

Religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse among undergraduates

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed at finding the relationship between religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse among undergraduate students. The study also explored the effect of religion and gender on religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse. The Religious Adherence Inventory and Drug Attitude Scale were used to measure the variables in the study. A sample of 100 undergraduate students consisting of 50 males and 50 females from 6 different collages of Bangalore was collected for the study. Correlation and MANOVA were used for the statistical analysis of the data. The results of the present study showed that there is a negative correlation between religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse. There was no effect of gender on religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse but there was an effect of a difference in religion on religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse. The present research findings can form a basis for formulating psychoeducation programs and interventions for substance abuse.

Keywords: *Religious Adherence, Religiosity, Attitude, And Substance Abuse*

Attitude refers to our evaluation of virtually any aspect of the social world. The possibility of change in the attitude depends on the strength of the attitude it can be weak, strong, or ambivalent. One of the factors influencing the formation of attitude is social learning.

Socialization influence model

The influence of social interaction on individuals is explained in the socialization influence model.

According to Wallace and William (1997), the adolescents involve themselves in health-compromising behaviors as a result of their interactive socialization process that occurs over time. The family is viewed as the primary socialization influence followed by peer influence and religion that are viewed as the secondary socialization influences.

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Received: August 09, 2020; Revision Received: September 11, 2020; Accepted: September 22, 2020

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Primary socialization influence and attitude towards substance abuse-

Family influence- parental guidance is extremely important in molding influences for children (Ramirez et al., 2004). The children of substance abusers have a great likelihood of being substance abusers themselves (Erblich et al., 2001).

Secondary socialization influence and attitude towards substance abuse-

Peer influence- According to Wallace (1999) the perceived behavior of peers has been a consistent predictor of substance abuse in adolescents. Peer substance use plays an important role in predicting individual substance use behavior and association with peers who use substances to provide reinforcement of substance by an individual by increasing the availability of substances.

Religious influences- the socio-cultural factors have a significant influence on the attitude towards substance abuse in individuals. This effect is well illustrated by Muslims and Mormons, whose religious values prohibit the use of alcohol and by orthodox Jews who have traditionally limited its use. The incidences of alcoholism are minimal in these groups. Religiosity is considered to be a significant predictor of attitude towards the use of various substances (Leslie & Mullen, 2006). Thus, it appears that religious sanctions and social customs can influence the use of alcohol in a particular society (Robert et al., 2007).

Reference group theory

The individual's behavior and attitudes are often shaped by the groups to which they belong and to which they relate. According to the reference group theory people use the groups they are part of as frames of reference.

The level to which an individual identifies himself or herself with the group as a reference group depends on the similarity in the status attributes of the individual and that of the group members. And also, on the individual's conformity to the beliefs and values of the group, the clarity in the values and beliefs of the group, the level of continuous and regular interaction with the group members, and on how much the individual considers the leaders as significant.

Often religious groups meet the above criterion, this increases their importance as reference groups (Beeghley et al., 1990).

In the present study, religious groups are considered as the reference groups and the influence of religion on the attitude towards substance abuse is studied based on the socialization influence model that considers religious influence as the secondary influence.

Significance of the study

It will help in understanding the influence of religious adherence on the attitude of the undergraduate students towards substance abuse. As there are very few studies conducted in this area with this age group and in India, it would be helpful.

As strong attitudes of an individual towards particular stimuli have a significant impact on the behavior of the individual, the study will be helpful in understanding the strength of the attitude towards substance abuse and how religious adherence would influence it.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

When we look at the existing literature, it can be found that there is a lot of research on religiosity and substance abuse. But there is a lack of research on religiosity and attitude towards substance abuse. Most of the researches in this area has been done on adolescents in the age group of 13-19 years. There are only a few studies have been done on undergraduate students especially in India. The aim of the present research was to study the relationship between religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse among undergraduate students.

In the current research the results of the previous studies are summarized into different parts based on the aims and variables. It includes religiosity and attitude towards substance abuse, religiosity and substance use, family and peer religiosity and substance use, religious difference, and gender difference.

Religiosity and attitude towards substance abuse

Religious adherence of individuals has a significant role in influencing their attitude towards substance abuse.

Two separate studies on religiosity and attitude towards drug use among Dutch school children and among 13-15-year-olds in England found that religion still has a powerful negative correlation with young people's attitude towards drug use and it's both the belief and the attendance that contribute to the difference in the attitude of young people towards various drugs (Mullen & Francis, 1993; 2001).

