

The Effectiveness of Drug Awareness Campaigns on College Students' Attitudes and Behaviours: A Perspective Study

Nandhana .S.¹, Ponnusamy .V.², Arun Kumar AR³

^{1,2}III B.A. Criminology, Student, Nehru Arts and Science College, Coimbatore.

³Assistant Professor, Department of Criminology, Nehru Arts and Science College, Coimbatore.

Abstract

Drug awareness campaigns are widely implemented in colleges to educate students about substance abuse and its consequences. This study examines the effectiveness of such campaigns in influencing students' attitudes and behaviors toward drug use. Through surveys, the research evaluates students' awareness levels and risk perceptions. Findings suggest that interactive elements, peer influence, and real-life testimonials significantly impact students' attitudes, fostering negative perceptions of drug use and promoting preventive behaviors. However, the effectiveness varies based on campaign design, frequency, and students' pre-existing beliefs.

This study explores students' perceptions and understanding of the effectiveness of these campaigns, focusing on their views on campaign content, delivery methods, and overall impact. Through surveys and qualitative analysis, the research assesses how students perceive drug awareness initiatives' effectiveness, relevance, and engagement. Findings indicate that students recognize the importance of such campaigns but often question their effectiveness due to factors like outdated, lack of interactivity.. The study emphasizes the need for innovative, student-centered, and customized or tailored approaches to enhance campaign effectiveness and engagement.

Keywords: Drug awareness, student's perception, effectiveness, campaigns, tailored, attitudes.

INTRODUCTION

Substance use and misuse pose a considerable public health challenge, particularly among college students who face academic and social pressures that may lead to drug consumption. This issue has prompted educational institutions to implement a range of drug awareness programs aimed at educating students about the risks and consequences of substance use while promoting a drug-free lifestyle. These programs utilize a variety of methods, including social media campaigns, workshops, and public service announcements, to engage with students. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives in altering student attitudes and behaviors remains a topic of discussion, as some prove successful while others falter due to outdated tactics or a lack of relevance.

This research seeks to assess the effectiveness of drug awareness programs by gathering students' opinions at a specific institution. The goal is to evaluate whether these campaigns achieve their objectives of reducing drug use and enhancing awareness, as well as to identify strategies that may enhance their efficacy. Through the examination of both qualitative and quantitative data, this study will illuminate the

strengths and weaknesses of current campaigning strategies, providing insights to develop more impactful programs tailored to college students.

The findings will significantly influence the design and implementation of future drug prevention programs on college campuses, offering valuable resources for educators, policymakers, and health professionals dedicated to promoting safer and healthier environments in colleges. The research highlights the necessity of customized drug awareness campaigns that resonate with the perspectives of today's youth and suggests possible solutions for improving the effectiveness of these campaigns.

In summary, while drug abuse among students remains a pressing issue, understanding their perceptions of existing drug awareness initiatives is crucial for devising successful strategies to tackle this problem. This study aims to provide insights that could contribute to reducing the negative effects of drug abuse and enhancing campaign effectiveness, ultimately supporting the establishment of drug-free college campuses.

Objectives of the Study:

- To understand the perspective of students on the effectiveness of drug-awareness campaigns.
- To get suggestions from the students to improve the efficiency of the drug-awareness campaigns.
- To provide valuable insights and resources for policymakers and health professionals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Deng and Aslam (2020) examine how effective drug awareness campaigns are by utilizing Google Trends to measure global interest in drugs before and after World Drug Day and its corresponding Action Week in 2018. The study adopts a qualitative methodology, exploring different search categories over a 12-month period and uncovering that the overall effect of the campaigns was moderate and fleeting, with a brief surge in public interest that swiftly waned after the campaigns ended. The research underscores that web searches are the primary means for individuals to seek drug-related information, with Nigeria, Liberia, Zambia, Ghana, and Tonga registering the highest levels of interest in drug-related searches. "Pharmaceutical drugs" was identified as the most commonly searched topic, highlighting significant public anxiety regarding the misuse of prescription medications. The results imply that digital platforms should be emphasized for the distribution of drug-related information, and campaigners ought to create enduring strategies that promote sustained public engagement by customizing content to address pressing public issues.
- The 1997 report from the U.S. Department of Education, titled "Designing Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Programs in Higher Education," presents a theoretical framework aimed at effectively preventing substance abuse in colleges in response to growing concerns about alcohol and drug use among students that emerged since the 1980s. Supported by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), the report introduces the Social Role Negotiation Model (SRN), which considers substance use as a factor influenced by social contexts and individual growth. It suggests that students resort to substance use as a means to navigate social roles and conform to peer expectations, often viewing heavy drinking as an integral aspect of the college experience. The document critiques the ways in which institutional traditions and media representations reinforce norms surrounding substance use, making prevention efforts more challenging. It classifies prevention strategies into three categories: punishment, treatment, and education, highlighting that education

represents the most effective method. The Social Ecology Theory further indicates that prevention initiatives should take into account the wider campus environment, which includes institutional policies and community factors. The paper advocates for comprehensive initiatives that feature social norms campaigns, peer education, and environmental interventions to rectify misperceptions about substance use and empower students. In summary, it emphasizes the necessity for integrated approaches to effectively confront substance abuse issues within college environments.

