Drug Abuse on Juveniles and Role of Justice System

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Abstract—**This study explores the pervasive issue of drug abuse among juveniles and examines the role of the justice system in addressing this problem. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, statistical analysis, and case studies, the research identifies the primary factors contributing to substance abuse in youth populations, including socio-economic conditions, family dynamics, and peer influence. The study further evaluates the effectiveness of current justice system interventions, such as rehabilitation programs, juvenile detention, and community-based initiatives. Findings suggest that punitive measures alone are insufficient and highlight the need for a more rehabilitative approach that includes mental health support, educational opportunities, and community engagement. The analysis suggests that a rehabilitative approach, integrating mental health services, educational opportunities, and community-based support, is crucial for fostering long-term recovery and successful reintegration of affected youths into society. The study advocates for policy reforms that emphasize prevention, early intervention, and comprehensive support systems. By adopting these strategies, the justice system can better serve as a catalyst for positive change, reducing recidivism rates and improving overall outcomes for juveniles struggling with drug abuse. The study concludes with recommendations for policy reforms and integrated strategies aimed at reducing juvenile drug abuse and promoting long-term recovery and reintegration into society.**

Keywords—**Drug; Abuse; Juvenile; Justice; Reforms; Rehabilitation**

I. Introduction

The landscape of juvenile drug abuse has evolved significantly over the decades, influenced by changing social dynamics, availability of substances, and shifts in cultural attitudes. In the mid-20th century, substance abuse among youth was relatively limited and often centered around alcohol and tobacco. However, the 1960s and 1970s saw a dramatic rise in the use of illicit drugs, such as marijuana, LSD, and heroin, partly driven by the counterculture movement. By the 1980s and 1990s, the proliferation of crack cocaine and the subsequent 'War on Drugs' led to a more punitive approach toward drug offenses, including those involving juveniles. This era saw an increase in the incarceration of young offenders, with little emphasis on rehabilitation or addressing the root causes of substance abuse.

The early 2000s marked a shift towards recognizing the limitations of punitive measures and the importance of rehabilitation. This period saw the implementation of more diversion programs, drug courts, and community-based interventions aimed at providing support rather than punishment. The opioid crisis of the 2010s further underscored the need for a comprehensive approach, integrating mental health services, addiction treatment, and preventive education. In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on restorative justice and trauma-informed care within the juvenile justice system. These approaches seek to address the underlying issues contributing to drug abuse, such as trauma, mental health disorders, and socio-economic disadvantages.

There has been a notable increase in the misuse of prescription medications among juveniles, particularly opioids, stimulants (like ADHD medications), and anti-anxiety drugs. The use of vaping devices and e-

cigarettes has surged among teens, with many using them to consume nicotine and, increasingly, THC. Marijuana remains one of the most commonly used substances among juveniles, and with legalization and decriminalization in many areas, its use has become more socially acceptable. The use of synthetic drugs, such as synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic cathinones, has also been observed among juveniles. There is a growing trend of polysubstance use, where juveniles combine multiple drugs simultaneously, increasing the risk of severe health consequences. The internet and social media platforms have become significant avenues for juveniles to access drugs. There is an increasing recognition of the link between mental health issues and substance abuse, with many juveniles using drugs as a coping mechanism for conditions such as depression, anxiety, and trauma.

II. Objectives

The objectives of this study are: to know the main reason for drug abuse among juveniles; to study the resources in the community to help juveniles struggling with drug abuse; to explore the collaboration between schools, families, and community organisations in reducing drug abuse; and to study the effectiveness of the juvenile system to combat drug abuse.

III. Review of Literature

Fauzi Anshari Sibarani (2024): Law No. 35/2009 on Narcotics explains that drug abuse is considered a crime without victims. In handling children who are involved in drug cases, the main principle that must be considered is the best interest of the child. This principle is contained in the Juvenile Justice System Law, which emphasizes that every decision must consider the welfare of the child's life and development. The legal protection of children caught up in drug abuse causes the boundaries between perpetrators and victims to become blurred, because according to the law, drug abuse is considered a criminal offense.

Mirseda and Shehdula (2024): The study explores how vices like drugs influence juvenile crime. It emphasizes parental roles, social policies, and education for young offenders, advocating for prevention and rehabilitation within the justice system. Nabilah (2023) investigated how the juvenile criminal justice system is implemented in the process of investigating children who abuse narcotics at the Simalungun Police Resort, finding that investigators encountered many obstacles in carrying out the SPPA Law.

Hasnah (2022): The widespread prevalence of drug abuse has reached various segments of society, penetrating even remote villages and influencing children whose cognitive abilities are still developing and are easily susceptible. This research investigates legal protection efforts for children involved in drug abuse and analyzes the forms of legal protection within the juvenile justice system.

Paula N. Goldman (2023): This review examines literature published over a 10-year period and summarizes evidence-based practices for screening, treatment, and linkage to care for justice-involved youth as well as barriers and facilitators that may arise during implementation. Alfonce James Odour (2022) explored instances of abuse of juveniles in the juvenile justice system and recommended that there should be a special police unit trained on how to deal with children in conflict with the law to reduce cases of police brutality and violence against juveniles.

Bernat Panjaitan (2023): In the Juvenile Justice System Law, a child in conflict with the law is a child who is 12 years old but not yet 18 years old who is suspected of committing a crime. With the existence of the Juvenile Justice System Act, juvenile justice is distinguished from general justice so that law enforcement against children is not the same as that of adults. Ali M. Yurasek (2021) examined factors associated with identified problematic substance use and treatment referral using two screening tools, the MAYSI-2 alcohol/drug use subscale and the CRAFFT.

Yu Jeong Choe (2023): The purpose of this study is to find out the effect of adolescents' initial drinking age and first smoking age on adolescents' drug abuse. Steven Belenko (2022) found that Juvenile Drug Treatment Courts (JDTCs) have shown small to moderate effectiveness in reducing substance use, improving mental health access, and lowering recidivism rates among high-risk youth in the justice system. Allyson L. Dir (2020) explored patterns of drug screen results and court-ordered substance use treatment referrals and completion among justice-involved youth.

Luzania Barreto Rodrigues (2018) analyzed legal processes of juvenile drug trafficking cases, highlighting disparities in sentencing and the justice system's role in perpetuating social inequalities.

Russian Law Journal (2023) noted that juvenile drug abuse is influenced by social, psychological, and familial factors, and that the justice system plays a crucial role in integrating services for prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of young offenders. Megan L. Steele (2021) explored substance use among justice-involved young people aged 14–17, highlighting high drug use rates and low help-seeking behaviors, emphasizing the need for tailored support services.

