A TEMPORAL ANALYSIS OF PREVALENCE, PATTERN AND PERCEPTION OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG HIGHER SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS IN ERNAKULAM DISTRICT, KERALA

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ABSTRACT

Substance abuse can degenerate the very fabric of a nation by destroying its youth and is detrimental to the development prospects of its economy. The present study makes a temporal analysis of the prevalence, pattern and perception of substance abuse among Higher Secondary and Higher Education Students of Ernakulam District, Kerala. The data was collected both in years 2022 and 2023 and the study constructed three scale variables such as Risk Perception of students towards Substance abuse, Disapproval Rate Score and Perception of Drug Accessibility in order to compare Higher Secondary and Higher Education Students over years 2022 and 2023.The study makes use of Independent Sample t-tests and Two way between-group ANOVA to analyse the data. The study recommends a multipronged approach which on the one hand, cuts the sources of drug, curb the drug peddlers and enforce stringent measures on drug abuse, on the other hand promote awareness among students on the perils of drug abuse and provide counseling and rehabilitation.

KEYWORDS: *Substance Abuse, Risk Perception, Disapproval Rate, Perception of Drug Accessibility*

1.INTRODUCTION

Rampant and reckless substance abuse among youth in Kerala especially in college campuses is a burning but much neglected issue, which if left alone can do havocs in the social settings of the state. It's a fact that the perception of drug abuse among youth can vary depending on the cultural and social context. In some cultures, drug abuse may be seen as a sign of rebellion or a rite of passage into adulthood, while in others it is viewed as a serious problem that needs to be addressed. Kerala, which is acclaimed to be the most literate state in India unfortunately, seems to be displaying first mentioned cultural traits.

The most commonly abused drugs among youth in Kerala include alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, prescription drugs such as benzodiazepines and opioids. In recent times, party drugs such as MDMA and cocaine are getting popular among the youth. Young males tend to engage more in drug abuse than females and the age of initiation into drug use has been decreasing. There is a perception among many young people in Kerala that drug use is a way to relieve stress and cope with academic, peer, social pressures and boredom, assisted by curiosity and easy availability of drugs.

The Kerala police registered 24,701 cases related to drug abuse under the Narcotic, Drugs and Psychotropic Substance (NDPS) Act till November 2022-23 calendar year, which was 333 percent higher than 5695 cases registered in the same month 2021. The Excise department registered 6116 NDPS cases in November 2022 as against 3992 in the same month 2021 registering a spike of 55 percent. In 2016, the Excise department conducted 1,39,366 raids and in 2022 it has risen to 1,44,200 raids registering a rise of 3.46 percent. There was an 87 per cent increase in the arrests under NDPS during the same period. Over the period, MDMA emerged as the most sought after drug among the youth. Bengaluru and Goa are alleged to be the main drug source of Kerala. (*The Indian Express*, 2023)

Ganja/Cannabis is growing popular among the youth. The worrying fact is that there is a growing percent of girl students' start experimenting with the drugs out of curiosity and peer pressure from boy compatriots. The easy accessibility and inefficacy of the enforcement system in the prevention of drug abuse though registered cases spiked, ever growing presence of drug peddlers have led to an alarming spurt in the substance abuse and can potentially endanger the fragile social equilibrium of Kerala state in not so near future.

However, there is also growing awareness of the negative consequences of drug abuse, including health problems, addiction, and social and economic problems. Government and non-governmental organizations in Kerala are initiating various steps to address the issue of youth drug addiction through education, prevention, and treatment programs. This includes increasing access to addiction treatment services and launching

awareness campaigns to educate young people about the dangers of drug abuse.

The present study is structured in the following ways. Section two delineates the objectives and hypotheses of the study. Section three briefly depicts the methodologies used in the study. Section four gives a brief review of the literature. Section five elaborates the results and its discussions. Section six summarizes the important findings of the study.

2.OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

The primary objective of the study was to make a temporal analysis of the prevalence, pattern and perception of Higher Secondary and Higher Education students in Ernakulam district of Kerala for the years 2022 and 2023. The following hypotheses were formulated for meeting these objectives.

