



Navigating Substance Abuse Among School Students for a Brighter Tomorrow

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Abstract:

This comprehensive exploration sheds light on the critical issue of substance abuse among high school students in Iran. The review examines prevalence rates, types of substances used, gender differences, and age distribution, aiming to provide valuable insights into this complex problem.

The **methodology** employed for this review involved sourcing relevant articles from academic journals, research periodicals, and databases. A total of seven articles, focusing on students aged 14 to 19 years, were considered for analysis.

The **results** showcase varying rates of drug consumption across different cities in Iran. Prevalent substances encompass cigarettes, hookah, alcohol, and various illicit drugs like opium, ecstasy, and hashish. The findings reveal that male students exhibit consistently higher rates of drug use compared to females. The transition to university life also corresponds to increased substance experimentation.

The **discussion** section underscores the significance of addressing this issue. It draws comparisons with studies conducted in other countries and highlights the unique challenges posed by Iran's cultural context. Prevention programs emerge as crucial, necessitating collaborative efforts from schools, families, and policymakers. Considering the role of peer pressure and the influence of addicted family members, the review stresses the importance of culturally sensitive interventions.

In **conclusion**, this exploration underscores the urgent need to address substance abuse among high school students in Iran. The provided insights emphasize evidence-based strategies, open communication, and a holistic approach to ensure a healthier and more resilient future generation. By engaging communities, educators, families, and policymakers, Iran can proactively combat this challenge and cultivate a brighter future for its youth and society at large.

Introduction:

Substance abuse is a big problem that affects people all around the world. It's when people use drugs in a harmful way that leads to many bad effects on their lives. This kind of drug use causes problems in how people think, act, and feel. In Iran, which is a country with its own unique qualities, there are a lot of people struggling with substance abuse. This problem is really big globally – a report from the World Health Organization in 2005 said that there are a huge 200 million people addicted to strong drugs in the world. Iran has a lot of these addicts, especially among people aged 25 to 35. When people are teenagers, they often start trying out drugs, and sometimes this is linked to smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol. Many things can make a teenager start smoking, like their age, if they are a boy or a girl, if they do risky things, if they have friends or family who smoke, and if they think smoking is a good thing. Boys and girls start smoking at similar rates, but boys tend to drink alcohol a bit more than girls. In Iran, there have been some studies about how teenagers use drugs, but we still don't know all the details. Because of this, this review is going to look at lots of different information to understand how much students in Iran are using drugs and what kinds of drugs they use. This is important to help us understand and solve this big problem.

Method-

This article presents a review of studies conducted in Iran that focus on substance abuse among high school students. The aim was to gather information about the types of substances used, how common their use is among different genders and age groups, and how many students have tried drugs at least once. The review includes articles from both Iranian and international journals and uses keywords like prevalence, substance abuse, Iranian student, and addiction. The research covers the period from 2001 to 2011 and focuses on high school students in Iran.

To find relevant articles, various sources were used, including academic medical journals, research periodicals, and online databases like Scholar Google, Magiran, Irandoc, and Medlib. The search used specific keywords to find articles related to substance abuse among Iranian high school students. The articles selected were those published within the last 10 years (from 2001 to 2011). The full texts of most articles were easily accessible from databases and websites, but for some, additional efforts were made to obtain the full text.

A total of 11 articles were initially found, but only 7 articles were considered for this review. The excluded articles either fell outside the specified time frame or didn't match the age group studied. All the studies included in this review focused on students aged 14 to 19 years old, and only three studies made distinctions between male and female students. These studies were all cross-sectional, meaning they looked at the data at a single point in time.

RESULTS -the prevalence of drug consumption among students in various cities over different time periods. Here's a summary of the data you've provided:

Zahedan City (2003):

- 0.4% of females and 2.3% of males smoked cigarettes.
- The first experience of smoking was often at the age of 14 (26.2%).

Kerman's Male Pre-university Centers (2009):

- Specific drug consumption prevalence rates were provided: hookah (15.5%), sedatives (40.7%), alcohol (37.7%), cigarette (34.6%), strong analgesics (10.2%), nas (9.7%), opium (8.7%), hashish (6.7%), ecstasy (6.6%), heroin (4.9%).

Gilan Province (2004–2009):

- At-least-once use prevalence (including and excluding cigarette) was 23.7% and 12.8%, respectively.

