

# Preventive Strategies for Drug Use and Substance Abuse among High School Students in North-coastal Districts, Andhra Pradesh

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## Abstract

*This study examines drug use and substance abuse among high school students in the North Coastal Andhra districts of Anakapalli and Visakhapatnam. Using mixed-method approach, data collected from the total 225 students as participants aged 13–16 selected randomly, they consisted of 75.1% male and 24.9% female during October 2025 to January 2026. The data were analyzed by SPSS 23.0. Findings of the study indicated that about 78.3% students faced negative effects, including physical (56.6%), psychological (48.9%), social (82.5% and academic attainment (47.0%). Common substances abused included khaini (25.3%), tobacco cigarettes (14.5%), gutka (6.8%), and ganja (5.2%). Key risk factors were male gender, low socio-economic status (LSE), and peer pressure, necessitating improved life skills education and support systems.*

**Keywords:** Drug Use, High Schools, Substance Abuse, North-Coastal Districts, Andhra Pradesh.

## 1. Introduction

As the world observes “International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking” (World Drug Day) on June 26 every year, Government authorities urge families, schools and community to work together to protect young lives. The day aims to raise awareness about the harmful effects of drugs and the face reacting consequences they have on society. Drug abuse is a serious problem that is causing serious concern to all particularly among adolescents, who vulnerable to its far-reaching consequences (UNODC, 2025)<sup>1</sup>. Since 7<sup>th</sup> December 1987, the global drug problem poses a multifaceted, touching the lives of millions.

To address these complexities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, educational strategies shifting a holistic approach emphasize real-life connections, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and development, moving away from traditional rote memorization (WHO, 2021)<sup>2</sup>. Globally, parents are concerned about their children's academic success. However, many children falling victim to drug abuse, which affects them mentally, physically, and emotionally (Conteh and Koroma, 2023)<sup>3</sup>. Increase in the use of certain drugs among students, and the addiction associated, may likely be linked to their characteristic specifically, ability to induce a pleasurable "high" that is intense but very short-lived. In order to attain the desired effects, this encourages users to consume more frequently or regularly. Through its chemical action, a 'drug' is a substance capable of inducing a change in biological functions. Individually, drug abuse exerts detrimental effects on his/her health (Sesay et al., 2021)<sup>4</sup>. Academically, drug use and abuse is linked to poor performance, absenteeism, and dropout rate, as students struggle to cope with academic demands (Tholley and Jallow, 2022)<sup>5</sup>.

Substance abuse leads to deviant social behaviour, such as violence, criminal activity, and the breakdown of family and community (Koroma et al., 2023)<sup>6</sup>. Approximately 292 million people used drugs in 2022, representing a 20% increase over the past decade

(The UNODC-World Drug Report, 2024)<sup>7</sup>. In India, substance abuse among high school students serves as an indicator of eroding social values. Adolescents who initiate substance use before age 15 are at the highest risk for developing chronic addiction, with a 40.6% lifetime risk of alcohol dependence compared to 16.6% for those starting at 18 (NIH, 2023)<sup>8</sup>. It leads to serious psychosocial issues, long-term health risks, and the rise of addiction potential (UNICEF, 2022)<sup>9</sup>.

### **1.1. How Do Drugs Affect the Brain?**

As a person continues to use drug or substance, the brain adapts by reducing the ability of cells in the reward circuit to respond the lifelong form use also causes change in other brain chemical systems and circuits, as well as affecting functions that include: learning, judgement, decision making, stress, memory, behaviour etc.

### **1.2. Constitutional Safeguards**

The Constitution of India, jointly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989)<sup>10</sup>, the National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC, 2016)<sup>11</sup>, the National Policy for Children (NPC, 2013)<sup>12</sup> and National Health Policy (NHP, 2017)<sup>13</sup> provided the following statutory provisions:

- 1) Article 15(3): Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.
- 2) Article 21: Protection of life and personal liberty - No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.
- 3) Article 39(f): Children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and moral and material abandonment.
- 4) Article 47: Duty of the state to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health: The State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties and, in particular, the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health.
- 5) Article 33: Indian states and political parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislative, administrative, social and educational measures, to protect children from the illicit use of drugs and psychotropic substances as defined in the relevant international treaties, and to prevent the use of children in the illicit production and trafficking of such substances.