H_{01}: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of students belonging to Year 2022 and 2023 on risk perception towards drug abuse.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of students belonging to Year 2022 and 2023 on disapproval rate scores towards drug abuse.

H_{03}: There is significant difference between the mean scores of students belonging to Year 2022 and 2023 on perception of drug access scores.

H_{04}: There is no significant difference between the means of the groups such as Year and Gender and any difference observed are due to chance. There is no interaction effect between Year and Gender and no main effect for Year and Gender on Risk Perception score of drug abuse.

H_{05}: There is no significant difference between the means of the groups such as Year and Gender and any difference observed are due to chance. There is no interaction effect between Year and Gender and no main effect for Year and Gender on Disapproval rate score of drug abuse.

H_{06}: There is no significant difference between the means of the groups such as Year and Gender and any difference observed are due to chance. There is no interaction effect between Year and Gender and no main effect for Year and Gender on Perception of drug access score.

3.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted among Higher Secondary and Higher Education students of Ernakulam district and data was collected in two phases- March 2022 and March 2023 in order to make a temporal comparison of prevalence, pattern and perception of substance abuse among students.

The sample of the study was composed of 75 students belonging to year 2022 and 80 students belonging to year 2023. A well-structured questionnaire was constructed and data were collected by face-to-face interaction after getting the consent of respondent by educating them the research purpose of the study. The study ensured the confidentiality of the respondents. The study made use of graphs, frequency analysis, Independent Sample t test and Two way-Between Group ANOVA to analyse data and reach the research conclusions.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are a number of International, national and regional studies on the substance abuse among youth and students. A study on the prevalence and determinants of substance abuse among youth in central Kerala found alarming trend of substance abuse among the youth and recommended school based programmes to generate awareness regarding the potential health hazards.(Raphael et al., 2017) Another study on substance abuse among dental students of Kantipur Dental College found that 74 percent of the respondents never smoked at the same time only 43 percent of the respondents never used alcohol drink and 35 percent of the respondents used cannabis. The study recommended proper counseling for the students to discourage substance abuse.(Bhatta et al., 2018) A large sample study (1200 undergraduate students) of substance abuse among undergraduate students in Osun State, Nigeria analysed the factors influencing substance abuse and identified peer influence as the major factor. The study recommended counseling for healthy living of students.(Yusuf, 2011) A Malaysian study on substance abuse among secondary school students found that 30 percent of the students felt their parents did not view glue sniffing, consuming alcohol or smoking as an offence and study recommended state intervention in awareness campaign to curb this abuse tendency.(Chan et al., 2016) A cross sectional study on psychological wellbeing and substance abuse among adolescents collected and analysed a sample of 300 secondary and higher secondary students and found better psychological well being among students who didn't use substance in their life.(Aiyappan et al., 2018) A research gap could be identified in a temporal analysis of substance abuse among Higher secondary and Higher Education students and the present study attempts to fill this research gap.

5.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section is classified into segments
1) Demographic Profile of the respondents
2) Year wise Pattern of Drug Abuse among students
3) Reliability Test
4) Independent Sample t Test
5) Two-way between- groups ANOVA

5.1) Demographic Profile

Table1: Demographic Profile of the respondents					
		2022		2023	
Variable	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	40	47	52	35
	Female	35	53	28	65
Education	Higher Secondary Education	39	52	16	20
	Higher Education	36	48	64	80
Religion	Hindu	32	43	42	53
	Christian	28	37	31	38
	Muslim	13	17	7	9
	Others	2	3	0	0
Education of Father	Uneducated	1	1	0	1
	Primary Education	5	7	2	3
	Secondary Education	16	21	12	15
	Higher Secondary Education	22	29	21	26
	Higher Education	31	42	45	56
Education of Mother	Uneducated	1	1	0	0
	Primary Education	5	7	2	3
	Secondary Education	16	21	12	15
	Higher Secondary Education	22	30	21	26
	Higher Education	31	41	45	56

5.2) Year wise Pattern of Drug Abuse among students
5.2.1 Year wise Frequency of Cigarettes use in Last 30 days