The religious involvement and drug use among 600 urban adolescents were studied and it was concluded that religion had a significant effect on the substance use and attitude towards substance use even after controlling the other important influences. The importance of religion's influence depends on the substance used, the degree to which the church speaks against the activity, and on other sources of social control (Hadaway & Elifson, 1984).

A strong attitude towards a particular object influences the individual's behavior. A negative attitude towards substance abuse leads to a decrease in the use and abuse of substances.

Religiosity and substance use

In the study on religiosity, spirituality, and substance abuse, the data from the 2004 general social survey was collected and studied to find the effect of religiosity and spirituality on substance abuse. It was found that religiosity was negatively related to substance abuse and was also affected by the socio bonding variables and religiosity controlled the likelihood of increased substance abuse (Allen & Celia, 2010).

According to the study on the effect of the mainstream religious social controls on adolescent drug use in rural areas, it was found that though religious commitment is one of the most powerful forms of control of drug use, the regulatory power of the regular church attendance and involvement decreases with the seriousness of increased drug use (Fitch et al., 1981).

Family, peer religiosity and substance abuse

Apart from the individual's personal religiosity, family and peer religiosity also have an influence on the use and abuse of substances.

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A study on religiosity as a protective factor against the use of drugs found that families can protect the youngsters from substance use by using religion as a protective factor to reduce substance abuse in adolescents (Sanchez et al., 2008).

Merrill et al., (2005) in their study on the influence of family religiosity on adolescent substance use according to religious preference, the family church attendance and religiosity among parents during the participant's adolescent years were significantly protective against substance abuse.

A qualitative study on, parent's perception of the effects of church involvement on adolescent substance use found that parents identified church involvement and one's own spirituality as a significant protective factor in reducing adolescent substance use (Sim et al., 2005).

In a study on religious traditions, parents, and peers as determinants of alcohol and drug use among college students the relationship between religiosity and drinking and drug use was examined considering the family background and the peer relationships. It was found that the influence of religion on substance abuse varied in different religions (Perkins, 1985).

Perkins, (1987) in his study on the parental religion and alcohol use problems, as intergenerational predictors of problem drinking among college youth, when compared with the previous generation youngsters from one religious tradition were at more risk of problem drinking as compared to other religious tradition, also if the youth are not strongly attached to their faith or if they are children of alcohol abusers. Parental religiosity has a significant impact on the children's conformity to religious traditions.

Study on religiosity and adolescent substance use: the role of individual and contextual influences concluded that the higher the individual's religiosity the lesser the involvement in substance abuse. The increase in the religiosity of the school leads to a decrease in substance use of individuals. The individual with high religiosity in a context with high religiosity is more likely to have a negative attitude towards substance use as compared to the individual with high religiosity but in context with a low level of religiosity (Wallace et al., 2007).

Religious adherence and substance use based on religious difference

While studying, religious change and alcohol use: An application of reference group and socialization theory, it was found that those individuals who belonged to conservative faith and did not change their faith showed the highest level of nonuse of substances (46%) as compared to those who change to a conservative faith group (41%), those changing to non-conservative faith groups (23%) and the non-conservative non-changers (17%) (Beeghley et al., 1990).

The study on alcohol consumption and the role of religiosity in alcohol use disorders in different religions based on their distinct religious teachings and social norms found that students who belonged to more conservative religious groups had lesser chances of having tried alcohol (Ghandour et al., 2009).

A study based on the six dimensions study of religion to predict youth substance use found that the fundamentalist religious groups had a low rate of substance use as compared to liberal religious groups (Lorch & Hughes, 1985).

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Religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse based on gender Difference

Yet another study on the correlation between spirituality, religiosity and stimulant use by gender that aimed at the gender differences in the impact of religiosity on the use of stimulants in male and female, it was found that there was an inverse relationship between the religiosity and stimulant use especially in males (Tindall et al., 2008).

Unlike the previous research in which the impact was more on males, a study on high school students in Hungary found that religious involvement proved to be an important factor against substance use particularly in females (Piko et al., 2011).

Another research study on the association of religious importance and attendance of religious services as protective factors against substance abuse and other risk-taking behaviors concluded that among females higher personal importance of religion had a weaker influence on decreased substance use while religious attendance had a strong influence on decreased substance abuse while in males both religious importance and religious attendance had a strong influence on substance use (Rasic et al., 2011).