Before the enactment of the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction for 2018–2025, the Indian parliament had enacted an enactment from time to time for achieving the goals such as follows: Opium Act- 1878; Dangerous Drug Act- 1930; Convention Narcotic Drugs- 1961; Convention on Psychotropic Substances- 1971; The Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances- 1985; 1988; and Transnational Crime Convention-2000. Within a broader "Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan" (Drug-Free India Campaign), the efforts aligned in 272 districts, extending awareness to additional 100 districts launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (GoI, 2022)<sup>14</sup>, which has been active in 372 districts, saw over 14.8 crore people sensitized by 2025. The initiative also heavily supported by NAPDDR, which funds rehabilitation centers. However, a committee has been constituted comprising the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and the National Commission for Protection of Child

Rights (NCPCR) which works in conjunction with the Ministries of Health, Education, Youth Affairs, and other relevant ministries and also organizations. It aims to focus on strategic measures, interventions, designated and timelines to ensure collaboration between implementing agencies and service providers. The specific strategies outlined in the JAP include: 1) unified action from all stakeholders; 2) provision of essential services; 3) timely implementation; 4) continuous monitoring; and 5) strict enforcement of legal measures.

### **1.3. Concept of Drug Use and Substance Abuse**

Everything is medicine, it depends upon how much quantity of drug use or abuse, and nothing is medicine. There are many reasons which cause growth rate in drug abuse like social, economic and psychological. The word “drug abuse” has been not defined in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act- 1985. Few central institutions try to define drug abuse but these definitions are not exclusive in nature. The Council of Health Officers of British Columbia encouraged a public health model in 2005 on recognition of a spectrum of substance use, challenging the binary distinction between "use" and "abuse." However, substance abuse also known as drug abuse, it refers to a maladaptive pattern of use of substance that is not considered dependent (Mosby, 2002)<sup>15</sup>. The term “substance use” does not exclude dependency, but is otherwise used in a similar manner in no medical contexts. Public health perspectives have shifted towards considering the societal, cultural, and availability factors impacting substance abuse, moving away from binary terms like "substance abuse" and favouring phrases like "substance-related problems." The adolescence years are a critical window of vulnerability to substance use disorder because the brain is still developing and malleable, are high risk age group to avoid temptations.

### **1.4. Religious Myth of Drug and Substance Use**

Mythological writings, ayurvedic texts and Vedas mentions the use of alcohol in various forms and methods where alcohol considered a drink of God and its elite worshippers. The religious and mystical use of drugs and substances has been repeatedly mentioned in India. According to the history of drug use, it relates to the two principle drugs: Alcohol and Ganja. In Indian religious rituals, these two substances are used on the nature of Lord Shiva. On the eve of occasions like Mahashivaratri, Holi and other festivals, such types of substances are used, because it is believed to stimulate the brain to think during this occasions and meditations.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

To put their health back on track, a drug is basically meant to be consumed by those who are sick or not good health and requires medication. This is done through consultation with the experts or physicians who give a prescription on what to take as drug for particular illness and dosage required for consumption. However, it is quite disheartening the normal thing has been dumped and abuse has been observed to be rampant among high school students in India.

Few studies and reports have repeatedly linked substance abuse to incidents of unrest and violence in schools, underscoring the urgency of addressing the issues through effective prevention and intervention strategies (Ambekar A et al., 2019; Sashank, V. S. S. et al., 2025; Sharma N, Joshi S., 2013; Moreira A et al., 2015; Dhawan A et al., 2025; Tikoo VK et al., 2013; Tsering D et al., 2010; Singh M et al., 2017)<sup>16-23</sup>. It is observed from the study results that about 21% alcohol, cannabis (3%), and 0.1% opium users are reported below the age 18 years. In various states, overall 0.4% and 4.6% of total treatment

seekers were children (Murthy Pratima et al., 2010)<sup>24</sup>. A study was conducted by the Karnataka State Temperance Board, Bangalore in 2012, 30% school students in Bangalore are drug addicts, estimates that by 2020, based on the trends, can expect 10 million deaths per year (Child line India, 2015)<sup>25</sup>.