Karaj City (2009–2010):

•57% of students had at-least-once experience of drug use (including cigarette), with 56.1% male and 43.9% female.

Nazarabad City (2007):

•Drug use prevalence (including and excluding cigarette) was 24.5% and 11.1%, respectively.

•Male and female drug consumption rates were 69.7% and 36.2%, respectively.

Lahijan City (2004):

•Consumption prevalence was 14.9% for cigarette.

•Consumption prevalence was 2.4% for ecstasy.

•Consumption prevalence was 4.1% for other drug types, with the highest rates for opium and hashish.

Mahriz City of Yazd (2008):

•Consumption prevalence among male 3rd year high school students was reported as 6.8% for alcohol and 3% for psychoactive substances.

This table summarizes the information of some city, drug type, and consumption prevalence percentage

Table-1

City	Drug Type	Consumption Prevalence (%)
Zahedan	Cigarette	Females: 0.4, Males: 2.3
	First Smoking Age	14 years (26.2%)
Gilan	At-least-once Use	Including: 23.7, Excluding: 12.8
Karaj	At-least-once Drug Use	Total: 57.0
		Males: 56.1, Females: 43.9
Nazarabad	Drug Use	Including: 24.5, Excluding: 11.1

City	Drug Type	Consumption Prevalence (%)
	Male Consumption	69.7%
	Female Consumption	36.2%
Kerman	Hookah	15.5
	Sedatives	40.7
	Alcohol	37.7
	Cigarette	34.6
	Strong Analgesics	10.2
	Nas	9.7
	Opium	8.7
	Hashish	6.7
	Ecstasy	6.6

City	Drug Type	Consumption Prevalence (%)
	Heroin	4.9
Gilan	Cigarette	20.0
	Alcohol	10.5
	Opium	2.4
	Ecstasy	1.2
	Hashish	2.0
	Heroin	0.3
Karaj	Hookah	53.0
	Cigarette	24.8
	Alcohol	13.6
	Ecstasy	2.0

City	Drug Type	Consumption Prevalence (%)
	Opium	2.0
	Hashish	1.1
	Crystal	0.4
	Heroin	0.2
Nazarabad	Cigarette	23.1
	Opium	2.0
	Amphetamines	1.0
	Ecstasy	1.0
	Heroin	0.5
	Hashish	0.3
	Cocaine	0.3

City	Drug Type	Consumption Prevalence (%)
Lahijan	Cigarette	14.9
	Ecstasy	2.4
	Other Drug Types	4.1
Mahriz	Alcohol	6.8
	Psychoactive Substances	3.0

Drug Consumption Prevalence for Each Sex and Age Distribution in Studied Populations

Zahedan Study:

- Some girls and boys tried **drugs** at least once: 1.6% of girls, 8% of boys.
- Some girls and boys smoked **cigarettes**: 7.8% of girls, 25.2% of boys.
- Girls were around 15.8 years old on average, and boys were around 16 years old.

Gilan Study:

- More guys used **drugs** (not counting cigarettes): 19.1% of guys, 5.3% of girls.
- Many guys also used **cigarettes** and drugs: 31.3% of guys, 14.8% of girls.
- Lots of guys **smoked**: 25.9% of guys, 3% of girls.
- Some guys drank **alcohol**: 16.6% of guys, 3.4% of girls.
- A few guys and girls used **opium**: 3.3% of guys, 1.5% of girls.
- A small number used **ecstasy**: 3% of guys, 1.1% of girls.
- A tiny number used **heroin**: 0.5% of guys, 0.1% of girls.
- Drug and cigarette use increased a lot in guys aged 19 and above.

Kerman Study:

- Students were around 17.9 years old on average.

- People tried different things at different ages: around 14 for cigarettes, 14.6 for alcohol, 13.9 for hookah, 13.1 for sedatives, 15.3 for painkillers, 17 for ecstasy, 16.7 for hashish, 16.7 for heroin, 16.7 for opium, and 15.3 for naswar.

Nazarabad Study:

- Most people started using drugs around ages 15-16.

Karaj Study:

- Students were around 16.9 years old on average.

