

Substance Use and High Risk Sexual Behaviours Among Youth in India: Emerging Evidences From Demographic Health Survey (2015-16)

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Introduction

- Youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence.
- Youth age-group is defined differently by different countries/agencies and by same agency in different contexts. The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years. However, this definition is flexible (UNESCO.org, 2018).
- Definition of youth perhaps changes with circumstances, especially with the changes in demographic, financial, economic and socio-cultural settings.
- In India, according to National youth policy, 2014, the youth age-group is defined as 15-29 years with a view to more focused approach, as per United Nations (UN) population prospects, the youth population (15-29 years) globally stands at 1.8 billion.
- Out of the total youth in the world, every fifth resides (20 percent) in India (366 million), reflecting the importance of this segment of people in the country (National youth policy, 2014).
- The youth are faced with many challenges, nearly two-thirds of premature deaths and one-third of the total disease burden in adults are associated with conditions or behaviours that began in youth, including tobacco use, a lack of physical activity, unprotected sex or exposure to violence (WHO, 2008).
- These all put adolescents at greater risk for sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy, undernutrition and over nutrition, and substance abuse.

Literature Review

- The use of substance abuse has been proposed as a contributing factor to sexual risk-taking behaviour. Valois (1999) studied that alcohol use was the only risk behaviour that was significantly and consistently related to an increase in the number of sexual partners.
- Alcohol use and sexual risk behaviour are major public health concerns worldwide. Drinking-related exposures to sexual risk behaviours, high-risk partners and drinkers' increased biological susceptibility could lead to an increased risk of STIs.
- A study by Doljan and Zimmerman (1998) examined that youth who report engaging in antisocial behaviours also tend to practice high-risk sexual behaviours and this study also indicated that peer alcohol and substance use, and problem behaviours were associated with high-risk sexual behaviour.
- In the Indian context, very few studies discussed the linkage of substance use and sexual risk behaviour. A study found that, among male alcohol users, unprotected sex with a non-regulated partner was more common among those who were currently unmarried, reported a higher number of sexual partner, used alcohol before sex and did not have a regular source of income (Sivaram *et al.* 2008). Injecting drug users has shown a significant association with daily use of alcohol and indulgence in risky sex with commercial sex workers.
- Global adult tobacco survey reveals that in India, 19% of men and 2% of women were currently users of tobacco, 7% are current cigarette smokers, and 14% are current bidi smokers (GATS, 2016-17). According to NFHS (2015-16) among Youth, 22 percentage of youth consume alcohol, and 16 percentage indulge in smoking.

Need for the Study

- India is the second-fastest developing country in the world, with the largest number of youth comprise of 27.5% of the total population (Office of the Registrar General, India, 2011). It is necessary to understand the sexual behaviour of our youth because, it contributes a significant increase in the global burden of diseases with other related problems (Li *et al.* 2010).
- In India, very few study about sexual risk behaviour among adolescents. In India, most of the studies on sexual behaviour related to small sample size and in some limited settings, particularly on high risk groups. Most of the studies related to substance use and sexual risk behaviour are related to only alcohol use before having sex, that is not associated with previous experience of substance use.
- It is necessary to study the risk behaviour of the general population with large sample size. so there is shortage of studies that indicate the association between sexual abuse and high-risk sexual behaviour.
- Hence in this context, this paper has explored the association of substance abuse and high-risk sexual behaviour among male adolescents in India.

Data source and Methodology

- The study is based on secondary data available from National Family Health Survey-4 (NFHS-4) carried out in 2015-16. 6,01,509 households were surveyed, with a sample of 699,686 women and 112,122 men, respectively.
- The analysis is done mainly for the youth population (15-29 years). The categorisation of the youth population is based on the National Youth Policy of 2014, in which the youth population is considered 15-29 years old.

- Different researchers give their own definition of high-risk sexual behaviour. As per the availability of data in this study, we define it as, sex with more than one partner, sex with someone other than their spouse or cohabiting partner without using condom, paid sex, more than the one-lifetime number of the partner. Consistent condom use is the effective way for the protection against sexually transmitted diseases and HIV; NFHS did not collect information about consistent condom use. Hence, the study took into account all sex, other than with the spouse as high-risk sexual behaviour (Kumari and Nair, 2012).
- In the present study, mainly bivariate and multivariate techniques have been used. Multivariate logistic regression has been used to see the odds of the outcome variables