- Mbutia (2016) examines the relationship between substance use, risky sexual behaviors, and the efficacy of awareness campaigns aimed at combating alcohol and drug abuse among university students in coastal Kenya. Utilizing a mixed-method research approach, the study integrates qualitative interviews with deans and counselors, focus group discussions with students, and quasi-experimental quantitative surveys. The results reveal a high incidence of substance use, particularly alcohol, alongside risky sexual behaviors, such as early engagement in sexual activities and inconsistent condom usage. Factors contributing to these behaviors include gender, age, religious involvement, and financial resources, with male students being more inclined to use substances. A notable correlation between substance use and risky sexual behavior was identified, increasing the risk of sexually transmitted infections. Despite the existence of awareness campaigns at the Technical University of Mombasa, the prevalence of substance use rose at both institutions, indicating that information-driven campaigns are not sufficient. The study advises implementing comprehensive prevention strategies that tackle wider social and environmental influences, including stricter regulations, peer support initiatives, and collaboration among stakeholders to effectively address substance abuse and encourage responsible behavior.
- Fapohunda, Bolarinwa, and Azeez (2023) examine the efficacy of marijuana prevention programs at Lagos State University, concentrating on the well-being of students and the goal of sustaining a drug-free campus. A descriptive survey design was utilized to gather data from 432 out of 500 students via convenience sampling, guided by the Health Belief Model (HBM). The results indicate a notable lack of awareness regarding marijuana prevention initiatives, with 62.3% of participants unaware of any programs, suggesting that the existing campaigns are not effective. Despite the risks involved, 62.7% of students indicated that they use marijuana, with 40.6% reporting daily use. Factors influencing usage include peer pressure, availability, societal norms, and media representations. Although student orientation initiatives and counseling services are acknowledged, they do not effectively engage the student demographic. Suggested actions include obligatory workshops for first-year students, a confidential helpline, and improved awareness campaigns utilizing diverse communication methods. The research advocates for a holistic strategy to tackle marijuana consumption, highlighting the need for education, stricter policy implementation, and enhanced support systems for students to foster a healthier academic atmosphere.
- Amulya, Velayudhan, and Nayak (2022) assess the knowledge and perceptions of nursing students regarding the detrimental impacts of substance use within nursing colleges located in Udupi District, Karnataka, India. The research, driven by the increasing incidence of substance use among young adults, included 282 undergraduate nursing students aged 18 to 21, utilizing a quantitative, descriptive correlational approach through an online questionnaire distributed from March 25 to May 22, 2021. Results revealed that 40.7% of the students exhibited low awareness of the harmful effects associated with substance use, particularly concerning treatment options. While 91.1% showed a favorable attitude towards preventing substance use, there was no significant correlation found between

awareness and attitude ($r = .021, p = .731$), which contrasts with the findings of earlier studies. The research highlights the necessity for targeted awareness initiatives to fill knowledge gaps and recommends organized educational programs that concentrate on treatment options and long-term health ramifications. Additional research is recommended to investigate the factors that influence attitudes and to create effective interventions for promoting behavioral change.

Research Gap

This research gap highlights the need for a focused study that explores how students from a particular college perceive drug awareness efforts, providing deeper insights into their effectiveness and potential shortcomings from the perspective of the target audience.

Research Questions:

1. Are these drug awareness campaigns effective in reducing drug abuse among students?
2. If not, why are they not effective?
3. What do the students think about these campaigns?
4. What can be done to improve the effectiveness of these campaigns?

Hypothesis:

H0: The drug awareness campaigns are not efficient in reducing drug abuse among college students.

H1: The drug awareness campaigns are efficient in reducing drug abuse among college students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is designed with both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis to understand students' perspectives. The primary data collected from the respondents are constructed as a questionnaire method to collect data based on the objective by using google forms.

The Data is analysed by using the chi-square test to understand the association between participating in drug awareness campaigns and the student's perspective as to the effectiveness of these campaigns, in short ,to prove the hypothesis. Furthermore the results are shown to understand the analysis.

Sampling Method:

The study uses convenience sampling, as the respondents are selected from the institution who are readily available and easily accessible for this particular study.

The sample size is 350 nos.