Christopher J. Sullivan (2016): The study on Juvenile Drug Courts found them generally ineffective in reducing recidivism among juveniles. Carolina M. Herrera (2019) found that gender moderates the relationship between risk factors and substance use among justice-involved youth. Amanda J. Neubauer (2016) examined juvenile drug use trends by race and gender, with research suggesting disparities in law enforcement focus on minority drug users, potentially influenced by socioeconomic factors. Tisha R. A. Wiley (2015) focused on implementing evidence-based substance abuse services for juveniles in the justice system using the EPIS model. Chelsea W. Harris (2021) focused on drug testing in juvenile justice programs, aiming to predict successful outcomes for youth in pretrial diversion programs.

IV. Methodology

The research method followed here is empirical research. A total of 200 samples have been collected through a convenient sampling method. The sample frame is taken in public areas in and around Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The independent variables are gender, age, educational qualification, occupation, and nationality. The dependent variables include the adequate resources in the community to help juveniles struggling with drug abuse and collaborations between schools, families, and community organisations in reducing juvenile drug abuse. The statistical tools used here are chi-square under SPSS and graphical charts such as simple charts and complex charts.

V. Data Analysis

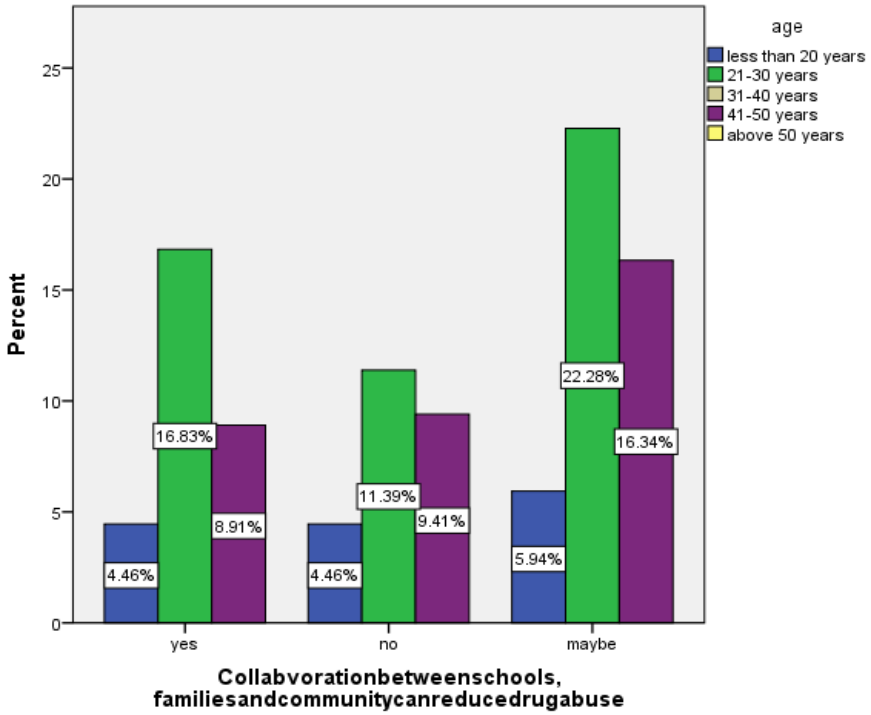

Fig. 1. Relation between age and collaboration between schools, families, and community in reducing drug abuse.

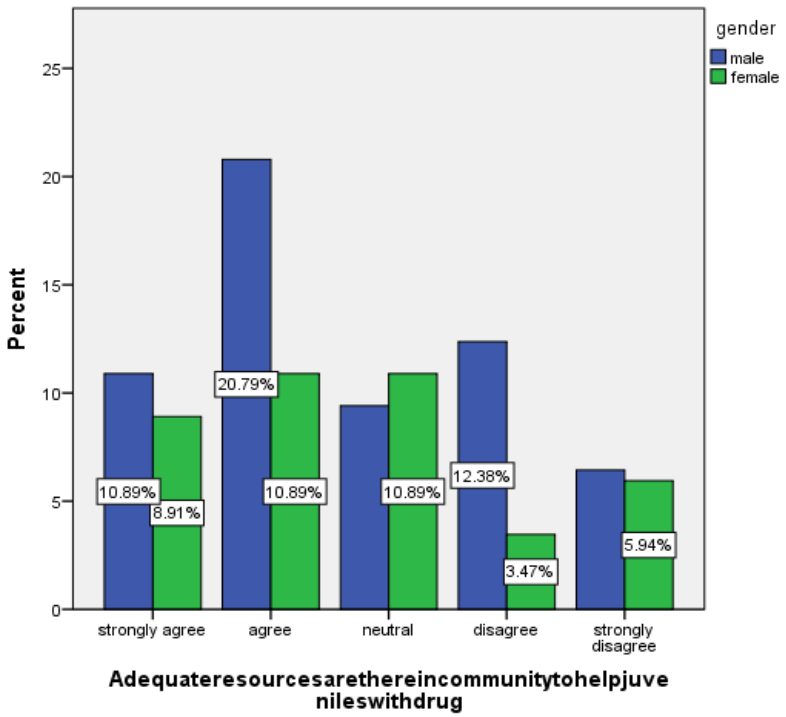

Fig. 2. Relation between gender and agreeability on adequate resources helping juveniles with drug abuse.

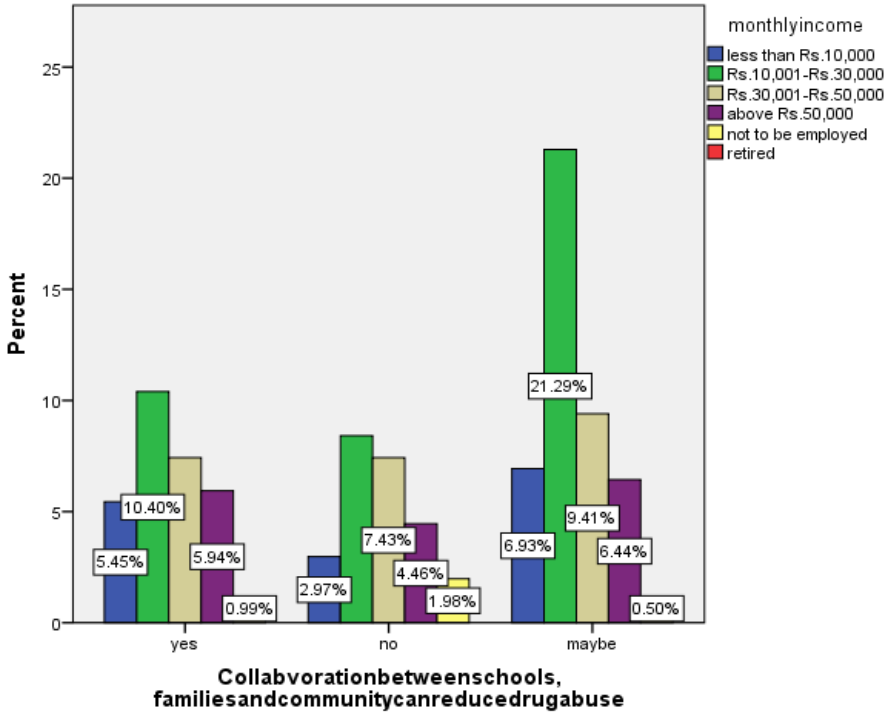

Fig. 3. Relation between monthly income and collaboration between schools, families, and community in reducing drug abuse.