Result

Table 1: Sample characteristics of male youth population

Variables	%	N
Alcohol consumption	21.77	51,535
Smoking	16.10	51,535
Use of any substance (alcohol/smoking)	28.74	51,535
Multiple sexual partner	4.38	16,573
High risk sex	9.3	16,573
Paid Sex	3.34	18,589

Table 2: Percentage of sexual risk behaviours among young men by background characteristics, India, 2015-16

Background characteristics	Multiple sexual Partner		High Risk Behaviour		Paid sex	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Religion						
Hindu	4.3	13,489	9	13,489	3.3	15,186
Muslim	4.1	2,216	7.5	2,216	3.6	2,437
Others	5.9	868	13.4	868	4.0	966
Caste						
SC	4.4	3,619	10.4	3,619	3.6	4,045
ST	3.7	1,794	9.4	1,794	3.7	2,029
OBC	4.7	7,292	9	7,292	3.5	8,162
Others	3.9	3,868	7.5	3,868	2.7	4,353
wealth index						
Poorest	3.5	2,923	9.4	2,923	3.6	3,290
Poorer	5.0	3,549	10	3,549	3.4	3,957
Middle	4.9	3,627	7.8	3,627	3.3	4,119
Richer	4.3	3,281	8.6	3,281	3.7	3,670
Richest	4.1	3,194	9.2	3,194	2.8	3,552
place of residence						
Rural	4.4	11,110	9.3	11,110	3.0	12,439
Urban	4.4	5,463	8.4	5,463	4.0	6,149
Education Level						
No education	3.1	1,684	6.4	1,684	2.3	1,823
Primary	4.5	2,128	7.6	2,128	3.4	2,322
Secondary	4.4	9,806	9.2	9,806	3.6	11,030
Higher	4.9	2,956	10.9	2,956	3.0	3,415
Marital Status						
Never married	12.36	3,064	42.4	3,064	11.3	4,488
Married	2.52	13,455	1.3	13,455	0.8	13,908
Other	15.18	54	34.2	54	4.67	192
Age Group						
15-19	9.8	1,073	38.7	1,073	10.4	1,430
20-24	6.0	5,295	12.9	5,295	4.4	6,132
25-29	3.0	10,205	3.9	10,205	1.9	11,026
Currently working						
No	6.56	2,577	17.9	2,577	5.6	3,217
Yes	3.98	13,997	7.4	13,997	2.9	15,372
Away from home for more than six months						
No	7.82	2,057	14.7	2,057	5.02	2,292
Yes	5.47	1,591	11.6	1,591	4.73	1,815
Media Exposure						
No	3.8	2,917	8.1	2,917	2.8	3,247
Yes	4.5	13,657	9.2	13,657	3.5	15,342
Region						
North	3.6	2,618.7	9.9	2,619	3.9	2,928
Central	5.5	4,654.3	13.5	4,654	3.7	5,325
East	3.0	3,056.8	6.2	3,057	3.2	3,372
North East	2.5	434.0	5.6	434	1.4	488
West	4.7	3,302.6	7.6	3,303	2.4	3,676
South	4.6	2,507.2	5.5	2,507	3.8	2,800
Alcohol consumption						
No	3.23	10,958	8.3	10,958	2.61	12,262
Yes	6.63	5,615	10.34	5,615	4.76	6,327
Smoking						
No	3.7	12,375	8.52	12,375	2.82	13,878
Yes	6.4	4,199	10.39	4,199	4.86	4,711
Any substance use						
No	3.08	9,241	8.1	9,241	2.41	10,359
Yes	6.02	7,333	10.11	7,333	4.51	8,230

Table 3: Adjusted logistic regression model for different sexual behaviours by background characteristics among young men, India, 2015-16