When we look at the existing literature, it is clear that there is a gap in research regarding religiosity and attitude towards substance abuse.

When we look at the existing literature, it is clear that there is a gap in research regarding religiosity and attitude towards substance abuse among undergraduate students so that appropriate measures to be taken to influence the student's attitude towards substance abuse.

METHODOLOGY

Aim of the study

To study the relationship between religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse among undergraduate students in Bangalore.

Objective of the study

To examine the correlation between religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse.

Hypotheses

Having reviewed the relevant literature, the following were the hypothesis formulated in the current research.

- Hypothesis 1- The religious adherence among adolescence has a negative correlation on their attitude towards substance abuse.
- Hypothesis 2- There is no significant difference in the effect of gender on religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse.
- Hypothesis 3- There is no significant difference in the effect of religion on religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse.

Research design

The study undertaken is exploratory and quantitative in nature and involves a co-relation between religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse in undergraduate students.

Population and sample description

The population was undergraduate students in Bangalore. The sample was collected by convenient sampling. The sample consisted of 100 undergraduate students (50 Males and 50

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females) from 6 different colleges in Bangalore. Students in the age group of 18- 21 were included in the study. Students who are religious novices, priests, and nuns were excluded from the study.

Tools

1. Socio-demographic information: Socio-demographic Information Sheet would be used to collect socio-demographic information about the participant.
2. Religious adherence scale: Religious adherence inventory for adolescence by (Rai, Saji, 2010) The reliability of the scale was established by using Cronbach's Alpha. The reliability of the scale is 0.813.
3. Attitude assessment: Drug attitude scale by (Campbell & Chang, 2006)

Procedure

Students from 6 different colleges in Bangalore were selected according to convenience. The students were checked for inclusion and exclusion criteria. The participants were briefed regarding the aim, procedure, anticipated benefits, and potential hazards of the research before administering the questionnaires. The informed consent of the research participants was taken. The data was collected from the participants, using the socio-demographic data questionnaire, religious adherence inventory for adolescents, and the personal attitude survey questionnaire. The privacy of the participants was maintained. The scores of the religious adherence inventory and the personal attitude survey questionnaire were correlated for the final results.

A relationship between religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse was established using Pearson co relational analysis. The effect of gender and religion on religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse was analyzed with MANOVA. SPSS.

RESULTS

The aim of the study was to find the relation between religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse. A sample of 100 undergraduate students consisting of 50 males and 50 females from different parts of Bangalore was taken for the study. The average age of the sample was 19.44 (SD=1.038, Range 18-21). The following socio demographic details were obtained (Refer to Table 1): -

Table 1. Socio demographic details of the sample

Demographic details	N	Mean (SD, Range)
Age		19.44(1.038, 18-21)
18	21	-----
19	34	-----
20	25	-----
21	20	-----
Religion		-----
Christians	41	-----
Hindus	44	-----
Buddhism	5	-----
Jain	1	-----
Muslim	8	-----
Sikh	1	-----

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Table 2. Correlation Between religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse.

	Religious Adherence	Drug Attitude
Religious Adherence	-----	-.377**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed) [$p < .01$]

The result shows a strong significant negative correlation between religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse ($r = -.377^{**}$, $p \leq .01$).

Table 3. Religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse based on gender

	Sex	N	Mean	SD	
Religious Adherence	Male	50	60.5	13.964	F=1.097(p=0.338)
	Female	50	66.46	13.183	
Drug Attitude	Male	50	55.44	10.418	
	Female	50	51.94	7.924	

According to table no. 3 there is no significant effect of gender on religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse $F = 1.097$ ($p \geq 0.05$).

Table 4. Religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse based on religion

	Religion	N	Mean	SD	
Religious Adherence	Christians	41	70.93	10.629	F=8.779(p=.000)
	Hindus	44	55.39	12.318	
	Others	15	66.87	13.596	
Drug Attitude	Christian	41	52.41	8.447	
	Hindus	44	56.36	10.13	
	Others	15	49.33	7.413	

According to Table no. 4 there is a significant effect of religion on religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse $F = 8.779$ ($p \leq .05$).