This table summarizes the information of Drug Consumption Prevalence for Each Sex and Age Distribution in Studied Populations**Table-2**

Study	Average Age	Drug Use (%)	Cigarette Use (%)	Alcohol Use (%)	Other Substances (%)
Zahedan	Girls: 15.8	Girls: 1.6	Girls: 7.8	Girls: -	-
	Boys: 16	Boys: 8	Boys: 25.2	Boys: -	-
Gilan	-	Girls: 5.3	Girls: 14.8	Girls: 3.4	Guys: 19.1 (Drugs)
	-	Boys: 19.1	Boys: 31.3	Boys: 16.6	Guys: 25.9 (Smoking)
	-	-	-	-	Guys: 3.3 (Opium), 3.0 (Ecstasy), etc.
Kerman	-	-	-	-	Various substances at different ages

Study	Average Age	Drug Use (%)	Cigarette Use (%)	Alcohol Use (%)	Other Substances (%)
	-	-	-	-	Cigarettes: 14, Alcohol: 14.6, etc.
Nazarabad	-	-	-	-	Most started at ages 15-16
Karaj	-	-	-	-	-

Indicators of the table-2

1. **Study:** Indicates the place of the study.
2. **Average Age:** Represents the average age of the participants in the study.
3. **Drug Use (%):** Shows the percentage of participants who used drugs.
4. **Cigarette Use (%):** Displays the percentage of participants who smoked cigarettes.
5. **Alcohol Use (%):** Indicates the percentage of participants who used alcohol.
6. **Other Substances (%):** Shows the percentages of participants who used other substances like opium, ecstasy, heroin, etc.
7. **Note:** Provides any additional noteworthy information from the study.

Discussion

Exploring the **Monitoring the Future (MFT)** study conducted in the **USA** with 10th graders revealed that drug use had risen from 11% to 34% between 1992 and 1996. In 1998, 12.10% of 8th graders, 12.5% of 10th graders, and 25.6% of 11th graders had used illegal drugs in the past month. Hashish was the most common illicit drug, followed by opium and alcohol. It's crucial to plan strategies to reduce drug use among students, including university students.

Looking into drug use among university students, the order of prevalence was: Hookah (74.5%), cigarettes (67.5%), opium (6.1%), alcohol (13.5%), psychoactive pills (5.26%), hashish, and heroin. Entertainment was the main reason for drug use in most cases (47.4%). A study found that 7% of Iranian teens regularly smoked, and 27% had tried smoking. The rise in teenage smoking in Iran is a big health concern. Promoting healthy activities for teens is important to discourage drug use.

Research indicated that 56% of male and 42% of female university students used drugs, similar to the current study, which also found more males using drugs. We could consider adopting solutions from other countries with experience in dealing with addiction issues that align with our culture.

Alcohol use among American 8th graders in 2005 and 2006 was 27% and 20%, respectively, but it rose to 88% among 12th graders. The percentage of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders using hashish was 10%, 23%, and 36%, respectively. This is quite different from students in our country. 0.5% of 8th graders and 10% of 12th graders used cocaine, and 1.5% of 12th graders used amphetamines, which is similar to Iran's rates. Hashish use is common in France, with around 30% of the population using it openly.

A study in **Rafsanjan** and **Yazd** cities revealed that 5.6% of students in Yazd and 10% in Rafsanjan had a family member with addiction. Additionally, 2.23% of Yazd students and 7% of Rafsanjan students believed narcotics could have some benefits. The presence of addicted family members could influence students' views on narcotics.

Kerman City had higher rates of drug use compared to other cities. Opium and heroin use was nearly 4 to 5 times higher in this city. Males consistently used more drugs than females in cities where studies were done, except for hookah and cigarettes.

Adolescents who use crystal drugs often show symptoms and have less stability in their families. They are influenced by their friends and may have behavioral issues. Interventions like software programs can help reduce drug use among youth. Educational programs in the first year can significantly decrease drug use. There's a connection between borderline personality disorder and drug abuse.

Prevention programs that focus on harm reduction, treatment, and guidance are important. Schools and parental care are protective factors for adolescents' health. Adolescence sees a relatively high rate of drug use and related problems. Continuously evaluating drug abuse among teens will aid clinical and research efforts. We must continue prioritizing efforts to prevent damage through coherent planning.

Commonly Abused Drugs: Effects and Risks

Drugs, both legal and illegal, can alter our body and mind, providing pleasurable sensations, stress relief, or a temporary escape from problems. However, their misuse can lead to severe health consequences and addiction. This overview sheds light on some commonly abused substances and their effects.