The significant traces of mental disorder among young adolescent children could be a pointer to drug abuse among students in Union Territories and Indian states including Andhra Pradesh. The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India acknowledged the gravity of the situation. The state government of Andhra Pradesh is addressing escalating drug peddling and ganja cultivation, which negatively impacts citizens, especially students. The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has initiated programs to curb drug demand, conducting over 10,000 awareness programs in 2020 and more than 20,000 in 2021 across education institutions. In Andhra Pradesh, Operation Parivartan is actively combating illicit Ganja cultivation, with 7,504 acres eradicated in 2021-2022. The Narcotics Control Bureau also conducted training for 95 law enforcement officers in the state in 2021. In 2019, a total of 66.7 metric tonnes of cannabis-based drugs were seized, followed by over 106 metric tonnes in 2020 and around 191.7 metric tonnes in 2021.

There are many factors could be responsible for drug abuse such as their academic performances, persistent absenteeism and psycho-social issues. With this interest, the researchers are carried out to study the Drug use and Substance Abuse and its Prevention Strategies among High School Students in North-coastal Districts of Anakapalli and Visakhapatnam. In the state, these two districts represent the largest catchment, and there is numerous liquor shops located nearby their high school surroundings.

### **3. Objective of the study**

This research aims to identify causes and effects of drug use and substance abuse in high school students, while exploring preventive strategies in the North-Coastal Districts of Andhra Pradesh namely Anakapalli and Visakhapatnam.

### **4. Research Design**

A cross-sectional study was conducted from October 2025 to January 2026. This study examines high school students in mid adolescence by taking interviews randomly from both four government and two private secondary education schools located in the North Coastal districts of Anakapalli and Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. Using a mixed-method, data collected by using pre-tested structured schedule after taking informed consent, while qualitative data was collected from 45 Government officials and school authorities as the key informants via focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. Among the 225 participants, the number of male (75.1%) was higher than that of female (24.9%). Inclusion criteria ensured the participation of currently enrolled students who voluntarily consented to take part, while students who were not enrolled or who declined to participate were excluded from the study.

### **5. Findings of the study**

This study was conducted to examine the socio-demographic, economic, and educational factors influencing strategies for preventing drug use and abuse among high school students aged 13–16 in the two North Coastal districts of Anakapalli and Visakhapatnam. The results indicate the various factors are interconnected, as described the following. The quantitative data consists of age in years, gender, education/class, religion, type of family, order of child, living with their parents, and family size.

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age, Gender, Class, Religion**

Age Group in years	Frequency	Percent
13	16	7.1
14	77	34.2
15	108	48.0
16	24	10.7
Mean age	14.62 ± 0.77	
Gender		
Male	169	75.1
Female	56	24.9
Class in school		
8	72	32.0
9	118	52.4
10	35	15.6
Religion		
Hindu	124	55.1
Christianity	58	25.8
Islam	43	19.1

Table 1 represents the distribution of respondents in four categories by their age (13–16), with over 80% aged 14 to 15 years. The most common age is 15, representing 48% of the total respondents. The mean age is approximately 14.62 years and the median age is 15, indicating a concentration around age 15 with a slight skew toward older ages. 13 year has the lowest representation at 7.1%, while 16 year comprises 10.7% of the students, reflecting a focus on mid-adolescence. The study also reveals that 52.4% of respondents are from Class 9, followed by Class 8 at 32% and Class 10 at 15.6%, indicating a concentration in middle grades. Religiously, 55.1% are Hindu, while Christianity and Islam account for 25.8% and 19.1%, suggesting a diverse participant background.

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Family, Child Order, Living with, Size**

Type of family	Frequency	Percent
Joint	48	21.3
Extended	65	28.9
Nuclear	112	49.8
Order of Child		
First	70	31.1
Second	66	29.3
Third	35	15.6
fourth	33	14.7
Fifth	21	9.3
Living with		
Both parent	162	72.0
Divorced parent	54	24.0
Living hostel	9	4.0
Family size		
1-4	83	36.9
5-8	131	58.2
8 and above	11	4.9

The data highlights key socio-demographic traits of respondents in table 2: 49.8% are from nuclear families, 28.9% from extended families, and 21.3% from joint families. First-born children constitute 31.1%, followed by second-born at 29.3%, indicating most families have fewer children. Living arrangements show 72% reside with parents, 24% with divorced parents, and 4% in hostels, emphasizing stable family environments. Family size reveals that 58.2% have 5–8 members, 36.9% have 1–4 members, and only 4.9% belong to large families of over eight members. Overall, the respondents are largely from nuclear or moderately sized families, with many children as early-borns.