Table 5. Comparison of Religious adherence and drug attitude based on religion

	Religion	Mean difference	Significant level
Religious Adherence	Christians- Hindus	15.54	0
	Others- Hindus	11.48	0.005
	Christian- Others	4.06	0.505
Drug Attitude	Christian- Hindus	-3.95	0.131
	Others- Hindus	-7.03	0.035
	Christians- Others	3.08	0.522

The table no.4 shows a significant difference between Christians and Hindus in religious adherence as the mean difference between Christians and Hindus is 15.54 ($p \leq .05$). Religious adherence is more among Christians than in Hindus. There is a significant difference between other religions and Hindus in religious adherence as the mean difference between other religions and Hindus is 11.48 ($p \leq .05$). Religious adherence is more among other religions than in Hindus. There is no significant difference between Christians and others in religious adherence ($p \geq .05$).

There is no significant difference between Christians and Hindus in Drug attitude scale ($p \geq .05$). There is no significant difference between Christian and others in the Drug attitude scale ($p \geq .05$). There is a significant difference between Hindus and other religions in the Drug attitude scale as the mean difference between Hindus and other religions is 7.03 ($p \leq .05$).

DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to explore the relationship between religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse among undergraduate students of Bangalore.

The main objective of the study was to find the inter-correlation between religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse.

The present study is based on the socialization influence model, according to Wallace and William (1997), the adolescent involves themselves in health-compromising behaviors as a result of their interactive socialization process that occurs over time. The family is viewed as the primary socialization influence followed by peer influence and religion that are viewed as the secondary socialization influences (as cited by Watkins & Rostosky, 2010).

Religious adherence is one of the important socio-cultural factors that influence the attitude of an individual towards substance abuse. This effect is well illustrated by Muslims and Mormons, whose religious values prohibit the use of alcohol and by orthodox Jews who have traditionally limited its use. The incidences of alcoholism are minimal in these groups. Religiosity is considered to be a significant predictor of attitude towards the use of various substances (Francis & Mullen, 2006). Thus it appears that religious sanctions and social customs can influence the use of alcohol in a particular society (Carson et al., 2007).

The individual's behavior and attitudes are often shaped by the groups to which they belong and to which they relate. According to the reference group theory people use the groups they are part of as frames of reference.

The level to which an individual identifies himself or herself with the group as a reference group depends on the similarity in the status attributes of the individual and that of the group members. And also, on the individual's conformity to the beliefs and values of the group, the clarity in the values and beliefs of the group, the level of continuous and regular interaction with the group members, and on how much the individual considers the leaders as significant.

Inter- correlation between religious adherence and drug attitude.

The current research studied the religious groups as the reference groups and the influences of adherence to the religious groups on the individual's attitude towards substance abuse.

According to the previous studies on religiosity and attitude towards drug use among Dutch school children, it was found that religion still has a powerful correlation with young people's attitude towards drug use and it's both the belief and the attendance that contribute to the difference in the attitude of young people towards various drugs. The religiosity of children had a negative correlation with the attitude towards substance abuse. Another study among 13-15-year-olds in England that worked on similar lines came up with similar findings (Mullen & Francis, 1993; 2001).

In the present study finding there was a negative correlation ($r = -.377^{**}$, $p \leq .01$) between religious adherence and drug attitude. Studies have found that religiosity was negatively related to substance abuse and was also affected by the socio bonding variables and religiosity controlled the likelihood of increased substance abuse (Allen & Celia, 2010).

The findings of the current study corroborate with the findings of the previous studies on the relationship between religiosity and attitude towards substance abuse.

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Gender difference

Though the main objective of the study was to find the relationship between religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse, during the course of the study gender difference in the same was also taken into consideration.

A study on the correlation between spirituality, religiosity, and stimulant use by gender that aimed at the gender differences in the impact of religiosity on the use of stimulants in male and female, it was found that there was an inverse relationship between the religiosity and stimulant use especially in males (Tindall et al., 2008).

Unlike the previous research in which the impact was more on males, a study on high school students in Hungary found that religious involvement proved to be an important factor against substance use particularly in females (Piko et al., 2011).

Another research study on the association of religious importance and attendance of religious services as protective factors against substance abuse and other risk-taking behaviors concluded that among females higher personal importance of religion had a weaker influence on decreased substance use while religious attendance had a strong influence on decreased substance abuse while in males both religious importance and religious attendance had a strong influence on substance use (Rasic et al., 2011).

Even though in the previous studies gender differences in the influence of religiosity on substance use were found. However, in the present study there was no effect of gender on religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse ($r=.338$, $p \geq .05$).