RESULTS

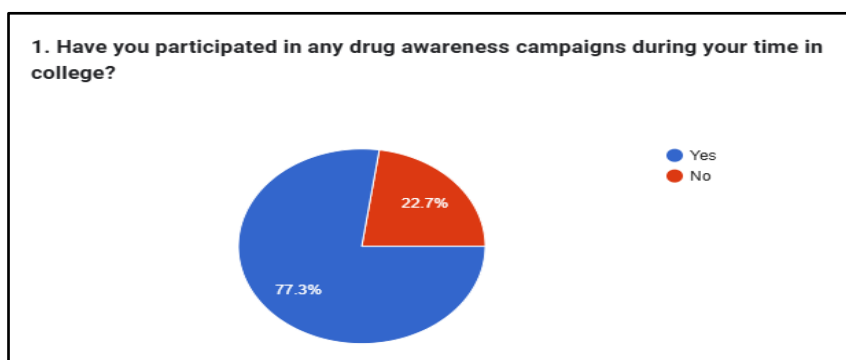


Figure 10

Figure 10 shows that as per the survey, 77.3% of the respondents attended the drug awareness campaign. 22.7% of the respondents did not attend the drug awareness campaign.

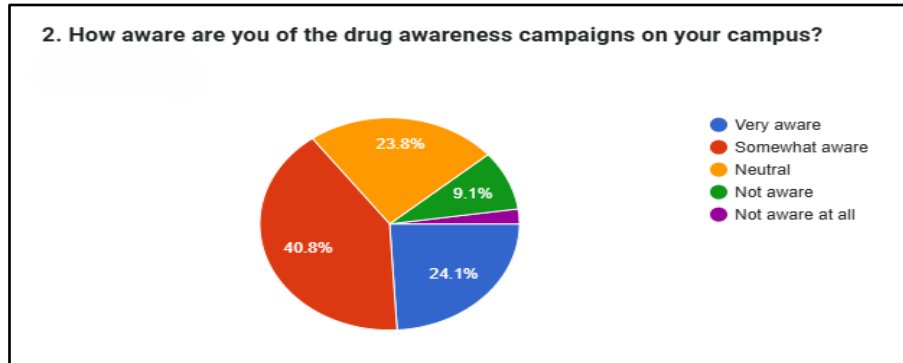


Fig 11

Figure 11 shows that as per the survey, 24.1% of the respondents are very aware of the drug campaigns. 40.8 % of the respondents are somewhat aware. 23.8% have no comments, 9.1% are not aware, and very few are not aware at all.

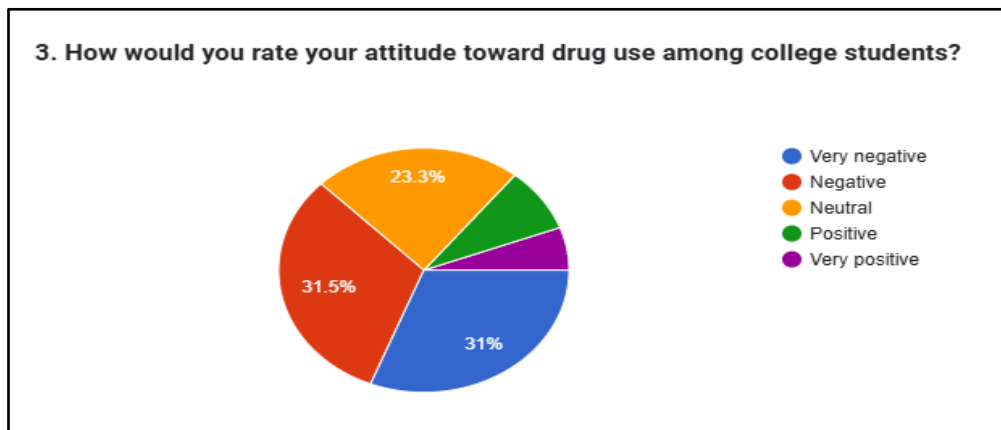


Fig 12

Figure 12 shows that as per the survey, 62.5% of the respondents have a negative attitude towards these drug awareness campaigns. 23.3% have no comments, and only 14.2% have positive attitudes towards these campaigns.