**Table 3: Distribution of Respondents using their Parent's Education**

Education	Father	Mother
Degree and above	27 (12.0)	5 (2.2)
Intermediate level	34 (15.1)	33 (14.7)
Secondary school level	108 (48.0)	115 (51.1)
No formal education	56 (24.9)	72 (32.0)

#values in parentheses often represent percentages

Table-3 shows that most parents have low educational attainment, with 48% of fathers and 51.1% of mothers completing secondary school. A significant portion, especially mothers (32%), lack formal education, indicating a gender-based educational gap. A small fraction has higher education.

**Table 4: Distribution of Respondents using their Parent's Occupation**

Occupation	Father	Mother
Employee	31 (13.8)	43 (19.1)
Automobile	56 (24.9)	NA
Daily Labour	106 (47.1)	109 (48.4)
Unemployed	32 (14.2)	NA
Shop Keeping	NA	5 (2.2)
Housewife	NA	68 (30.2)

#values in parentheses often represent percentages

In table 4 data regarding occupation, many fathers (47.1%) and mothers (48.4%) work in daily wage labor, highlighting reliance on manual work for income. While some fathers have formal jobs such as automobile works (24.9%) and employee (13.8%) both public and private sector and few mothers are in shop-keeping (2.2%), most respondents come from families with low educational backgrounds and are economically dependent on labor-intensive jobs, reflecting a modest socio-economic status with limited access to better opportunities.

**Table 5: Causes of Drug Use and Abuse among High School Students (N= 225)**

Causes	Frequency	Percent
Availability of money	12	5.3
Peer pressure	115	51.1
Family background	52	23.1
Negligence by parents	9	4.0
Experiment	13	5.8
Stress relief	24	10.7

According to the findings in Table-5, peer pressure (51.1%) is the primary cause of drug use among high school students, with the social influence being a key role. Family background significantly shapes drug-related choices through parental behavior (23.1%). Stress relief (10.7%), experimentation (5.8%), and availability of money (5.3%) motivate some students to use drugs. Parental/guardian negligence (4.0%) contributes minimally to drug use among students.

**Table 6: Place of Substance Use among High School Students (N= 225)**

Place	Frequency	Percent
In the public field	59	26.2
In the classroom	11	4.9
In the toilet	61	27.1
In the playground	56	24.9
Away from school	38	16.9

Table 6 reveals that toilets (27.1%) and public fields (26.2%) are preferred locations for drug or substance use among high school students, indicating a tendency for semi-private spaces. Playgrounds (24.9%) support group use, while away from school (16.9%) shows some use in homes. Classrooms (4.9%) are least popular.

**Table 7: Challenges experienced by High School Students (N= 225)**

Challenge	Frequency	Percent
Fighting amongst students	53	23.6
Sneaking	28	12.4
Stealing	32	14.2
Strikes	24	10.7
Conflicts amongst teachers and others	47	20.9
Poor performance in examinations	41	18.2

Table 7 denotes that drug use and substance abuse in high schools disrupts by their social challenges such as learning, discipline, and relationships. Notable issues include fighting (23.6%), teacher-student conflicts (20.9%), and poor academic performance (18.2%). Other challenges include sneaking (12.4%), stealing (14.2%), and strikes (10.7%), highlighting both behavioral and educational impacts.

**Table 8: Effects of Drug Use and Substance Abuse on their Academic Achievement**

Effects	Frequency	Percent
They do not concentrate in class	43	19.1
The steal from others	25	11.1
They are always punished	35	15.6
They break school rules	46	20.4
They are not co-operative	52	23.1
They are usually absent	24	10.7

Table 8 indicates that drug use and substance abuse leads to high school students being "not co-operative" (23.1%), breaking rules (20.4%), and lack of concentration (19.1%), negatively impacting learning. Additional challenges include frequent punishment (15.6%), stealing (11.1%), and absenteeism (10.7%), underscoring the necessity for intervention programs.

