



DRUG ABUSE MONITORING SYSTEM A PROFILE OF TREATMENT SEEKERS

The data for the Drug Abuse Monitoring System (DAMS) component of the *National Survey on Extent and Pattern of Drug Abuse in India* was obtained from patients seeking help in various treatment centres funded by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, as well as those of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and private psychiatrists. In addition, information on the drug abusing population was also obtained from prisons, NGOs working with children, NGOs working with HIV/AIDS-affected persons, youth organisations (Nehru Yuva Kendras) and psychiatric hospitals. A total of 203 centres participated.

The agencies were divided into two categories. Category 'A' comprised the treatment centres (GO and NGOs) and private psychiatrists. Category 'B' consisted of agencies whose primary mandate was not to provide care to subjects with drug abuse problems, although they may come across such individuals. A total of 16,942 individuals were reported by the agencies under Category 'A' and information on 2,365 individuals was obtained from (Category B). Some subjects were poly-drug-users.



OBJECTIVE

The objectives of the Drug Abuse Monitoring System, component of the 'National Survey on Extent, Patterns and Trends of Drug Abuse in India', were to develop a monitoring system for the entire country, collect data from people seeking treatment in the organized sector and develop a format for collecting information on a regular basis.

FINDINGS

Profile of treatment seekers:

- The subjects were 97.2% male and 2.8% female.
- About 33% were between 21-30 years and around 37% were between 31-40 years.
- Only about 5% were below 20 years of age.
- Overall, around 23% were unmarried and about 16% were illiterate.
- A relatively small number of the sample was unemployed (19.8%) and students (3.5%).
- Largely, the sample in this study was comprised of farmers. Altogether 51.6% of the subjects were from a rural background.
- About 30% of their fathers and 50% of their mothers were illiterate.
- A majority of the treatment seekers were from the low-income group. 49% reported drug use in the family.

Drugs of Abuse:

- The four most commonly used substances were alcohol (reported by 43.9 percent of treatment seekers), cannabis, heroin, and opium.
- This was followed by opiates as a group (26.0%) and cannabis (11.6%).
- Other drugs include barbiturates, minor tranquillizers, other sedatives, cocaine, amphetamines, hallucinogens, inhalants and cough syrup. Their percentage varied between 0.2 and 1.7%.
- 10.9% of treatment seekers reflected use of tobacco and related products.
- Cannabis abuse was reported from 25 states.
- Heroin abuse was reported from all the states except Tripura and Himachal Pradesh.
- The highest number of opium abusers was reported from Punjab (around 56%).
- In Goa, Meghalaya, and Tripura who sought treatment did so for alcohol use.

Data on Drug Users:

- The data on drug-use-related variables show that most (around 46%) had been introduced to drugs between the ages of 21-30 years.
- Overall, 14.3% reported injecting drug use (IDU) at least once in their lifetime and 9.4% were current IDUs.
- Overall, 7.7% reported the sharing of needles at least once.
- About 4% reported drug related arrest in the preceding one month.
- Overall, about 66% reported drug related violence in the family.
- About 27% reported previous attempt(s) to abstain.
- A small minority (around 4%) reported multiple sexual encounters including those with commercial sex workers (CSWs).

Alcohol abusers:

- The highest percentage was from Maharashtra followed by Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar and Haryana.
- The remaining 18 states, 2 UTs and 1 NCT reported around a total of 43% of reported alcohol abusers.