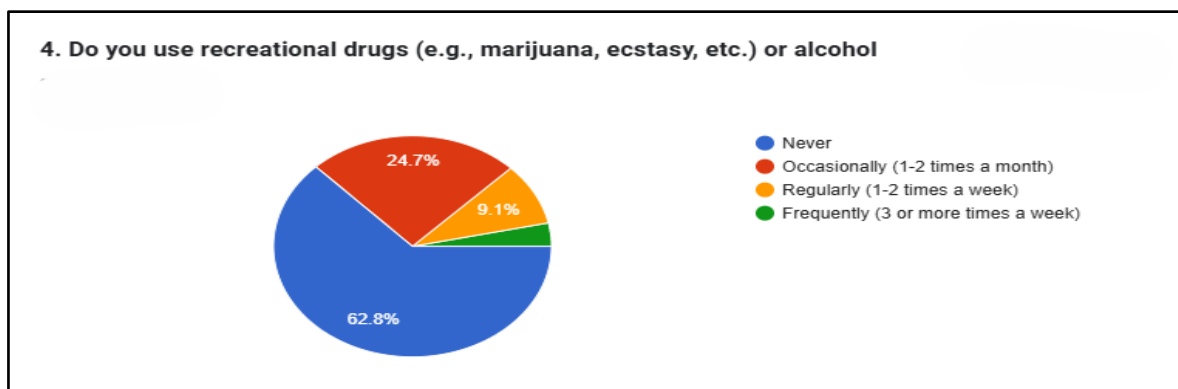


Fig 13

Figure 13 shows that, as per the survey, 62.8% don't use drugs, 24.7% use them occasionally, 9.1% use them regularly, and 3.4% use them frequently.

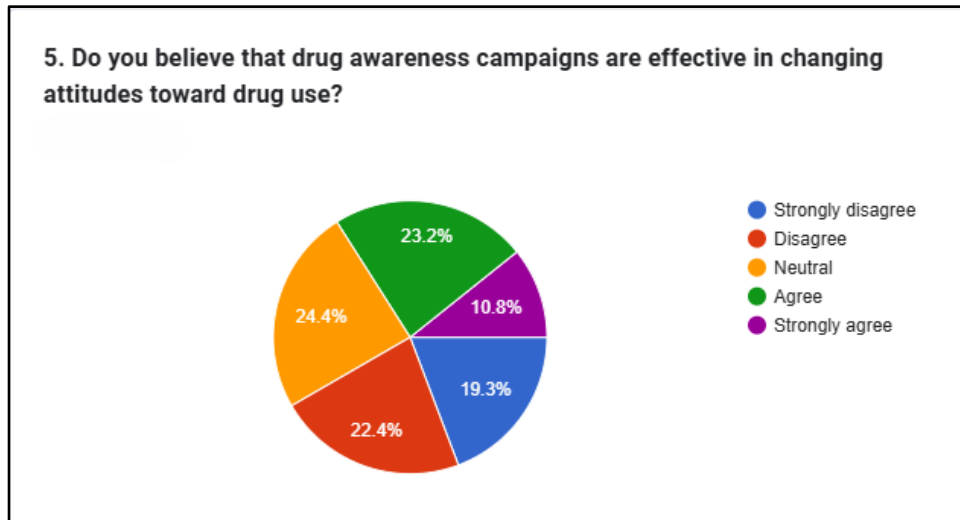


Fig 14

Figure 14 shows that as per the survey, 41.7% disagree that drug awareness campaigns are effective in changing attitudes, 24.4% don't have any opinion, while 34% agree that they do have effective.

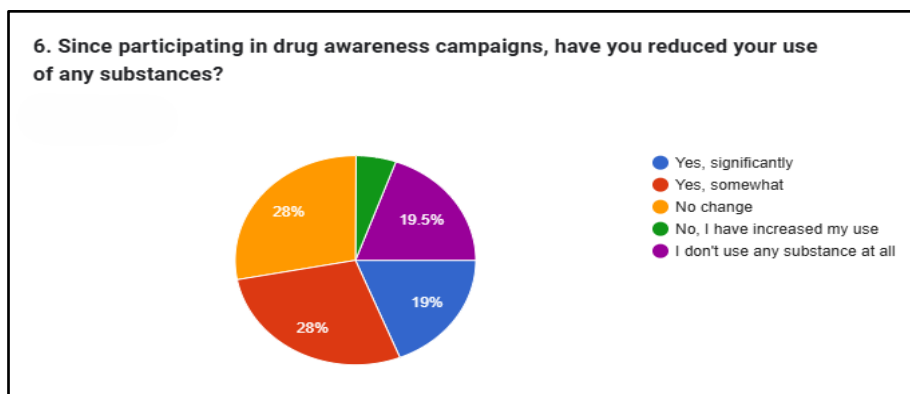


Fig 15

Figure 15 shows that as per the survey, 19.5% claim that they don't use any substance at all, 47.5% agree that they have reduced their usage, 28% claim that they were no changes, and 5.4% claim that they have increased their usage.

