 5.2% meeting criteria for alcohol dependence. Cannabis use was reported by an estimated 31 million individuals (2.8%), while 7.2 million (0.66%) exhibited cannabis use disorders. Overall, opioid use prevalence was 2.06%, with about 0.55% (6 million) requiring specialized treatment services. The result also noted that the non-medical use of sedatives affected around 11.8 million people (1.08%). In addition, inhalant use was notably higher among children and adolescents at 1.7%, compared to 0.58% in adults, with 1.8 million children needing intervention. Furthermore, approximately 850,000 individuals were identified as people who inject drugs (PWID), indicating increased risks for blood-borne infections and substance dependence. These epidemiological data underscore the significant burden of substance use disorders in India, highlighting the urgent need for targeted prevention, harm reduction, and treatment strategies. Hence, this research was designed to examine the level of awareness and philosophical opposition to drug abuse, as well as related factors (e.g., peer pressure and family values), and preferred strategies for resisting or avoiding substance use.

Methodology

A cross-sectional descriptive research design was employed with participants (N=120) belonged to Adolescents and youth via random sampling from high schools and higher education institutions in Bilaspur. The inclusion criteria for participants were Adolescents between 15 to 17 years and youth between 18 to 24 years who were residents of Bilaspur at the time of study (2024-25). Consenting to participate. The sample composition was 60 participants from the adolescent group and 60 from the youth one. All the participants were male.

Data Collection Tools

A structured questionnaire and interview were used as data collection tools during the present study. Demographic data, Knowledge about drug harm, and Moral Opposition Scale, and the Peer Influence Scale were collected. The informed consent was given to all participants and committed to maintaining their data privacy.

Data Analysis

The correlation and comparative accounts were included to conclude the result in an effective way. The table and graphs were created and analyzed using MS Office 2021.

Results and Discussion

The study included 120 participants divided into two groups: 60 adolescents and 60 youth. The assessment of adolescents and youth philosophy against drug abuse in Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh, revealed significant differences in knowledge, moral opposition, and peer influence between the two groups. Adolescents demonstrated comparatively lower knowledge levels (76.67%) than youth (85%), which suggests that younger participants have less awareness about the dangers of drug abuse. Conversely, adolescents exhibited stronger moral opposition (81.67%) than youth (73.33%), which shows that adolescents maintained more rigid ethical resistance against substance use. Notably, peer influence remained strikingly high among adolescents (88.33%) compared to youth (78.33%), indicating that adolescents had a greater sensitivity to social pressures. These findings highlighted the urgent need to design tailored interventions that enhance knowledge, reinforce moral frameworks, and reduce peer susceptibility, particularly among adolescents, to mitigate drug abuse risks in this population effectively.

Table 1: Knowledge, moral opposition and peer influence

Group	Knowledge (%)	Moral Opposition (%)	Peer Influence (%)
Adolescents (N=60)	76.67	81.67	88.33
Youth (N=60)	85	73.33	78.33

A comparative assessment of resistance strategies preferred by adolescents and youth against drug abuse in Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh, revealed meaningful patterns and differences that reflected their developmental needs and socio-cultural contexts. Educational seminars and workshops emerged as the most preferred strategy among adolescents (86.67%) and youth (80%). This finding suggested that both groups valued structured, authoritative learning environments that provided scientific knowledge, social validation, and collective commitment against substance abuse. Peer-led support groups also received high preference, i.e., adolescents (76.67%) and youth (75.56%), which shows that both populations recognized the protective function of shared experiences and social modeling. Such preferences aligned with Social Learning Theory, which posited that behaviors are shaped through observation, peer reinforcement, and collective norms (Khadka, 2024) [6]. Adolescents slightly higher preference might have resulted from their developmental sensitivity to peer approval and group belongingness. Family discussions showed a markedly greater preference among adolescents (71.67%) compared to youth (63.33%). This difference likely reflected those adolescents continued reliance on parental guidance and family values for moral orientation and emotional security, which is consistent with Attachment Theory paradigms (Thompson *et al*., 2022) [13]. In contrast, youth may have exhibited increasing autonomy and reduced dependence on family for sensitive discussions.