Table 2: Frequency of Cigarettes use in Last 30 days			
		Frequency	Percent
2022	Never	59	78.7
	1-2 times	3	4.0
	3-5 times	2	2.7
	6-9 times	6	8.0
	10-19 times	3	4.0
	20-39 times	2	2.7
	Total	75	100.0
2023	Never	60	75.0
	1-2 times	3	3.8
	3-5 times	2	2.5
	6-9 times	5	6.3
	10-19 times	5	6.3
	20-39 times	3	3.8
	40 or more times	2	2.5
	Total	80	100.0

5.2.2 Year wise Frequency of Alcohol usage in last 30 days

Table 3: Frequency of Alcohol usage in last 30 days			
Year		Frequency	Percent
2022	Never	49	65.3
	1-2 times	9	12.0
	3-5 times	4	5.3
	6-9 times	6	8.0
	10-19 times	7	9.3
	Total	75	100.0

2023	Never	52	65.0
	1-2 times	16	20.0
	3-5 times	6	7.5
	6-9 times	2	2.5
	10-19 times	2	2.5
	20-39 times	1	1.3
	40 or more times	1	1.3
	Total	80	100.0

5.2.3 Year wise Frequency of Cannabis / Ganja/ Kanjavu Usage in lifetime

Table 4: Frequency of Cannabis / Ganja/ Kanjavu Usage in lifetime			
Year		Frequency	Percent
2022	Never	57	76.0
	1-2 times	6	8.0
	3-5 times	2	2.7
	6-9 times	4	5.3
	10-19 times	5	6.7
	40 or more times	1	1.3
	Total	75	100.0
2023	Never	70	87.5
	1-2 times	2	2.5
	3-5 times	2	2.5
	6-9 times	1	1.3
	10-19 times	1	1.3
	20-39 times	1	1.3
	40 or more times	3	3.8
	Total	80	100.0

5.2.4 Year wise frequency of age of first Consumption of Beer (at least one glass)

Table 5: Age of first Consumption of Beer (at least one glass)			
Year		Frequency	Percent
2022	Never	35	46.7
	11 years old or less	2	2.7
	12 years old	3	4.0
	13 years old	4	5.3
	14 years old	2	2.7
	15 years old	5	6.7
	16 years old	2	2.7
	17 years old	5	6.7
	18 years old or above	17	22.7
	Total	75	100.0
2023	Never	29	36.3
	11 years old or less	4	5.0
	12 years old	2	2.5
	14 years old	1	1.3
	15 years old	1	1.3
	16 years old	7	8.8
	17 years old	3	3.8
	18 years old or above	33	41.3
	Total	80	100.0

5.2.5 Year wise frequency of age of first Consumption of Wine (at least one glass)

Table 6: Age of first Consumption of Wine (at least one glass)			
Year		Frequency	Percent
2022	Never	14	18.7
	11 years old or less	15	20.0
	12 years old	8	10.7
	13 years old	7	9.3
	14 years old	2	2.7
	15 years old	10	13.3
	16 years old	6	8.0
	17 years old	4	5.3
	18 years old or above	9	12.0
	Total	75	100.0
2023	Never	22	27.5
	11 years old or less	20	25.0
	13 years old	6	7.5
	14 years old	2	2.5
	15 years old	8	10.0
	16 years old	5	6.3
	17 years old	4	5.0
	18 years old or above	13	16.3
	Total	80	100.0

5.2.6 Year wise frequency of age of first Smoking of a Cigarette

Table 7: Age of first Smoking of a Cigarette			
Year		Frequency	Percent
2022	Never	46	61.3
	11 years old or less	1	1.3
	12 years old	1	1.3
	13 years old	3	4.0
	15 years old	4	5.3
	16 years old	5	6.7
	17 years old	6	8.0
	18 years old or above	9	12.0
	Total	75	100.0
2023	Never	53	66.3
	11 years old or less	1	1.3
	12 years old	2	2.5
	15 years old	3	3.8
	16 years old	3	3.8
	17 years old	2	2.5
	18 years old or above	16	20.0
	Total	80	100.0

5.2.7 Year wise frequency of age of first Consumption of Alcohol (at least one glass)

Table 8: Age of first Consumption of Alcohol (at least one glass)			
Year		Frequency	Percent
2022	Never	44	58.7
	11 years old or less	2	2.7
	12 years old	2	2.7
	13 years old	2	2.7
	15 years old	4	5.3
	16 years old	2	2.7