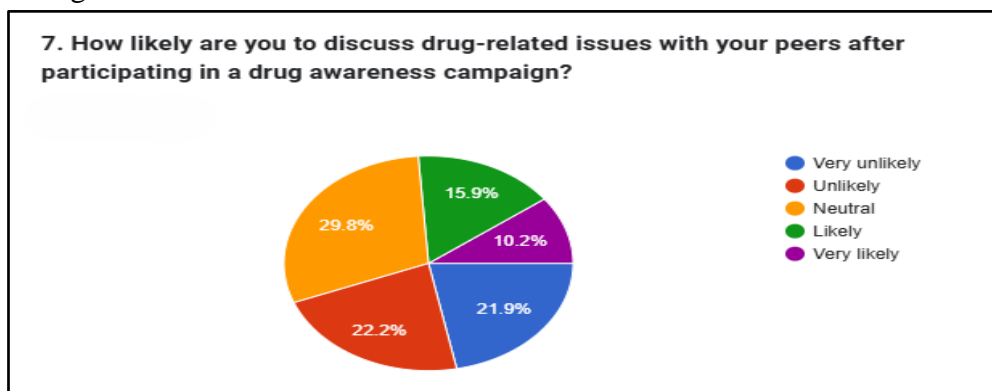


Fig 16

Figure 16 shows that as per the survey, 44.1% don't discuss about these campaigns with their friends and peers, 29.8% don't have any opinion, 26.1% do share their experience to their peers.

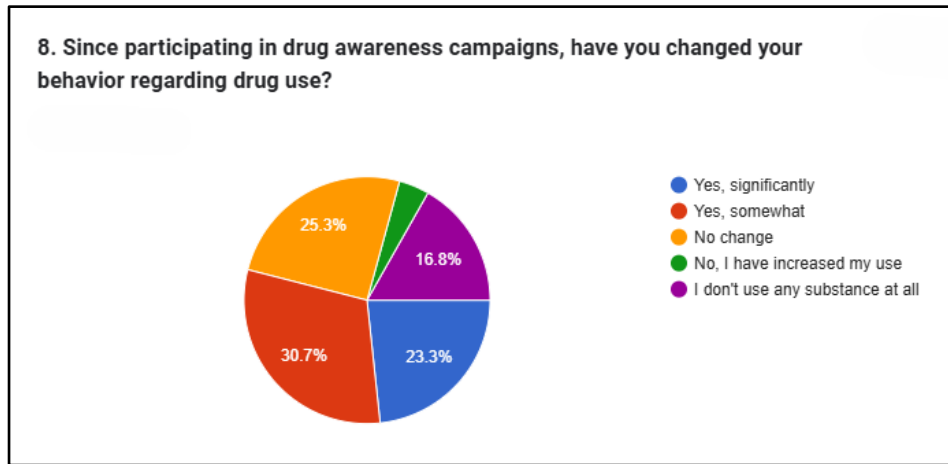


Fig 17

Figure 17 shows that as per the survey, 16.8% don't use any substance at all, 56% have changed their behaviour, 25.3% claim there are no changes, 4% disagree.

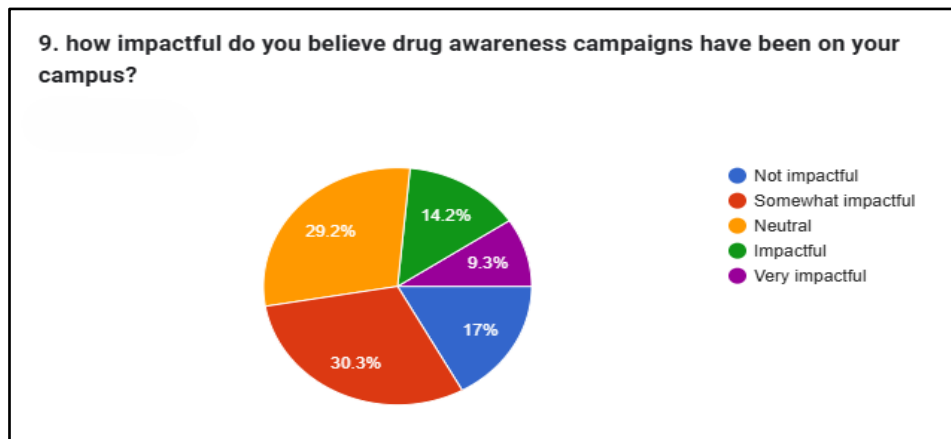


Fig 18

Figure 18 shows that as per the survey, 17% believe they were not impactful, 29.2% don't have any opinions, 30.3% believe they were somewhat impactful, 23.5% believe they were indeed impactful.