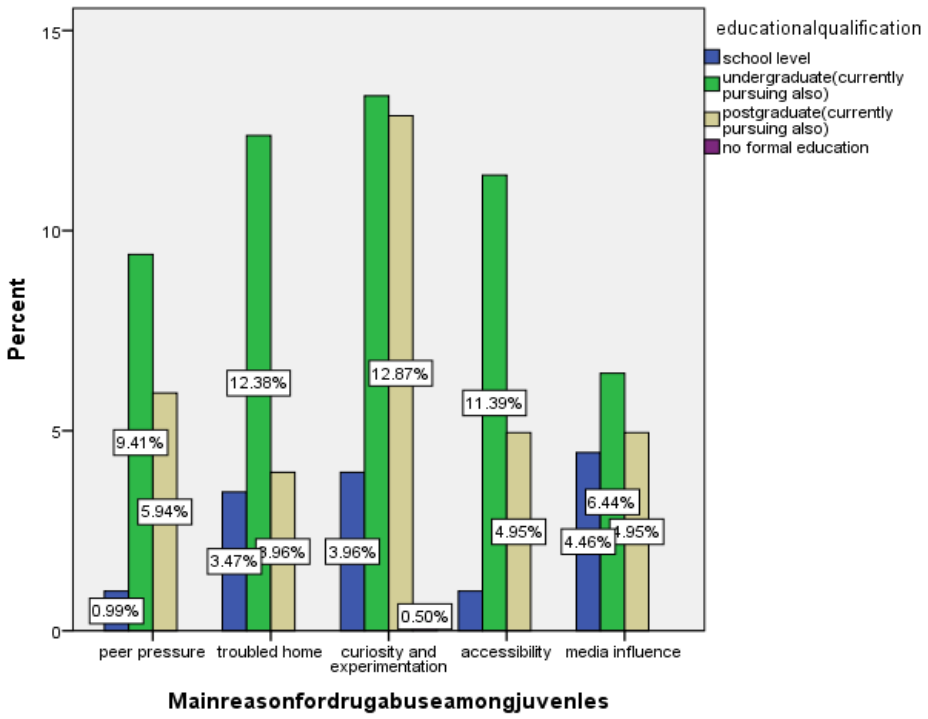

Fig. 4. Relation between educational qualification and main reason for drug abuse among juveniles.

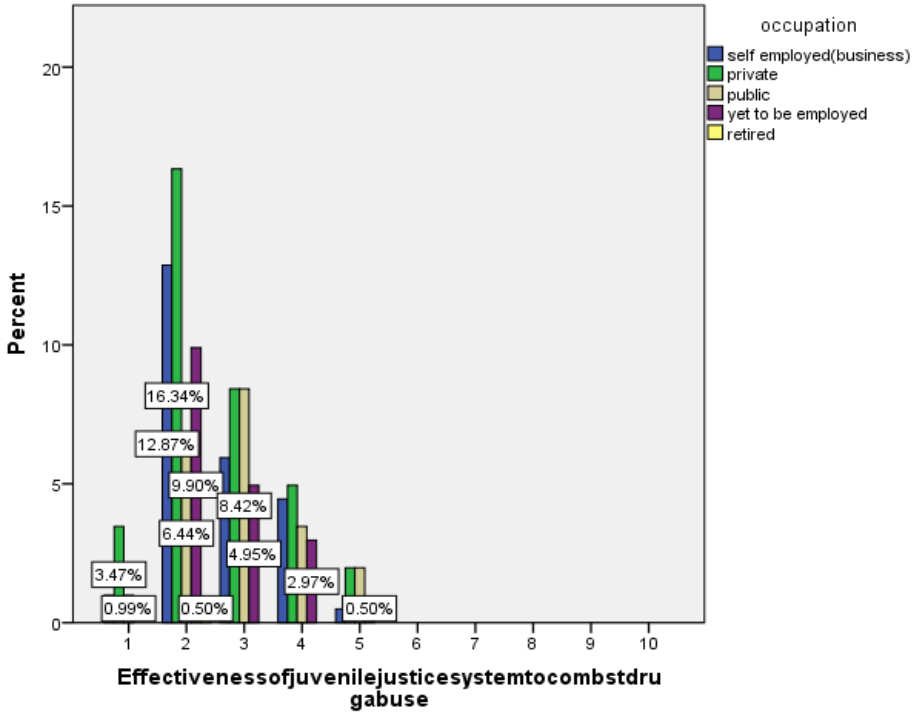

Fig. 5. Relation between occupation and effectiveness of juvenile justice system to combat drug abuse.

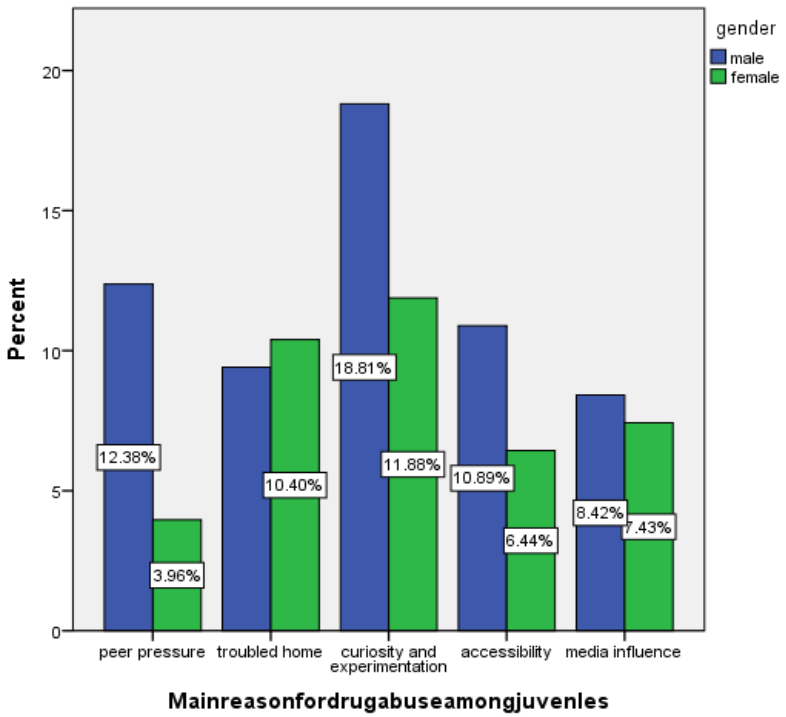

Fig. 6. Relation between gender and main reason for drug abuse among juveniles.