	17 years old	1	1.3
	18 years old or above	18	24.0
	Total	75	100.0
2023	Never	38	47.5
	11 years old or less	3	3.8
	15 years old	1	1.3
	16 years old	1	1.3
	17 years old	6	7.5
	18 years old or above	31	38.8
	Total	80	100.0

5.2.8 Year wise frequency of age of first of first Usage of Drugs

Table 9: Age of first Usage of Drugs			
Year		Frequency	Percent
2022	Never	56	74.7
	11 years old or less	1	1.3
	12 years old	1	1.3
	14 years old	1	1.3
	16 years old	2	2.7
	17 years old	3	4.0
	18 years old or above	11	14.7
	Total	75	100.0
2023	Never	64	80.0
	11 years old or less	2	2.5
	12 years old	1	1.3
	13 years old	1	1.3
	17 years old	1	1.3
	18 years old or above	11	13.8
	Total	80	100.0

5.3) Reliability Test

Three scale variables such as Risk Perception Score of drug usage, Disapproval Rate Score of drug usage and Perception of Drug Accessibility Score were constructed using likert scale questionnaire and their reliability is tested by Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

Table 10: Reliability Statistics		
Scale Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Risk Perception	.877	8
Disapproval Rate	.921	4
Perception of Drug Access	.896	3

All scale variables have good internal consistency with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients reported more than 0.85 and be used for further analysis.

5.4) Independent Sample t Test
5.4.1) Testing of the first Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of students belonging to Year 2022 and 2023 on risk perception towards drug abuse.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is a significant difference between the mean scores of students belonging to Year 2022 and 2023 on risk perception towards drug abuse.

Table 11: Group Statistics					
	Year	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Risk Perception	2022	75	24.87	6.143	.709
	2023	80	26.25	5.369	.600

Table 12: Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Risk Perception	Equal variances assumed	1.764	.186	-1.495	153	.137	-1.383	.925	-3.211	.444

An Independent sample t test was conducted to compare the risk perception scores for students belonging to year 2022 and 2023. There was on significant difference in the scores for 2022-year students (M = 24.87, SD = 6.14) and 2023-year students (M = 26.25, SD = 5.37; t (153) = -1.49, p = 0.137, two tailed). The magnitude of difference in the means (mean difference = -1.38, 95% CI: -3.2 to 0.44) was small (eta squared =0.014).
Though non-significant, it is intriguing to observe a slight increase in the risk perception of drug abuse among students from 2022 to 2023.

5.4.2) Testing of the second hypothesis
Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of students belonging to Year 2022 and 2023 on disapproval rate scores towards drug abuse.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is significant difference between the mean scores of students belonging to Year 2022 and 2023 on disapproval rate scores towards drug abuse.

Table 13: Group Statistics					
	Year	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Disapproval Rate	2022	75	8.72	2.754	.318
	2023	80	9.05	2.643	.295

Table 14: Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Disapproval Rate	Equal variances assumed	.563	.454	-.761	153	.448	-.330	.433	-1.186	.526

An Independent sample t test was conducted to compare the disapproval rate scores for students belonging to year 2022 and 2023. There was on significant difference in the scores for 2022-year students (M = 8.72, SD = 2.75) and 2023-year students (M = 9.05, SD = 2.64; t (153) = -0.76, p = 0.45, two tailed). The magnitude of difference in the means (mean difference = -0.33, 95% CI: -1.2 to 0.57) was small (eta squared =0.004).

Though non-significant, it is intriguing to observe a slight increase in the disapproval rate score of drug abuse among students from 2022 to 2023.

5.4.3) Testing of the third hypothesis
Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of students belonging to Year 2022 and 2023 on perception of drug access scores.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is significant difference between the mean scores of students belonging to Year 2022 and 2023 on perception of drug access scores.