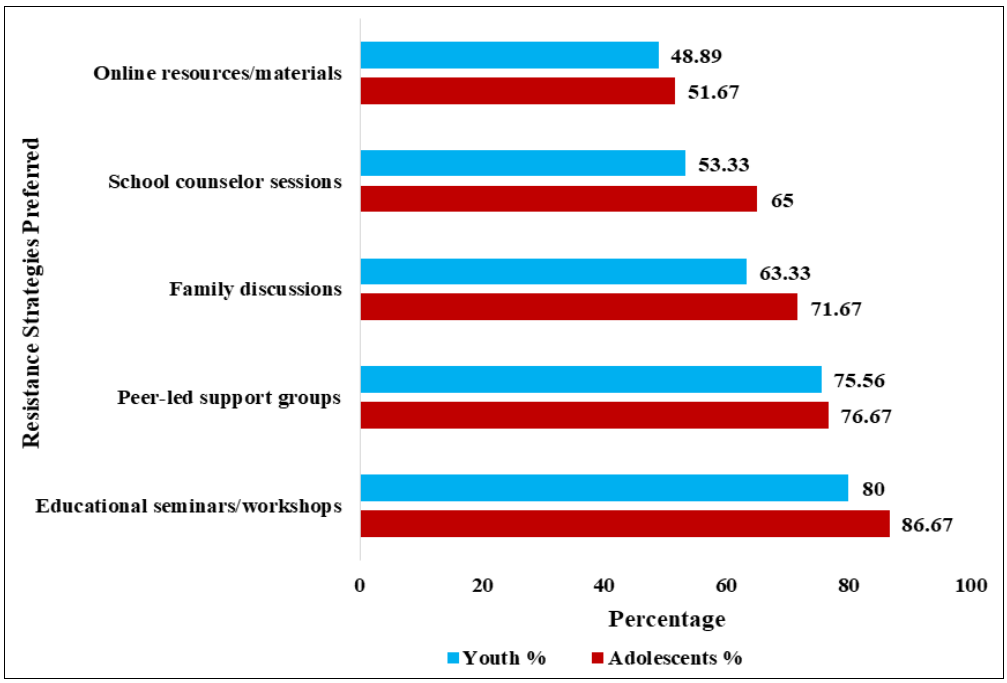

Fig 1: Resistance strategy preferred among Adolescents and Youth [Adolescents (N=60); Youth (N=60), Total (N=120)%: No of Respondents (In Percentage)]

School counselor sessions were preferred more by adolescents (65%) than by youth (53.33%), which is possibly due to school settings being more immediate, familiar, and trusted for them. Adolescents may have perceived counselors as approachable authority figures who could address personal issues discreetly. Meanwhile, youth, often transitioning away from school systems, may have viewed counselor sessions as less accessible or relevant. Online resources and materials recorded the lowest overall preference (adolescents 51.67% and youth 48.89%). This outcome suggested scepticism toward impersonal, self-directed learning for complex, emotionally charged issues like drug resistance. The potential barriers included low digital literacy in rural contexts, in line with Yu *et al*. (2024) [14] reported limited internet access, doubts about content credibility, and limited literacy level are act as barriers. Present findings claim the need to design developmentally appropriate, culturally sensitive, and socially anchored intervention strategies. Programs should prioritize interactive educational sessions, peer-group support, and family involvement for adolescents. Whereas it is flexible, self-directed, and community-based, options for youth. Policymakers and educators can tailor effective, evidence-based drug abuse prevention frameworks by understanding these preferences through psychological and sociocultural paradigms. However, some relevant studies have been conducted in the capital of Chhattisgarh (Raipur), and their findings are highlighted below.

Shalini *et al*. (2021) [12] conducted a cross-sectional observational study among 576 adolescent school students in Raipur city to evaluate psychological well-being and its socio-demographic determinants using Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale. Their analysis revealed that 79.9% of participants demonstrated average psychological well-being, while 20.1% exhibited good well-being scores. Higher psychological well-being was associated with being female, studying in English-medium private schools with non-state board syllabi, belonging to the unreserved category, having educated or employed parents including at least one working at a distant location, residing in joint families with both parents present, and being attended to after school. Furthermore, the study identified a concerning prevalence of substance use, with 39.5% of adolescents reporting exposure to tobacco products, markedly exceeding the 18.1% prevalence estimated in the Global Youth Tobacco Survey-4 (2019). These findings emphasize significant socio-demographic disparities and underline the urgent need for targeted interventions to improve adolescent mental health and reduce substance abuse.

Most recently, Jaiswal and Verma (2024) [5] investigated substance abuse among 664 adolescents, reporting that 301 (45.3%) had a lifetime history of any form of substance use other than for medicinal purposes. The majority of participants, 53.5% and 26.8%, belonged to socioeconomic classes II and III, respectively, based on the revised modified Prasad classification (2023) as mentioned by Ghodke (2023) [3]. Lifetime exposure rates were 39.5% for tobacco, 17.6% for alcohol, and 5.7% for cannabis. The study highlighted a notably high prevalence of substance abuse among adolescents compared to national data. Specifically, the proportion of adolescents exposed to tobacco products was 39.5%, which exceeded the 18.1% prevalence reported in the Global Youth Tobacco Survey-4 (2019). These results suggested that substance use among adolescents was a significant public health concern, with socioeconomic factors potentially contributing to elevated rates of abuse. They endorsed the immediate action towards targeted interventions and prevention strategies to address this growing problem. Collectively, these studies and our research findings underscore the urgent need for age-specific, culturally sensitive, and educationally focused interventions to increase knowledge, reduce peer pressure, and foster ethical resistance to substance use among adolescents and youth in Chhattisgarh.

Conclusion

This study highlighted the protective influence of moral and philosophical perspectives against drug abuse among Bilaspur's youth, demonstrating that while youth possessed greater knowledge about drug harms, adolescents

maintained stronger moral opposition to use. Youth also experienced lower peer influence pressure, suggesting important age-related differences in vulnerability and resilience factors. The findings suggested an urgent need for value-based education and peer-supported prevention programs tailored to local contexts. However, the cross-sectional design, reliance on self-reported data, and geographic limitation to Bilaspur restrict causal interpretation and broader generalizability, indicating the importance of future longitudinal research to track the stability and evolution of these protective factors over time.

Acknowledgement
I extend my sincere gratitude to my mentor, Dr. Sanjay Tiwari, for his invaluable guidance and to my colleagues for their steadfast support and collaboration throughout this research.

Conflict of Interest
There is no conflict of Interest among authors.

Ethical Disclosure
Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and no form of coercion was applied at any stage.

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