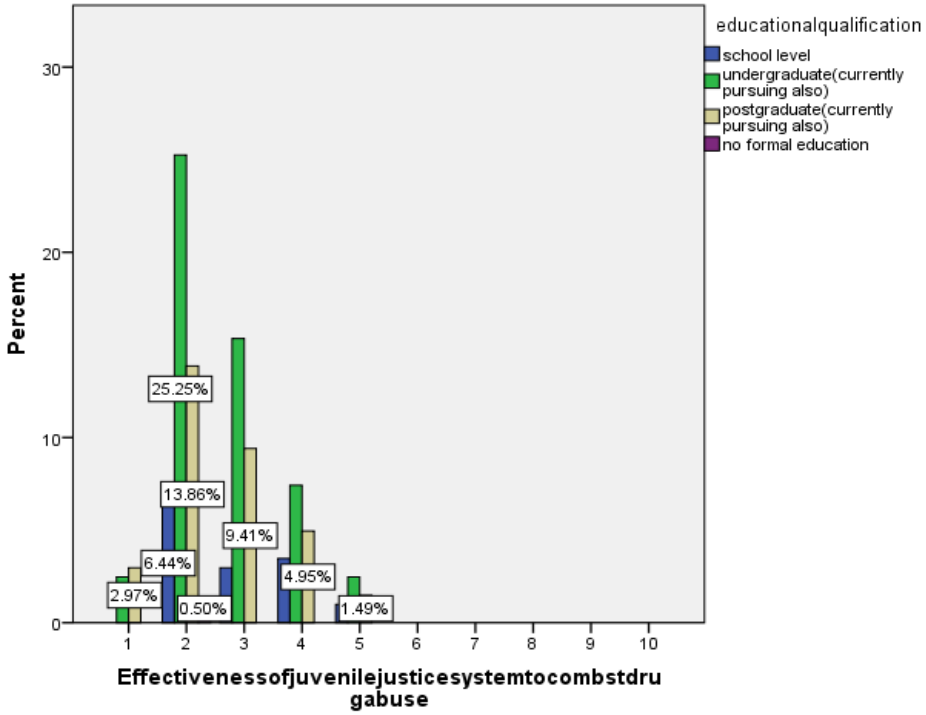

Fig. 7. Relation between educational qualification and effectiveness of juvenile justice system to combat drug abuse.

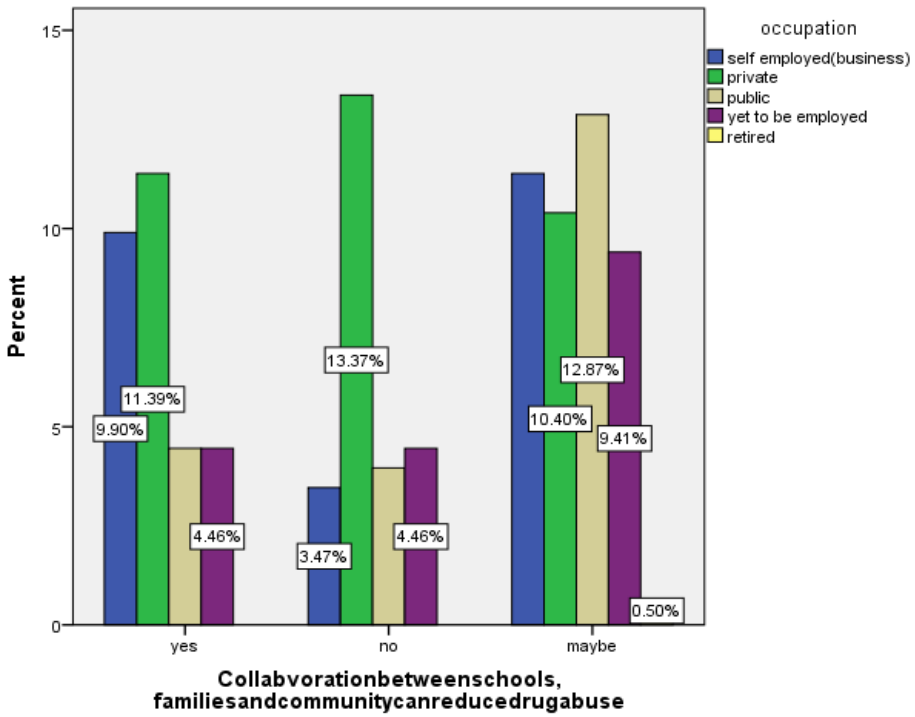

Fig. 8. Relation between occupation and collaboration between schools, families, and community in reducing drug abuse.

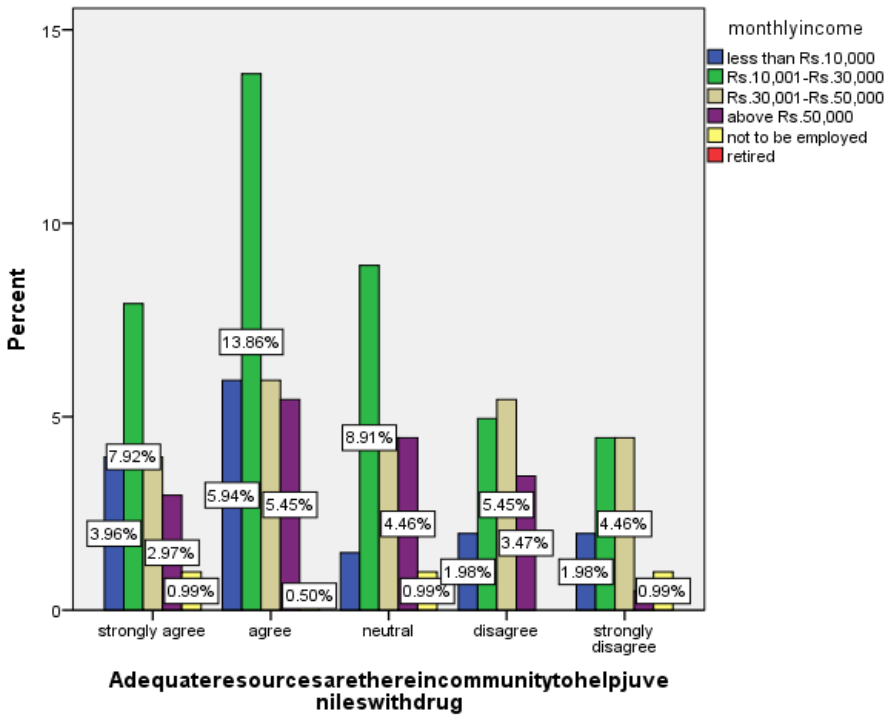

Fig. 9. Relation between monthly income and agreeability on adequate resources in the community to help juveniles with drug abuse.