Table 15: Group Statistics					
	Year	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Perception of Drug Access	2022	75	9.37	4.426	.511
	2023	80	9.06	4.073	.455

Table 16: Independent Samples Test		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
									Lower	Upper	
Perception of Drug Access	Equal variances assumed	2.896	.091	.455	153	.650	.311	.683	-1.038	1.660	

An Independent sample t test was conducted to compare the perception of drug access scores for students belonging to year 2022 and 2023. There was on significant difference in the scores for 2022-year students (M = 9.37, SD = 4.43) and 2023-year students (M = 9.06, SD = 4.07; t (153) = 0.46, p = 0.65, two tailed). The magnitude of difference in the means (mean difference = 0.31, 95% CI: -1.04 to 1.67) was small (eta squared =0.001).
Though non-significant, it is intriguing to observe a slight decrease in the perception of drug access score among students from 2022 to 2023.

5.5) Two-way between- groups ANOVA
5.5.1) Testing of the fourth hypothesis
Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the means of the groups such as Year and Gender and any difference observed are due to chance. There is no interaction effect between Year and Gender and no main effect for Year and Gender on Risk Perception score of drug abuse.
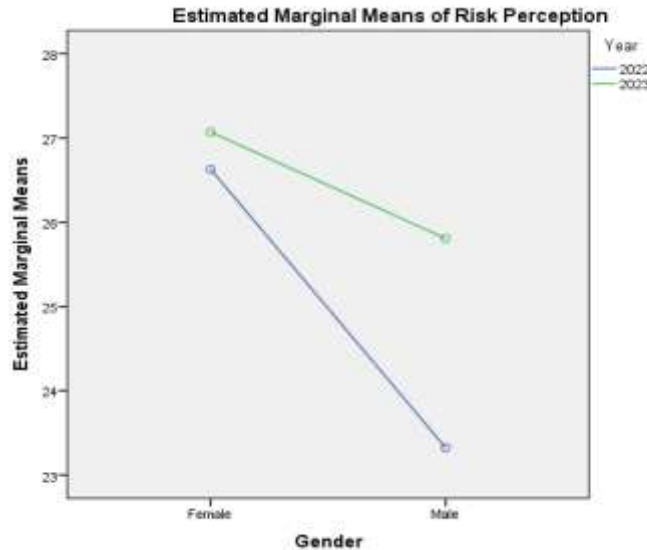Alternative Hypothesis: There is significant difference between the means of the groups such as Year and Gender and any difference observed are not due to chance. There is interaction effect between Year and Gender and main effect for Year and Gender on Risk Perception score of drug abuse.

Table17: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances			
Dependent Variable: Risk Perception			
F	df1	df2	Sig.
2.472	3	151	.064

The null hypothesis of homogeneity of variance is not violated since p = (0.064) is greater than 0.05.

Table 18:Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Dependent Variable: Risk Perception						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	306.861[a]	3	102.287	3.193	.025	.060
Intercept	97446.602	1	97446.602	3042.134	.000	.953
Year	78.871	1	78.871	2.462	.119	.016
Gender	192.232	1	192.232	6.001	.015	.038
Year * Gender	38.344	1	38.344	1.197	.276	.008
Error	4836.880	151	32.032			
Total	106571.000	155				
Corrected Total	5143.742	154				
a. R Squared = .060 (Adjusted R Squared = .041)						

A two way between groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of gender and year on risk perception towards drug substance abuse. Youth were divided according to their gender and the year of study. (Gender: Male and Female, Year of study: 2022 and 2023). The interaction between gender and year of study was not statistically significant, $F_{(1,155)} = 1.197$, $p = 0.276$. There was statistically significant main effect of Gender on Risk perception, $F_{(1,155)} = 6.001$, $p = 0.015$. However the effect size is small as per partial eta squared = 0.038. The main effect of year of study, $F_{(1,151)} = 2.462$, $p = 0.119$ is not statistically significant. Female have a high-risk perception both in 2022 and in 2023 (M=26.63 and M=27.07) respectively. Risk perception of Male and Female students is a bit higher in 2023.