**Table 9: Perception of Government Officials and School Authorities encounter in dealing with Drug Abuse (N= 45)**

Perception	Frequency	Percent
Parents do not support administration	10	22.2
Access and availability of drugs	9	20.0
Teachers also take drugs	3	6.7
Teachers do not discourage	5	11.1
Lack of adequate knowledge	11	24.4
Time schedules are not flexible	7	15.6

Table 9 reported that perception of government officials and school authorities encounter in dealing with drug abuse. Among the 45 informants, 10 individuals (22.2%) reported that a lack of parental support hinders school authorities in addressing substance abuse, while 11 (24.4%) identified a lack of adequate knowledge among students regarding drug use. Whereas, school administrators emphasized the need for collaboration among themselves, teachers, and parents which is often lacking; this gap, they noted, allows students to take advantage. Additionally, it was reported that 6.7 percent teachers have practiced and facilitated their students' access to alcohol and cigarettes (11.1%). Overall, these findings highlight significant issues of indiscipline and classroom management challenges within schools. When it was offered in a number of influencing situations, one important question in assessing students' substance abuse was premised on whether or not students would accept alcohol, which produces the following results as indicated in the table below.

**Table 10: Influencing events for Drug Use among High School Students (N = 225)**

Influencing Events	Yes	No	Maybe
At a friend's house function	23 (10.2)	188 (83.6)	14 (6.2)
At a sporting event	29 (12.9)	171 (76.0)	25 (11.1)
With an older brother or sister	29 (12.9)	169 (75.1)	27 (12.0)
With someone you are attracted	32 (14.2)	166 (73.8)	27 (12.0)
After school with friends	27 (12.0)	178 (79.1)	20 (8.9)
At a disco or DJ dance	68 (30.2)	132 (58.7)	25 (11.1)
At a party with older friends	38 (16.9)	155 (68.9)	32 (14.2)
When you are bored	27 (12.0)	171 (76.0)	27 (12.0)
When you are really upset	18 (8.0)	171 (76.0)	36 (16.0)
At a traditional ceremony	34 (15.1)	153 (68.0)	38 (16.9)
On a public holiday	56 (24.9)	144 (64.0)	25 (11.1)
Average of Drug Use/Abuse	35 (15.4)	163 (72.6)	27 (12.0)

The data on drug use and substance abuse among high school students shows that a majority, 72.6%, report not regularly engaging in drug use across various contexts. Although, 27.4 percent certain events increase the likelihood of drug use and substances abuse. Social and recreational settings are significant influences, with 30.2% indicating potential use at disco or DJ dances, 24.9% on public holidays, and 16.9% at parties with old friends. These contexts often involve peer interaction and celebratory atmospheres. Moderate influences arise in interpersonal situations, such as being with someone they are attracted to (14.2%) and with older siblings (12.9%). Additionally, environments like sporting events (12.9%) and after-school gatherings with friends (12.0%) also present risks due to peer dynamics. Emotional factors like boredom (12.0%) and being upset (8.0%) show lower direct influence but suggest potential contributes to drug use.

Traditional ceremonies and public holidays (15.1% and 24.9%, respectively) indicate cultural factors can shape behavior. Overall, social gatherings and festive events are key risk environments, necessitating targeted interventions.

**Table 11: Tobacco use after consuming Drugs or Substances**

Tobacco Use	Frequency	Percent
Smoking	132	58.5
Chewing	93	41.5

The data in Table 11 focuses on post-drug/substance behavior, showing that tobacco use (smoking or chewing) is a common follow-up activity. Majority students (58.5%) engage in smoking, while 41.5% engage in chewing after consuming drugs or substances. This suggests that drug or substance use may increase the likelihood of engaging in tobacco-related behaviors, potentially due to habit, social influence, or chemical reinforcement.