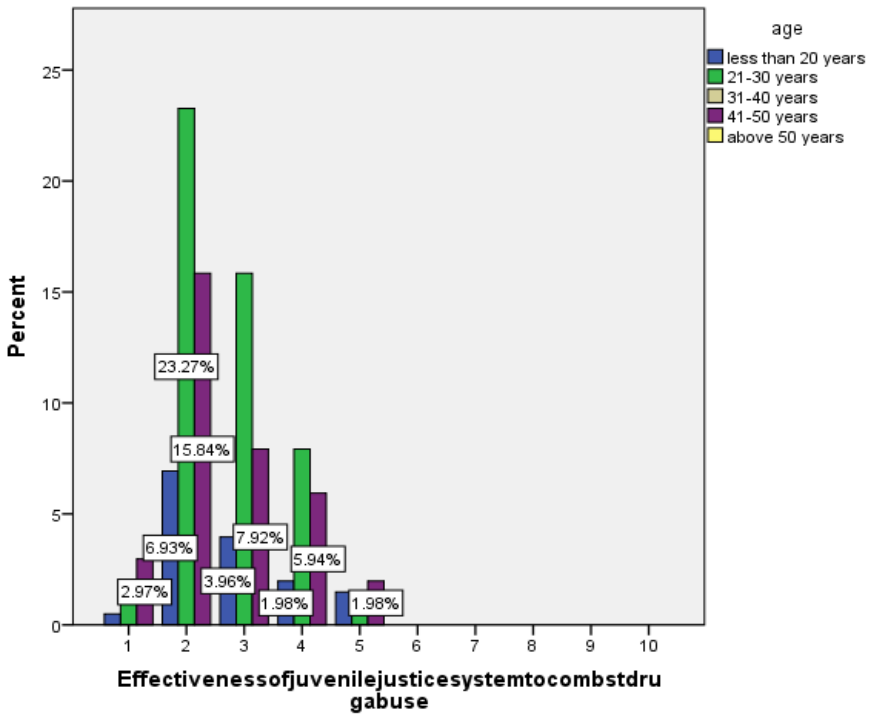

Fig. 10. Relation between age and effectiveness of juvenile justice system to combat drug abuse.

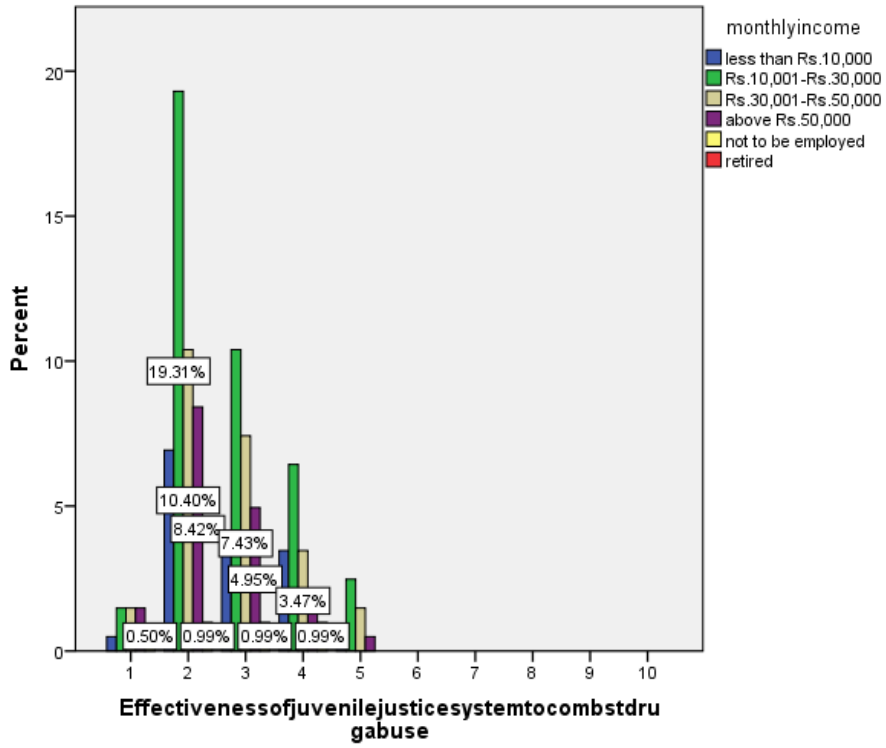

Fig. 11. Relation between monthly income and effectiveness of juvenile justice system to combat drug abuse.

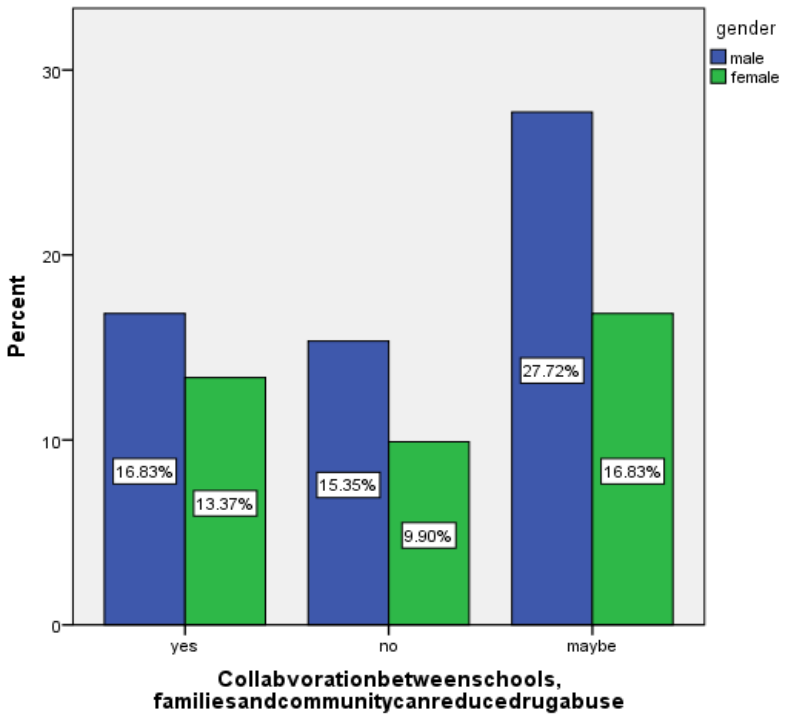

Fig. 12. Relation between gender and collaboration between schools, families, and community in reducing drug abuse.