1. Alcohol: Alcohol impacts individuals differently, but excessive and frequent consumption increases the risk of accidents and health issues. Heavy drinking can lead to liver problems and alcohol disorders.

•Safe Limits:

- Men: No more than 4 drinks a day or 14 drinks a week.
- Women: No more than 3 drinks a day or 7 drinks a week.

•Standard Drink:

- 12 oz regular beer
- 8-9 oz malt liquor
- 5 oz wine
- 1.5 oz distilled spirits (vodka, whiskey)

2. Prescription and OTC Medicine: Misusing prescription and over-the-counter drugs is as dangerous as illegal drugs. Abuse includes taking medication not prescribed for you, exceeding doses, or using for non-medical purposes.

•Commonly Abused Prescription Drugs:

- Opioid pain relievers
- Stimulants for ADHD
- Anxiety and sleep medications

•Commonly Abused OTC Drugs:

- Cough and cold medicine containing dextromethorphan (DXM)

3. Heroin: Heroin, an illegal opioid, induces euphoria initially but later leads to slowed movements, nausea, and nervousness. Strong cravings develop, driving repeated use.

•Effects:

- Euphoria followed by lethargy
- Chills and nausea
- Strong urge for more

4. Cocaine: Cocaine accelerates bodily functions, causing rapid speech and thought. Mood swings, paranoia, and irrational behavior can also occur. Long-term use intensifies cravings.

•Effects:

- Increased energy and alertness
- Rapid speech and movement
- Shifting moods, potential paranoia

5. Marijuana: Marijuana's legality varies, with some states allowing medical and recreational use. It can induce laughter, sleepiness, or memory lapses. Driving under its influence is dangerous, and heavy use may lead to disinterest.

•Effects:

- Euphoria and laughter
- Sleepiness and memory issues
- Impaired driving, potential apathy

6. Cigarettes and Tobacco: Nicotine in tobacco products produces short-lived pleasure and energy boosts. Nicotine addiction is real, akin to other substance addictions.

•Nicotine Effects:

- Momentary pleasure and energy
- Fast-fading effects, craving for more
- Nicotine addiction potential

Understanding the effects and risks of commonly abused drugs is essential to making informed choices. Responsible use and seeking help for addiction can lead to healthier lives and reduced societal harm.

Signs of a Substance Use Problem

Recognizing a substance use problem involves increasing tolerance, neglecting interests, fluctuating social circles, self-care decline, isolation, disrupted eating and sleep patterns, work/family issues, emotional instability, and intense cravings. Addressing this issue promptly is vital as substance abuse has far-reaching negative impacts on relationships, finances, health, and can lead to addiction and even fatal consequences. Seek help without delay.

conclusion,

The review of substance abuse among high school students in Iran underscores the gravity of a widespread issue that has far-reaching implications for both individuals and society. The findings reveal that various substances are being used by students across different cities, with notable variations in prevalence rates and types of drugs consumed. While some cities exhibit lower rates of drug consumption, others experience higher instances, indicating the complex nature of the problem.

Several key observations emerge from the data. Male students consistently show higher rates of drug use compared to their female counterparts, and the transition to university seems to coincide with an increase in

substance experimentation. The prevalent substances include cigarettes, hookah, alcohol, and various illicit drugs such as opium, ecstasy, and hashish.

Comparative analysis with studies conducted in other countries, like the USA, brings to light the unique challenges faced by Iran in addressing this issue. The influence of family members with addiction, societal perceptions of drug use, and the need for culturally sensitive interventions all play pivotal roles in shaping the landscape of substance abuse among Iranian youth.

Efforts to combat this problem must be multifaceted. Prevention programs need to focus on education, harm reduction, and guidance, engaging both schools and parents. Recognizing the role of peer pressure, family dynamics, and the broader cultural context can aid in tailoring effective strategies to deter drug use. Learning from successful interventions implemented in other countries and adapting them to align with Iran's cultural values could prove beneficial.

In the end, addressing substance abuse among high school students requires collaboration between communities, educators, families, and policymakers. By implementing evidence-based strategies, fostering open dialogues, and investing in the well-being of the youth, Iran can pave the way for a healthier and more resilient generation, ultimately contributing to a brighter future for the nation.

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