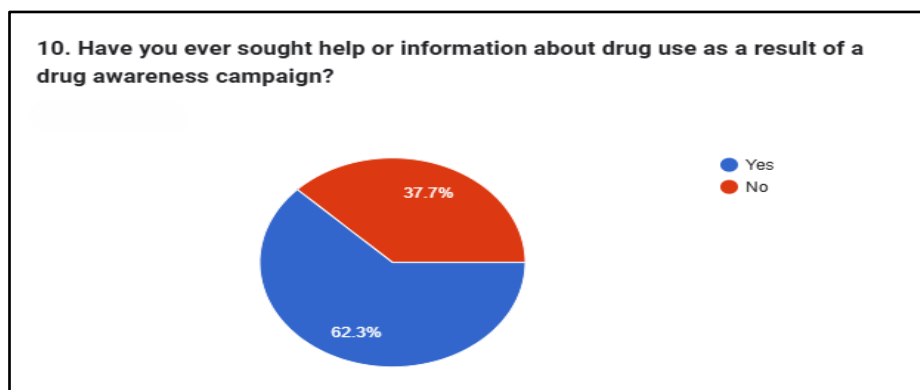


Fig 19

Figure 19 shows that as per the survey, 62.3% have sought help as a result of these campaigns, 37.7% have not.

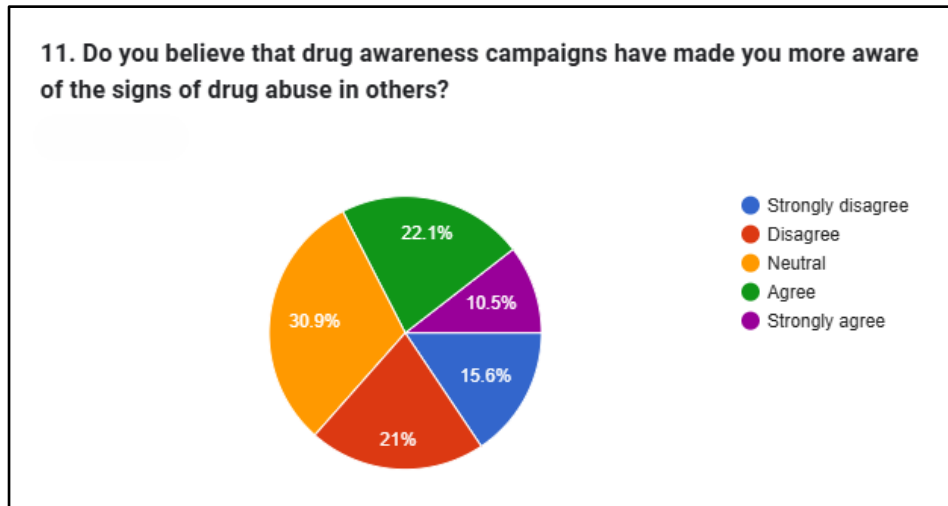


Fig 20

Figure 20 shows that as per the survey, 36.6% disagree that these campaigns have made them more aware, 30.9% don't have any opinions, 32.6% agree that they have made them more aware.

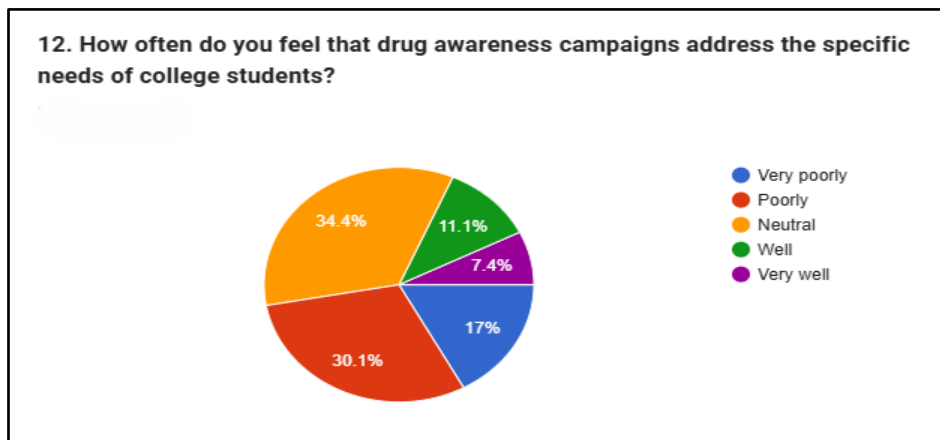


Fig 21

Figure 21 shows that as per the survey, 47.1% of the respondents don't feel that the campaigns address the specific needs of colleges, 34.4% have no opinions, only 18.5% feel that they do so.