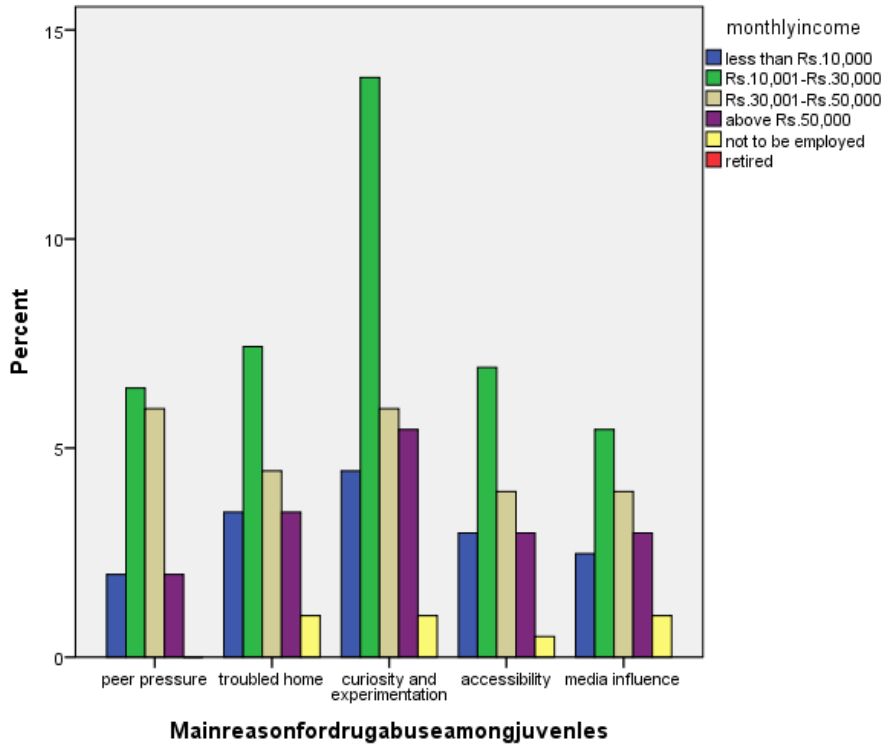

Fig. 13. Relation between monthly income and main reason for drug abuse among juveniles.

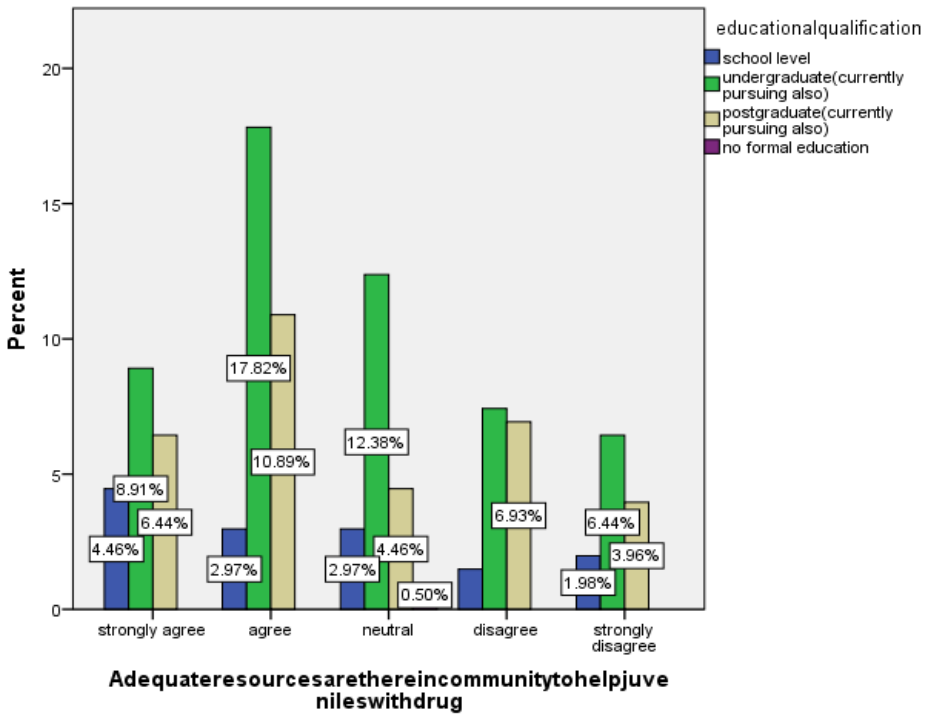

Fig. 14. Relation between educational qualification and agreeability on adequate resources in community to help juveniles with drug abuse.

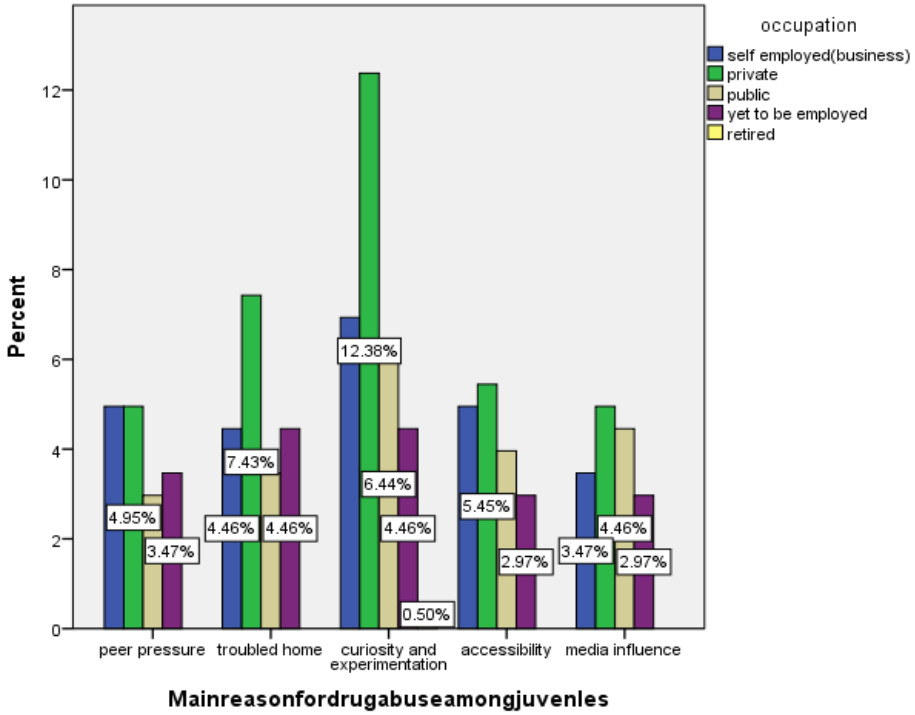

Fig. 15. Relation between occupation and main reason for drug abuse among juveniles.