Religious difference

As the attitude of an individual is often shaped by the group they belong to and refer to, the difference in the teachings of different religions has an impact on the attitude towards substance abuse.

A study on alcohol consumption and the role of religiosity in alcohol use disorders in different religions based on their distinct religious teachings and social norms found that students who belonged to more conservative religious groups had lesser chances of having tried alcohol (Ghandour et al., 2009).

Another research study based on the six dimensions study of religion to predict youth substance use found that the fundamentalist religious groups had a low rate of substance use as compared to liberal religious groups (Lorch & Hughes, 1985).

Though in the previous studies the conservatism and liberalism of different religions were defined and it was found that more conservative religious groups had a low rate of substance use as compared to more liberal groups, in the present study conservatism and liberalism of the religions were not defined. The results of the present study conclude that religion had an effect on religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse ($r=.000$, $p \leq .05$), however, in this study definition of conservatism and liberalism has not been considered in any religion.

Limitations

The sample was collected from a metropolitan city Bangalore and thus the results can't be generalized on a larger population as there is a cultural difference in the practice of different religions and the social acceptance of substance abuse. For e.g. in certain parts of the country 'Bhang' is distributed as 'Prasad' during religious festivals and celebrations. The

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culture of a particular place has a great impact on the use and abuse of substances among individuals.

The sample is from the urban population thus the results can't be generalized to the rural population.

The sample consisted of mainly 44% Hindus 41% Christians and only 15% from other religions. The participants from different religions varied depending on the accessibility. There were fewer participants from other significant religions therefore the difference in other religions could not be studied in detail.

The various other factors like family influence, peer influence, social norms, and media that could affect the attitude of an individual towards substance abuse were not considered.

Implications

In the recent past the mental health profession has taken initiatives in cooperating religious traditions and rituals along with medical treatment and psychotherapy. Some indigenous practices too have been studied in the past to understand its impact on mental health. India being a land of diverse religious beliefs and cultures has a great impact on the individual's attitude formation. Being collectivistic society individuals identify themselves more in relation to the different social groups they belong thus religious groups and its tenants play an important role in the lives of the people in India, as it becomes one of the main factors that influence the attitude of a person towards any particular object. The present study was helpful in analyzing the relationship between religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse. The results have helped in understanding the negative correlation between religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse and how an increase in religious adherence leads to a negative attitude towards substance abuse. The attitude of an individual influences his or her behavior depending on the strength of the attitude formed.

Previous studies have found that families can protect youngsters from substance use by using religion as a protective factor to reduce substance abuse in adolescents (Sanchez et al., 2008). The results of the present research can form a basis in forming psychoeducation programs for parents to help them understand the relationship between religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse.

The religiosity of the context in which youngsters spend their maximum time also plays an important role in their attitude towards substance abuse. The individual with high religiosity in a context with high religiosity is more likely to have a negative attitude towards substance use as compared to the individual with high religiosity but in context with a low level of religiosity (Wallace et al., 2007). The students could be provided with a religious context in schools and colleges as the increase in the religiosity of the institution leads to a decrease in substance use of individuals.

The results could be a basis to formulate intervention programs for young adults.

Scope for future research

The impact of religious adherence on the attitude towards substance abuse across various other religions in India could be studied as different intervention programs could be made on the basis of differences in religious beliefs.

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An impact of cultural beliefs of different regions in India on the impact of religious adherence on attitude towards substance abuse can be studied.

The level of impact of the various other factors like family religiosity and peer religiosity and the influence of the religiosity of the context and social norms on the attitude towards substance abuse needs to be explored and used in forming proper intervention programs.

CONCLUSION

As in recent times many initiatives have been taken in India to incorporate religious traditions and rituals with the medical interventions a lot of studies have been conducted on the indigenous practices. But there only few studies have been conducted in India to understand the relationship between religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse in undergraduate students.

The present study provides the findings consistent with the previous studies done in other countries that there is a negative correlation between religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse. There is no significant gender difference in religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse. And there is a significant difference among different religions in religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse.

These findings can be helpful in using religious adherence as a protective factor against substance abuse among undergraduate students.

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Acknowledgments

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Simon S. (2020). Religious adherence and attitude towards substance abuse among undergraduates. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 8(3), 1141-1152. DIP:18.01.119/20200803, DOI:10.25215/0803.119