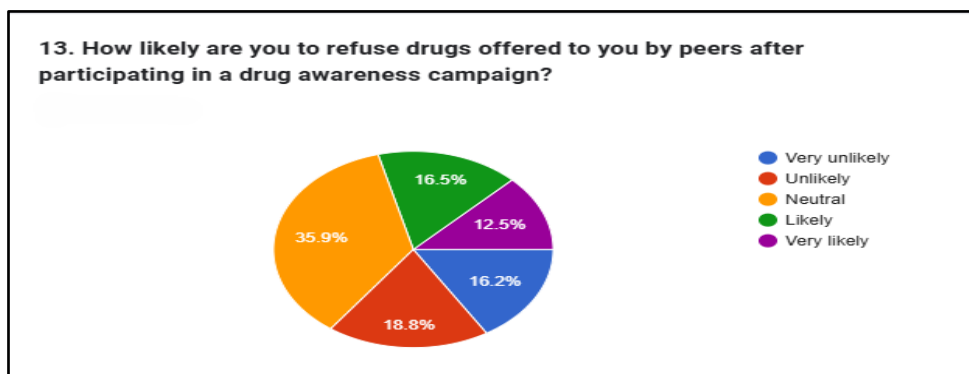


Fig 22

Figure 22 shows that as per the survey, 35% of the respondents feel that they might not refuse drugs, 35.9% have no opinions, and 29% claim that they will refuse.

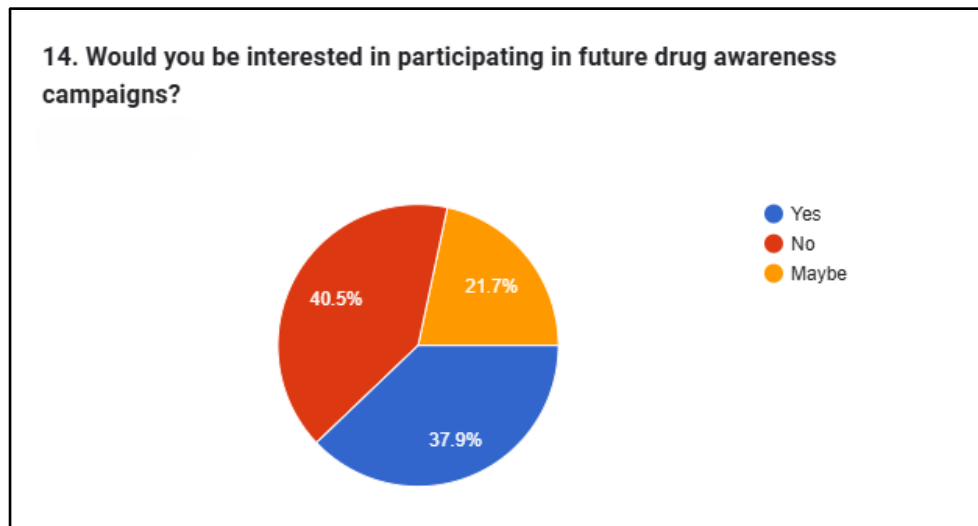


Fig 23

Figure 23 shows that as per the survey, 37.9% show interest in participating in future campaigns, 21.7% have neutral opinions, while 40.5% have downright refused to show interest in campaigns.

Discussion:

By analyzing the results we got, we can understand the perspective of the students regarding the drug awareness campaigns and their effectiveness. By looking at the results, we can say that the students don't believe that these campaigns are as effective as they should be.

Suggestions from the students to improve the efficiency of the drug-awareness campaigns:

Finally, at the end, there was one open-ended question asked to get students' suggestions on what could be done to improve these campaigns. The following are some of the suggestions:

- Sharing real-life stories from people who've struggled with substance use and recovered can humanize the issue and make the campaign more impactful.
- In addition to the campaign, add programs
- Conduct the campaign with a specific message to the attendees
- Conduct the campaign in a practical way and explain the consequences in a practical way
- Have a clear idea about the substances and clearly explain the consequences of substances
- Conduct more awareness campaigns with demo sessions
- Conduct the awareness campaign in effective way. The authorities should have a clear idea about the current drugs and their consequences
- aimed towards minimizing the abuse of drugs & alcohol, encouraging addicts/dependents to access treatment.
- Conduct the campaign in effective way by creating awareness through the dramas or mock way
- They should make it tailored to the college students' needs

By going through the suggestions, we can understand that students require more engaging and interactive sessions. And they ask for tailored methods of rehabilitation or awareness. They also feel that the

campaigns are not as aware about the drug issues itself, and that they need to have a clear idea about it. They also talk about using demo sessions, innovative, real-life experience, and more.

Data Interpretation:

Two Chi-square tests were done to understand the association between the efficiency of drug awareness campaigns and students’ perspectives. To prove whether the hypothesis is rejected or accepted, we need to find the p-value.