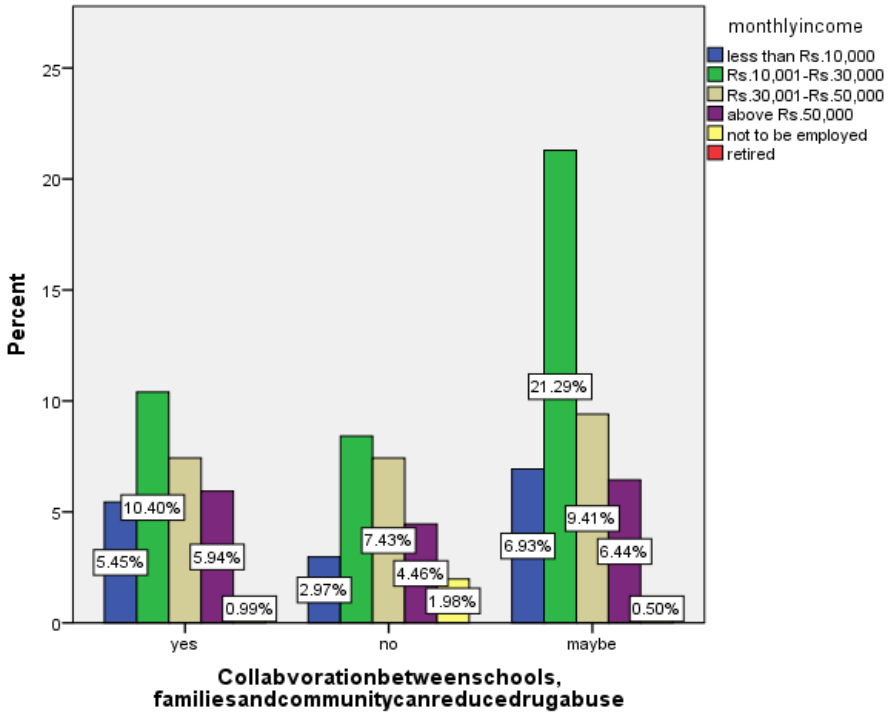

Fig. 16. Relation between monthly income and collaboration between schools, families, and community in reducing drug abuse.

H_0: There is no significant association between age and the collaboration between schools, families and community in reducing drug abuse.

H_1: There is a significant association between age and the collaboration between schools, families and community in reducing drug abuse.

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
age * Collabvorationbetweenschools, familiesandcommunitycanreducedrugabuse	202	100.0%	0	0.0%	202	100.0%

age * Collabvorationbetweenschools,familiesandcommunitycanreducedrugabuse Crosstabulation

Count

		Collabvorationbetweenschools, familiesandcommunitycanreducedrugabuse			Total
		yes	no	maybe	
age	less than 20 years	9	9	12	30
	21-30 years	34	23	45	102
	41-50 years	18	19	33	70
Total		61	51	90	202

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.710[a]	4	.789
Likelihood Ratio	1.720	4	.787
Linear-by-Linear Association	.688	1	.407
N of Valid Cases	202		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.57.

Legend: Chi-square test between age and the collaboration between schools, families and community in reducing drug abuse.

H_0: There is no significant association between gender and adequate resources in helping juveniles with drugs.

H_1: There is a significant association between gender and adequate resources in helping juveniles with drugs.

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
gender * Adequateresourcesarethereincommunitytohelpjuvenileswithdrug	202	100.0%	0	0.0%	202	100.0%

gender * Adequateresourcesarethereincommunitytohelpjuvenileswithdrug Crosstabulation

Count

		Adequateresourcesarethereincommunitytohelpjuvenileswithdrug					Total
		strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	
gender	male	22	42	19	25	13	121
	female	18	22	22	7	12	81
Total		40	64	41	32	25	202

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.486[a]	4	.050
Likelihood Ratio	9.784	4	.044
Linear-by-Linear Association	.056	1	.813
N of Valid Cases	202		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 10.02.

Legend: Chi-square test between gender and adequate resources in helping juveniles with drugs.

H_0: There is no significant association between occupation and main reasons for drug abuse among juveniles.

H_1: There is a significant association between occupation and main reasons for drug abuse among juveniles.

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
occupation * Mainreasonfordrugabuse amongjuvenles	202	100.0%	0	0.0%	202	100.0%

occupation * Mainreasonfordrugabuseamongjuvenles Crosstabulation

Count

		Mainreasonfordrugabuseamongjuvenles					Total
		peer pressure	troubled home	curiosity and experimentation	accessibility	media influence	
occupation	self employed(business)	10	9	14	10	7	50
	private	10	15	25	11	10	71
	public	6	7	13	8	9	43
	yet to be employed	7	9	9	6	6	37
	retired	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total		33	40	62	35	32	202

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.431[a]	16	.983
Likelihood Ratio	6.471	16	.982
Linear-by-Linear Association	.052	1	.819
N of Valid Cases	202		

a. 5 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .16.

Legend: Chi-square test between occupation and main reasons for drug abuse among juveniles.

H_0: There is no significant association between monthly income and effectiveness of the juvenile justice system to combat drug abuse.

H_1: There is a significant association between monthly income and effectiveness of the juvenile justice system to combat drug abuse.

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
monthlyincome * Effectivenessofjuvenilejusticesystemtocombstdrugabuse	202	100.0%	0	0.0%	202	100.0%

monthlyincome * Effectivenessofjuvenilejusticesystemtocombstdrugabuse Crosstabulation

Count

		Effectivenessofjuvenilejusticesystemtocombstdrugabuse					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
monthlyincome	less than Rs.10,000	1	14	8	7	1	31
	Rs.10,001-Rs.30,000	3	39	21	13	5	81
	Rs.30,001-Rs.50,000	3	21	15	7	3	49
	above Rs.50,000	3	17	10	3	1	34
	not to be employed	1	2	2	2	0	7
Total		11	93	56	32	10	202

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.510[a]	16	.962
Likelihood Ratio	7.613	16	.960
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.166	1	.280
N of Valid Cases	202		

a. 14 cells (56.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .35.