5.5.2) Testing of the fifth hypothesis
Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the means of the groups such as Year and Gender and any difference observed are due to chance. There is no interaction effect between Year and Gender and no main effect for Year and Gender on Disapproval rate score of drug abuse.
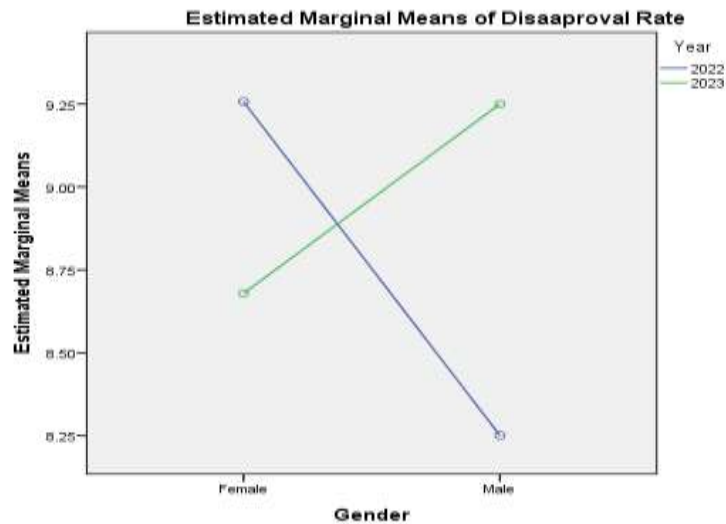
Alternative Hypothesis: There is significant difference between the means of the groups such as Year and Gender and any difference observed are not due to chance. There is interaction effect between Year and Gender and main effect for Year and Gender on Disapproval rate score of drug abuse.

Table 19: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances			
Dependent Variable: Disapproval Rate Score			
F	df1	df2	Sig.
1.636	3	151	.183

The null hypothesis of homogeneity of variance is not violated since p = (0.183) is greater than 0.05.

Table 20: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Dependent Variable: Disapproval Rate Score						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	29.093[a]	3	9.698	1.346	.262	.026
Intercept	11571.420	1	11571.420	1605.897	.000	.914
Year	1.637	1	1.637	.227	.634	.002
Gender	1.749	1	1.749	.243	.623	.002
Year * Gender	22.963	1	22.963	3.187	.076	.021
Error	1088.043	151	7.206			
Total	13368.000	155				
Corrected Total	1117.135	154				
a. R Squared = .026 (Adjusted R Squared = .007)						

Estimated Marginal Means of Disaaproval Rate

A two way between groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of gender and year on disapproval rate score towards drug substance abuse. Youth were divided according to their gender and the year of study. (Gender: Male and Female, Year of study: 2022 and 2023). The interaction between gender and year of study was not statistically significant, $F_{(1,155)} = 3.187$, $p = .076$. There was no statistically significant main effect of Gender on Disapproval Rate Score, $F_{(1,155)} = .243$, $p = .623$. The main effect of year of study, $F_{(1,151)} = .227$, $p = .634$ is not statistically significant. Female have more disapproval rate in 2022 than 2023 ($M = 9.26$ and $M = 8.68$). Male have more disapproval rate in 2023 than in 2022 ($M = 8.25$ and $M = 9.25$).

5.5.3) Testing of the sixth hypothesis
Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the means of the groups such as Year and Gender and any difference observed are due to chance. There is no interaction effect between Year and Gender and no main effect for Year and Gender on Perception of drug access score.
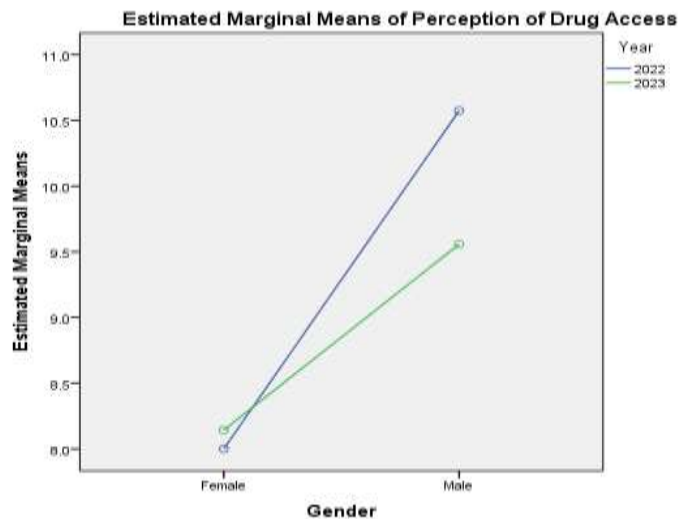Alternative Hypothesis: There is significant difference between the means of the groups such as Year and Gender and any difference observed are not due to chance. There is interaction effect between Year and Gender and main effect for Year and Gender on Perception of drug access score.