Religion	Multiple sexual partner			High risk sex			Paid Sex		
	AOR#	C.I.(95%)		AOR#	C.I.(95%)		AOR#	C.I.(95%)	
		lower	upper		lower	upper		lower	upper
Religion									
Hindu									
Muslim	1.03	0.80	1.32	0.92	0.74	1.16	1.16	0.89	1.51
Other	1.53***	1.11	2.11	1.37***	1.05	1.80	1.06	0.74	1.53
Caste									
SC									
ST	0.95	0.70	1.29	0.99	0.77	1.27	1.28	0.94	1.74
OBC	1.18	0.96	1.45	0.1	0.84	1.19	1.07	0.86	1.34
Other	1.05	0.82	1.36	0.81**	0.66	1.00	0.83	0.63	1.09
wealth index									
Poorest									
Poorer	1.42***	1.09	1.86	1.13	0.90	1.42	0.9	0.68	1.18
Middle	1.46***	1.09	1.94	0.95	0.74	1.22	0.83	0.62	1.12
Richer	1.14	0.83	1.57	0.87	0.67	1.14	0.78	0.56	1.07
Richest	0.99	0.70	1.42	0.78*	0.58	1.04	0.49***	0.34	0.72
Place of residence									
Urban									
Rural	1.08	0.90	1.31	1.53***	1.31	1.82	0.69***	0.56	0.84
Education Level									
No education									
Primary	1.44**	1.02	2.07	1.25	0.90	1.73	1.52**	1.02	2.26
Secondary	1.17	0.85	1.60	0.98	0.74	1.30	1.17	0.83	1.67
Higher	1.1	0.76	1.59	0.90	0.65	1.24	0.75	0.50	1.14
Marital Status									
Never married									
Married	0.2***	0.16	0.24	0.02***	0.01	0.02	0.05***	0.04	0.07
Other	1.27	0.59	2.73	0.64	0.35	1.14	0.32***	0.16	0.65
Age Group									
15-19									
20-24	1.13	0.88	1.45	0.77***	0.64	0.92	0.95	0.76	1.20
25-29	0.88	0.67	1.16	0.64***	0.48	0.74	0.91	0.70	1.19
Currently working									
No									
Yes	0.97	0.80	1.19	1.20**	1.02	1.41	1.01	0.83	1.24

Away from home for more than six months	Adjusted odds ratio								
	AOR#	C.I.(95%)		AOR#	C.I.(95%)		AOR#	C.I.(95%)	
		Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper
Media Exposure									
No									
Yes	0.68***	0.52	0.89	0.76***	0.63	0.92	0.94	0.70	1.25
Region									
North									
Central	1.44***	1.11	1.86	1.15	0.9	1.4	0.66***	0.51	0.86
East	0.99	0.72	1.36	0.82	0.6	1.1	0.92	0.68	1.24
North- East	0.81	0.42	1.57	0.83	0.5	1.4	0.41**	0.19	0.93
West	1.36**	1.03	1.80	0.67***	0.5	0.8	0.55***	0.41	0.74
South	1.64***	1.22	2.20	0.88	0.7	1.2	1.36***	1.02	1.83

Note: @ Reference category; Level of significance ***-p 0.0, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

© Religions other than Muslim and Hindu; # Adjusted odds ratio

Table 4: Adjusted logistic regression model of sexual risk behaviours among young men, India, 2015-16

	Multiple sexual Partner		High Risk Behaviour		Paid sex				
	AOR#	C.I.(95%)	AOR#	C.I.(95%)	AOR#	C.I.(95%)			
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper		
Alcohol									
>@									
≥	2.05***	1.74	2.42	0.9	0.8	1.1	1.44***	1.20	1.72
Smoking									
>@									
≥	1.67***	1.41	1.97	0.87	0.75	1.01	1.35***	1.13	1.62
Any substance use									
>@									
≥	1.92***	1.63	2.27	0.95	0.83	1.10	1.47***	1.23	1.76

Note: @ Reference category; Level of significance ***-p 0.0, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

Adjusted odds ratio

Discussion

- The finding of this study justify the national concern for alcohol use and cigarette smoking and high risk sexual behaviour among youth in India. Here 21% of youth consume alcohol, 16 percent smoke cigarette or bidi and 28.9 per cent use at least one of the above substance.
- Among different high risk sexual behaviour 4 percent reported as having more than one partner, 9 percent of men had high-risk sexual intercourse, and 3 percent of men had indulged in paid sex. It is varying among different socio-demographic backgrounds. Married men are less likely than unmarried men to have multiple sexual partners (Kumari & Nair, 2012). It is also more among men who are away from home.
- Age is negatively related to high-risk sex (South *et al.*, 2012). Paid sex is reported more among men who are living in urban areas. Never married and men from lower wealth index are more engaged in paid sex (Decker *et al.*, 2010).
- From the logistic regression result, it is found that compared with non-smokers and non-alcohol consumers, smokers and alcohol consumers are more likely to have multiple sexual partners and indulge in paid sex. (Li *et al.* 2013, Graves, and Leigh, 1995, Palen *et al.* 2006) These findings are consistent with previous research from developing countries.

Conclusion

This study found a greater risk of HRSBs among Youth with the use of alcohol and cigarette, which has negative consequences for their health. It is mostly among the unmarried and young population of 15-19 age group. The relations between substance use and HRSBs were also stronger among, who are currently not working, away from home, unmarried and in 15-29 age group for all high risk sexual behaviours.