If the p-value is greater than 0.05 i.e (p-value > 0.05), then we cannot reject the null hypothesis H0, but if the p-value is less than 0.05 i.e (p-value < 0.05), then we can reject the alternative the null hypothesis. To find the p-value, we need to use the chi-square formula, which is,

$$\chi^2 = \sum (O_i - E_i)^2 / E_i$$

- χ^2 : The chi-square statistic
- O_i : The observed value
- E_i : The expected value

The first test was done by addressing two questions: the number of participants and the effectiveness or reduction of drug use. The second test is between participants seeking help and whether the specific needs are being met. The following are the results.

CHI-SQUARE TEST No.1:

Observed values:

Believe	I don't use any substance at all	No change	No, I have increased my use	Yes, significantly	Yes, somewhat	Grand Total
Agree	50	14	5	21	30	120
Disagree	4	44	8	38	53	147
Neutral	15	41	6	8	16	86
Grand Total	69	99	19	67	99	353

Expected values:

Believe	I don't use any substance at all	No change	No, I have increased my use	Yes, significantly	Yes, somewhat
Agree	23.45609065	33.65439093	6.458923513	22.77620397	33.65439093
Disagree	28.73371105	41.2266289	7.912181303	27.90084986	41.2266289
Neutral	16.8101983	24.11898017	4.628895184	16.32294618	24.11898017

Formula :[(O-E)^2/E]

Believe	I don't use any substance at all	No change	No, I have increased my use	Yes, significantly	Yes, somewhat
Agree	30.03821626	11.47829666	0.3295375478	0.1385173988	0.3968151773

Disagree	21.29054828	0.1865684266	0.0009747152178	3.655545767	3.362202316
Neutral	0.1949303529	11.81512769	0.4061289663	4.243806988	2.733027621

RESULT OF 1ST CHI-SQUARE TEST:

Chi²	3.283574704
DF	2
P-Value	0.1936336413

CHI-SQUARE TEST No.2:

Observed values:

help	Neutral	Poorly	Well	Grand Total
No	45	68	20	133
Yes	77	97	44	218
Grand Total	122	166	65	353

Expected values:

help	Neutral	Poorly	Well
No	45.96600567	62.54390935	24.49008499
Yes	75.3427762	102.5155807	40.14164306

Formula :[(O-E)²/E]

help	Neutral	Poorly	Well
No	0.02030124073	0.4759684118	0.8232255295
Yes	0.03645194468	0.2967512903	0.3708597144

RESULT OF 2ST CHI-SQUARE TEST:

Chi²	2.023558131
DF	2
P-Value	0.3635715861

Discussion:

By looking at the p-value, we can see that both of them are greater than 0.05, therefore, we cannot reject the null hypothesis and have to accept it. Which means, we can see that based on the analysis, that the drug awareness campaigns are not as effective as they are supposed to be among college students, according to students' perspectives.

By analyzing and going through all the data, we can say that in this particular institution, drug awareness campaigns are not effective, according to the students. This shows the need to conduct such studies in other institutions and figure out solutions for this issue. This data can be taken as an example to emphasize the need of new, innovative, tailored and advanced means of awareness and rehabilitation are required to reduce or potential completely eradicate this issue.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Investigate whether social media-based campaigns (Instagram, YouTube) are more effective than traditional methods (seminars, posters, public talks) in influencing student attitudes and behaviors.
- Conduct studies to assess whether drug awareness campaigns lead to sustained changes in behavior or if their effects fade over time.
- Explore how cultural backgrounds, religious beliefs, and regional factors influence the effectiveness of drug prevention strategies among college students.
- Study why some students resist or dismiss drug awareness messaging despite being informed, focusing on cognitive biases, peer pressure, and personal beliefs.
- Examine whether campaigns that involve peer educators, real-life testimonials, or interactive elements (e.g., experiences, role-playing) are more effective than standard lecture-based approaches.

CONCLUSION

Drug awareness campaigns play a vital role in informing college students about substance abuse and strategies for prevention; however, their impact is frequently scrutinized. Numerous students perceive these initiatives as obsolete and uninspiring, resulting in a disconnect between heightened awareness and actual changes in behavior. Statistical evaluations reveal that involvement in awareness programs does not reliably lead to a decrease in substance use, underscoring the necessity for more engaging, student-focused methods, such as firsthand accounts and discussions led by peers. The study highlights the significance of customizing campaigns to meet the unique needs of students, taking into account elements like peer pressure and the culture of the campus. Furthermore, it advocates for continuous follow-up and persistent prevention efforts instead of single events, incorporating drug education into academic programs and campus regulations. Collaborative relationships among educators, lawmakers, and student groups are essential for developing effective, research-supported prevention methods. In summary, the study calls for a reevaluation of drug awareness campaigns to better meet the changing requirements of college students and proposes that future research should concentrate on efficient communication tactics and evidence-based models for sustained behavior modification.

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