

KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, AND PRACTICES ON SUBSTANCE USE AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN NEPAL



Brief Summary:

The study, "Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices on Substance Use Among Adolescents in Nepal: Research and Recommendations", conducted by World Vision International Nepal in collaboration with the Nepal Public Health Research and Development Center (PHRD Nepal), examines the prevalence, causes, and consequences of adolescent substance use across five districts—Sarlahi, Rautahat, Lamjung, Kailali, and Kanchanpur. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research surveyed 1,021 adolescents and included focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) with parents, teachers, law enforcement, policymakers, and community stakeholders.

Key Findings:

- **Prevalence:** 15.87% of adolescents reported substance use, with significantly higher rates among boys (80.8%) than girls (19.2%).
- **Age of Initiation:** Tobacco use begins around 14 years, alcohol at 14.5 years, and cannabis at 16 years.
- **Most Common Substances:** Alcohol (70.3%) is the most commonly used substance, followed by tobacco (54.3%) and cannabis (20.3%).
- **Reasons for Use:** Peer pressure (83.9%), curiosity (58%), and entertainment (42%) were cited as key drivers.
- **Knowledge Gaps:** 77% of adolescents had limited awareness of the health risks associated with substance use.
- **Social and Economic Influences:** Users were more likely to come from nuclear families with parents of lower educational backgrounds.
- **Gender-Specific Trends:** Boys reported higher substance use due to peer influence, whereas girls faced stigma in seeking support.

Key Recommendations:



School-Based Prevention: Integrate a thorough curriculum on substance prevention and socioemotional learning in schools. Train teachers to recognize gender-specific risks and provide tailored guidance.



Peer Support Networks: Establish gender-sensitive peer-led groups to provide safe spaces for discussion and support. Development of boy-focused programs addressing peer pressure and girl-focused initiatives that empower them to seek help.



Community Engagement: Strengthen collaboration with local leaders to implement culturally appropriate awareness campaigns. Additionally, involve parents and community leaders to challenge gender norms influencing substance use.



Policy and Regulation: Enforce stricter substance control policies, age restrictions, and taxation to reduce youth access.



Youth-Friendly Services: Expand access to mental health services, life skills training, and early intervention programs. Train health workers, caregivers and teachers to offer nonjudgmental, gender-responsive interventions.

Conclusion:

The study highlights the urgent need for a multi-sectoral approach involving government, schools, communities, and NGOs to prevent adolescent substance use. Strengthening education, policy enforcement, and mental health support is crucial to mitigating substance use among adolescents and ensuring a healthier future for Nepal's youth.