

## Risk perception and influencing factors for substance abuse in college going adolescents in Rohtak city: A qualitative study: Reg ID: 404

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### ABSTRACT

Substance use among young people is no longer an unfamiliar concern- it has slowly made its way into college campuses. Adolescents often experiment with tobacco, alcohol, or drugs out of curiosity, peer influence, or emotional stress, without fully understanding the long-term harm. 2023 UNODC reports shows overall drug use increase by 23% over the last decade. Risk perception is shaped not only by individual choices but also by family values, social pressure, and media exposure. This study explores how college going students in Rohtak perceive the risks of substance use and what factors influence them. This qualitative study was carried out in five colleges of Rohtak city. Data were collected through focused group discussions with students selected by purposive sampling and In-Depth interviews were conducted with students willing to discuss more about the subject using a pre-designed semi-structured interview schedule. Data were recorded, transcribed and analyzed using inductive thematic analysis. Six broad themes emerged from the study. Many students considered substances like cigarettes and alcohol as normal or social habits. Peer pressure and college environment played a major role. Family and cultural factors also contributed, especially where substance use was normalized at home. Media and social platforms often glamorized such behaviors, further shaping attitudes. Although students recognized the health risks, many believed they were personally immune. Students stressed upon the importance of counseling, awareness programs, and stricter campus monitoring to prevent substance use. Substance use among adolescents is not just an individual decision, it is a reflection of society, cultural values, emotional issues and accessibility. Students, although, understand the risks, they often underestimate the consequences. To tackle this a multipronged strategy needs to be applied like strengthening preventive education program and teacher-student interaction, policy implementation and institutional support, parental and family engagement initiatives, community involvement and awareness campaigns.

### KEYWORDS