**Table 12: Type of Drugs and Substances taken by High School Students (N= 225)**

Drug/Substance	Frequency	Percent
Beer	64	28.4
Alcohol/Spirits	31	13.8
Ganja	24	10.7
Cough syrup	29	12.9
Glue	19	8.4
Tobacco/Cigarettes	58	25.8

Table 12 denotes the type of drugs and substances usually taken due to accessibility, peer pressure, and social influence. It is observed that primarily consume beer (28.4%) and tobacco/cigarettes (25.8%), with alcohol/spirits (13.8%) and cough syrup (12.9%) also very common. Ganja (10.7%) and while white glue (8.4%) is less favored, indicating a preference for legal and accessible substances over harder-to-obtain drugs.

**Table 13: Frequency of Drug Use among High School Students (N = 225)**

Frequency of Use	Frequency	Percent
Daily	72	32.0
Weekly	67	29.8
Monthly	35	15.6
Occasional	51	22.7

Table 13 shows that 32.0% of students use substances daily, with 29.8% using weekly. Monthly use is at 15.6%, while occasional use stands at 22.7%. This indicates a significant number of students experience habitual exposure to substances, heightening the risk of dependency and related health issues.

**Table 14: First-Time Substance Use by High School Student’s Reasons**

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Party / Fun	94	41.8
Curiosity/Experiment	72	32.0
Friend Suggestion	36	16.0
Cope with Stress	23	10.2

It is observed from Table 14 that party/Fun (41.8%) is the primary reason students try substances, emphasizing the influence of social environments. Curiosity and experimenting (32.0%) show many explore out of interest. Friend/Family suggestion (16.0%) highlights social influence, while coping with stress (10.2%) indicates some use substances for managing emotional or academic pressures.

**Table 15: Motivation for Drug Use and Substance Abuse by High School Students**

Motivation	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	44	19.6
Disagree	38	16.9
Neither agree nor disagree	19	8.4
Agree	52	23.1
Strongly agree	72	32.0

It is a self-reported five-point scale. The scale is categorized as strongly disagree 1 to strongly agree 5. Data reveals the motivation for drug use and substance abuse. In this manner, about 55.1% of students fully acknowledged that substance/alcohol abuse serves as a motivator for them, whereas 43.9% did not agree. While 19.6% strongly disagreed and 16.9% disagreed, 32% strongly agreed and 23.1% agreed. However, when neither agree nor disagree by 8.4%, reflecting the diverse cognitive groups within the student population.

**Table 16: Access to Drugs and Substances Availability by Various Sources**

Source	Frequency	Percent
Friends and relatives	44	19.6
Bar and restaurant	52	23.1
Local brew den	35	15.6
Shops near school	18	8.0
Teachers	12	5.3
Non-teaching workers	23	10.2
Other students	41	18.2

Table 16 shows that, when asked to mention the possible sources of drugs/substances of abuse, the students identified friends (19.6%), carried from other students (18.2%), bought from a bar and restaurant (23.1%) or from a local brew den (15.6%). Other sources were shops near school (8%), teaching (5.3%) and non-teaching staff (10.2%).

### At District Level

The North Coastal Districts are the backward region in Andhra Pradesh state between the Eastern Ghats and the Bay of Bengal consist Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Parvathipuram Manyam, Visakhapatnam, Anakapalli, and Alluri Sitharama Raju districts. It is known for its hilly terrain, scenic, and coastal geography.

**Table 17: Details of Selected Study Districts**

District	Revenue Divisions	Revenue Mandals	Total Population	Area	Density
Anakapalli	3	24	17,26,998	4,292	402.38
Visakhapatnam	2	11	19,59,544	1,048	1869.79

### Enforcement and Its Implications

It is evidence based profile of drug use and substance abuse among high school students in the North Coastal Districts. At recent years, Andhra Pradesh state has seen a sharp rise in NDPS arrests and cannabis seizures, reflecting both rise enforcement and heightened drug activity in all the districts. In Anakapalli district, the rural hamlet of Bylapudi, a significant number have been linked to cannabis smuggling and the ganja trade, with dozens already convicted under the NDPS Act. The Task Forces continue efforts to dismantle supply networks. The district authority says experts and observes as an increasing number of high school students and adolescents are being caught consuming 'ganja'. A school boy student from Anakapalli district, who once excelled in his studies, quit school after getting addicted. Caught by Police, while smoking weed, he was later admitted to the de-Addiction centre at Mental Health & Illness Centre, Visakhapatnam for treatment and counseling. In another case, an adolescent dropout employed temporary at private company in Rambilli mandal became addicted to 'ganja'. Later he along with his friends was caught by the Task force, while smoking weed in public place.