Table 21: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances			
Dependent Variable: Perception of Drug Access Score			
F	df1	df2	Sig.
.907	3	151	.439

The null hypothesis of homogeneity of variance is not violated since p = (0.439) is greater than 0.05.

Table 22: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Dependent Variable: Perception of Drug Access						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	163.944[a]	3	54.648	3.174	.026	.059
Intercept	12126.411	1	12126.411	704.256	.000	.823
Year	7.047	1	7.047	.409	.523	.003
Gender	146.695	1	146.695	8.519	.004	.053
Year * Gender	12.403	1	12.403	.720	.397	.005
Error	2600.030	151	17.219			
Total	15920.000	155				
Corrected Total	2763.974	154				
a. R Squared = .059 (Adjusted R Squared = .041)						

Estimated Marginal Means of Perception of Drug Access

A two way between groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of gender and year on Perception of Drug Access. Youth were divided according to their gender and the year of study. (Gender: Male and Female, Year of study: 2022 and 2023). The interaction between gender and year of study was not statistically significant, $F(1,155) = .720$, $p = 0.397$. There was statistically significant main effect of Gender on Perception of Drug Access, $F(1,155) = 8.519$, $p = .004$. However the effect size is small as per partial eta squared = 0.053. The main effect of year of study, $F(1,151) = .409$, $p = 0.523$ is not statistically significant. Female have almost similar Perception of Drug Access both in 2022 and in 2023 (M=8.00 and M=8.14) respectively. Male students have more Perception of Drug Access in 2022 than 2023 (M=10.58 and M=9.56). Perception of Drug Access of Male students is higher than female students.

6. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION
The study constructed three scale variables such as Risk Perception of students towards Substance abuse, Disapproval Rate Score and Perception of Drug Accessibility in order to compare Higher Secondary and Higher Education Students over years 2022 and 2023.The major findings of the study can be summarised as follows

- The percentage of students who never tasted a beer in their lifetime was 47 percent in 2022 and it was 36 percent in 2023.
- The percentage of students who never consumed alcohol in their lifetime was 59 percent in 2022 and it was 47 percent in 2023. These two findings show the increasing trend in substance abuse.
- The percentage of students who never smoked in their lifetime was 61 percent in 2022 and it was 66 percent in 2023.
- The percentage of students who never used drugs in their lifetime was 75 percent in 2022 and it was 80 percent in 2023.
- There is no significant difference in the risk perception towards drug abuse among students both in years 2022

and 2023. Even though non significant, risk perception has increased slightly in the year 2023.
- There is no significant difference in the disapproval rate score towards drug abuse among students both in years 2022 and 2023. Even though non significant, disapproval rate has increased slightly in the year 2023.
- There is no significant difference in the perception of drug access among students both in years 2022 and 2023. Even though non significant, the perception of drug access has decreased slightly in the year 2023 which implies that students think it is more difficult to access drugs.
- There is no interaction effect between Year and Gender on Risk Perception score towards drug abuse.
- There is no interaction effect between Year and Gender on Disapproval rate score of drug abuse.
- There is no interaction effect between Year and Gender on perception of drug accessibility.

Despite various efforts from Government of Kerala, Non Governmental Agencies, School and College authorities to educate students of the hazardous and detrimental effects of substance abuse on a healthy and prosperous life, the trend is not reversed though slight decline in the usages are visible. The growing presence of drug peddlers through social media, the peer pressure, the cultural traits and the glorification of drugs through popular medium such as cinema, have aggravated the already worse scenario. A predominant importance needs to be given to curb this malice through consistent and follow up awareness programs, counseling programs and provision of deaddiction and rehabilitation centres. Government needs to come up with multipronged approach which on the one hand cut the sources of drug, curb the drug peddlers and enforce a stringent measures on drug abuse on the other hand promote awareness among students on the perils of drug abuse and provide counseling and rehabilitation.

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