Legend: Chi-square test between monthly income and effectiveness of the juvenile justice system to combat drug abuse.

VI. Results

From Figure 1, it is inferred that 22.82% of the respondents belonging to the age group 21–30 have responded with 'maybe' there is some collaboration between school, families, and community in combating drug abuse among juveniles. From Figure 2, it is inferred that 20.79% of the male respondents have agreed that there are adequate resources in the community to combat drug abuse. From Figure 3, it is inferred that 21.29% of the respondents with monthly income ₹10,001–₹20,000 have stated that maybe there is some collaboration between school, families, and community in combating drug abuse among juveniles. From Figure 4, it is inferred that 12.38% of the respondents in the UG level have stated troubled homes are the main reason for drug abuse among juveniles.

From Figure 5, it is inferred that 16.34% of the respondents belonging in the private sector have rated 2 on the scale of 10 for the effectiveness of the juvenile justice system in combating drug abuse. From Figure 6, it is inferred that 18.81% of the male respondents have stated curiosity and experimentation are the main reason for drug abuse among juveniles. From Figure 7, it is inferred that 25.25% of the respondents in the UG level have rated 2 on the scale of 10 for the effectiveness of the juvenile justice system in combating drug abuse. From Figure 8, it is inferred that 12.87% of the respondents belonging to the private sector have responded with 'maybe' there is some collaboration between school, families, and community in combating drug abuse among juveniles.

From Figure 9, it is inferred that 13.86% of the respondents receiving monthly income of ₹10,001–₹20,000 have agreed that there are adequate resources in the community to combat drug abuse. From Figure 10, it is inferred that 23.27% of the respondents in the age group 21–30 have rated 2 on the scale of 10 for the effectiveness of the juvenile justice system in combating drug abuse. From Figure 11, it is inferred that 19.38% of the respondents receiving monthly income of ₹10,001–₹20,000 have rated 2 on the scale of 10 for the effectiveness of the juvenile justice system in combating drug abuse. From Figure 12, it is inferred that 27.72% of the male respondents have responded with 'maybe' there is some collaboration between school, families, and community in combating drug abuse among juveniles.

From Figure 13, it is inferred that 18.81% of the male respondents have stated curiosity and experimentation are the main reason for drug abuse among juveniles. From Figure 14, it is inferred that 17.82% of the respondents in UG level have agreed that there are adequate resources in the community to combat drug abuse. From Figure 15, it is inferred that 12.38% of the respondents in the private sector have stated curiosity and experimentation are the main reasons for drug abuse among juveniles. From Figure 16, it is inferred that 21.29% of the respondents receiving monthly income of ₹10,001–₹20,000 have responded

with 'maybe' there is some collaboration between school, families, and community in combating drug abuse among juveniles.

VII. Discussion

The data gathered from the survey provides valuable insights into perceptions and attitudes regarding juvenile drug abuse and the effectiveness of various interventions across different demographics. A significant proportion of respondents, particularly those in the 21–30 age group (22.82%) and those with a monthly income of ₹10,001–₹20,000 (21.29%), expressed uncertainty about the collaboration between schools, families, and communities in combating juvenile drug abuse (Figs. 1, 3, 16). This indicates a perceived lack of clear and effective coordination among these crucial sectors. Additionally, 12.87% of respondents from the private sector shared this sentiment (Fig. 8), and 27.72% of male respondents also indicated uncertainty about such collaborations (Fig. 12). These responses suggest a need for more visible and communicated efforts to enhance and showcase the collaborative measures in place.

Regarding the adequacy of community resources, 20.79% of male respondents agreed that sufficient resources are available to combat drug abuse (Fig. 2), and 17.82% of respondents at the UG level also agreed (Fig. 14). However, the relatively low percentage of agreement highlights a potential gap in resource availability or awareness. Ensuring that communities are well-equipped and that information about these resources is effectively disseminated could address this issue.

There is a clear indication of dissatisfaction with the juvenile justice system's effectiveness in combating drug abuse among juveniles. Respondents in the private sector (16.34%) and those in the 21–30 age group (23.27%) rated the system poorly, with a score of 2 out of 10 (Figs. 5, 10). Additionally, 25.25% of UG-level respondents and 19.38% of those with a monthly income of ₹10,001–₹20,000 also gave a low rating of 2 (Figs. 7, 11). These results suggest a widespread perception of inefficacy within the justice system, indicating a critical need for reforms and improvements.

The study identifies several perceived primary reasons for drug abuse among juveniles. Troubled homes were cited by 12.38% of respondents at the UG level (Fig. 4), while curiosity and experimentation were highlighted by 18.81% of male respondents and 12.38% of those in the private sector (Figs. 6, 13, 15). These findings suggest that both environmental factors and intrinsic motivations play significant roles. Gender and income disparities are also evident: male respondents show a higher tendency to attribute drug abuse to curiosity and experimentation, while income level also influences perceptions of community collaboration and resource adequacy. Overall, the data underscores the necessity for a multi-faceted approach to combat juvenile drug abuse.

VIII. Conclusion

This study underscores the multifaceted and evolving nature of juvenile drug abuse, highlighting significant variations across different countries and the critical role the justice system plays in addressing this issue. The analysis reveals that socio-economic factors, family dynamics, peer influence, and mental health issues are primary contributors to substance abuse among juveniles globally. The findings indicate that punitive approaches traditionally favored by justice systems are insufficient in effectively mitigating juvenile drug abuse. Instead, there is a clear need for a shift towards more rehabilitative and restorative justice models. These models emphasize mental health support, educational opportunities, and community engagement, aiming to address the root causes of substance abuse and facilitate long-term recovery.

Furthermore, international comparisons reveal that countries with integrated strategies, combining legal, social, and health interventions, tend to have more success in reducing juvenile drug abuse rates. Effective programs are those that involve comprehensive prevention efforts, early intervention, and tailored rehabilitation services. Policy recommendations arising from this study include: adopting a holistic approach by integrating mental health, education, and social services with the justice system; enhancing community-based programs that engage families and local resources; focusing on early intervention to address substance abuse before it escalates; promoting restorative justice by shifting from punitive measures to rehabilitative practices; and improving access to mental health and substance abuse treatment services, particularly in underserved communities. In conclusion, addressing juvenile drug abuse requires a coordinated and multifaceted approach that transcends traditional punitive measures.

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