As well as, enforcement teams in Visakhapatnam district have identified drug "hotspots" where cannabis and related substances are being bought and consumed, with adolescents and youth reportedly using weed in isolated areas. Another worrying concern is the illegal sale of illicit drugs and injections in local medical shops without prescription, as the study observed. The police investigations recent revealed that an adolescent student from Visakhapatnam allegedly died by suicide, whereas addicted illicit drugs had fallen into debts. Therefore many cases where people are struggling to overcome the addiction in rehabilitation centres. According to the Police Department, the north coastal districts i.e. Anakapalli, Alluri Sitarama Raju and Visakhapatnam have emerged as a key hubs for ganja trafficking. The agency area has much source of ganja being sold secretly in small quantities sometimes across these districts. Therefore, it became easy for school and college students to buy at cheaper costs. Despite regular check downs, the task forces noticed many peddlers to continue to sell ganja substance. The operations resulted in ten thousands of kilograms seized recently.

### **Strategies for Prevention of dealing with Drug Abuse in High Schools**

Preventing drug use and substance abuse among high school students requires a multi-faceted approach that combines education, supportive environments, and community involvement. The local authorities and civil groups include NGOs, community-based organizations, trade unions, religious groups are actively responding: awareness rallies, pledges, and cycle rallies involving students have been organized to encourage saying "No to drugs." Through the school participation, the Department of Police led anti drug expos and aim to strengthen youth resilience and community reporting mechanisms. The state government of Andhra Pradesh launched many initiatives like 'Sankalpam' engage college and school students in discussions about the harms of drug use and importance of informed decisions. In Visakhapatnam, formation of Prahari Clubs is part of efforts to educate and empower students to be vigilant about drug misuse and trafficking. Before substance use becomes entrenched, these initiatives reflected local awareness building efforts to reach students. However, the present study examined that majority schools had put up strategies of dealing with students who were found with drugs and other substances abuse. It is recommended the following strategies are: 1) Guidance and Counselling; 2) Suspension or Expulsion; and 3) Summoning of parents to school. Closing remark identified that some teachers got involved when cases of drugs and substance abuse were reported only, but they were not well prepared.

## **Suggestions**

Implement comprehensive programs addressing the physical, psychological, and social risks of drug use and substance abuse, with defined evaluation metrics. Utilize student-led peer education initiatives to enhance influence, employing role-playing, discussions, and multimedia for active engagement. Track awareness and knowledge of local drug trends and their consequences. Foster critical thinking on peer pressure while teaching assertive refusal skills. Introduce coping mechanisms, mindfulness, and confidence-boosting strategies. Educate parents on recognizing warning signs and effective communication about substance abuse, thereby reinforcing family support networks. Establish clear anti-drug policies with detailed consequences. Set up support groups and counseling within schools while encouraging participation in sports, arts, and clubs to create drug-free peer networks. Equip teachers to identify and refer at-risk students. Promote healthy behavior modeling, older student mentorship, and community partnerships to facilitate awareness events. Monitor substance availability near schools and conduct screenings for at-risk students, connecting them to professional support as needed.

## **Conclusion**

In these two north coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh, drug use and cannabis (ganja) or substance abuse have become notable concerns among high school students from six high schools. Local enforcement efforts have increased significantly, resulting in large seizures and arrests. Awareness, rallies, student clubs, and police outreach programs are actively working to educate high school students and families. Broader patterns indicate adolescence as a critical period for substance use initiation.

## **Limitations**

To preserve student diversity and avoid administrative difficulties, data for this study was collected from selected four government and two private schools located in two north coastal districts of Anakapalli and Visakhapatnam falling within the jurisdiction of Andhra Pradesh. Furthermore, to prevent a lack of cooperation from all the participants and to avoid other ethical issues, this study did not cover all the high school students' actual drug use or substance abuse behaviours.

## **Ethical Considerations**

This study prior to commencing, permission was obtained from parents and relevant authorities. In addition, the objective of the study to explaining all participants, they were informed that their participation was voluntary and responses would be kept confidential.

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Nil

## **Conflicts of interest**

There are no conflicts of interest.

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