

Substance Use And Its Prevalence In Various Migration Scenarios: A Reflective Discussion

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Abstract

Migration, whether voluntary, forced, or transnational, greatly impacts substance use trends within migrant communities. This study explores the association between migration and substance use, emphasizing the diverse factors that affect these behaviors across different migration types. Acculturation, generational status, and mental health difficulties contribute to the susceptibility of migrating populations, including students, refugees, and transnational migrants. The study indicates that migrant students, especially those facing challenges in academic and social adaptation, are at higher risk of substance use. Forced migrants, frequently contending with trauma, marginalization, and not a proper support, encounter increased hazards. Furthermore, transnational migration complicates patterns of substance use, as migrants may partake in substance use beyond national boundaries. Understanding these processes is essential for formulating specific strategies to help vulnerable migratory populations. The study highlights a need for additional research to fill gaps in our comprehension of migration-related substance use, especially within humanitarian and transnational frameworks, to inform effective public health policies and treatment approaches.

Keywords: Migration, Substance Use, Substance Use Disorders, Vulnerability, Migrant Populations.

I. INTRODUCTION

The movement of a population across a considerable distance is termed as migration. Migration has occurred in both ancient and modern eras for various reasons. Migration occurs seasonally or in cycles, and it also aims for enhanced security and survival, leaving natural disasters and conflicts, and engaging in trade and pilgrimage. Those who migrate carry a fragment of their native culture, enhancing the cultural tapestry of their new environment. This cultural exchange is a fascinating aspect of migration that makes people wonder about it and embrace the diversity that it brings. It is also a complex tapestry of culinary habits, traditions, and cultures that is brought along in this process of migration, which is more than just moving from one place to another. Nevertheless, due to migration, this might occasionally negatively impact the new land. Numerous risks are often encountered by them, such as a lack of safe and legal routes, exposure to exploitative smugglers, a lack of documentation, a lack of resources, cruel and degrading treatment, assault, drug exposure, and so forth (CRITERIA, 2023). One of the adverse impacts is the diffusion of drug use from one country to another, which may occur by migration of its bearers, through the direct borrowing of traits or artifacts, or via the transmission of ideas involving a certain process or behavior (Westermeyer, 1987). Displaced individuals exhibit a greater vulnerability to addiction and substance abuse. This may result from greater exposure to substance misuse and addiction risk factors, including familial conflict and high stress, alongside an absence of safety factors such as caregiver supervision or a secure environment (Substance Use Disorder in Humanitarian Setting, 2023).

People usually desire a better life for themselves and their families; hence, for various motives, people migrate within states, countries, and continents, sometimes legally and sometimes undocumented. However, in this process the vulnerability has been seen in both the native population as well as the migratory individual in a variety of ways, including substance abuse, as initially discovered by Krupinski et al. he observed that Australia, immigrants and refugees had low rates of substance misuse in the first few years after relocation. Several years after relocation, substance usage rates continue to rise. The types of substances consumed and the prevalence of substance abuse differ by ethnic group (Westermeyer, 1999). Despite this higher number of people moving around the world, the prevalence of substance use varies depending on the migrant community being studied and the substance use measurements used. Cultural differences, societal acceptability of substance use, substance availability, and gender may all influence migrants' substance use habits, which may evolve over time in new host countries (Salama et al., 2020). Substance use problems were assumed to be more common among displaced people residing in refugee camps than among displaced populations residing in local communities. (Substance Use Disorder in Humanitarian Setting, 2023)

II. OBJECTIVE

The study aims to explore how migration (voluntary, forced, and transnational, educational) affects substance use habits among migrants. Investigate how acculturation and generational status impact substance use among migrants.

III. METHOD AND MATERIALS

This study employs a desk research methodology to discover, assess, and integrate existing literature about the connection between migration and substance use, concentrating on themes such as voluntary migration, forced displacement, and transnational migration etc. The review aims to encompass a wide array of findings, highlight gaps in the literature, and establish a basis for future empirical study. A lot of academic databases, like PubMed, PsycINFO, Scopus, and Google Scholar, will be searched for peer-reviewed studies, articles, and reviews that are linked to migration and substance use for the review. The differences and similarities between study results will be compared, with a focus on how different groups of migrants experience drug use in different ways. This review will show the main things that put migrant groups at risk for and in favor of substance use.

IV. RESULT

1. First Generation And Second-Born Generation Immigration And Substance Use

The terms immigration and migration are frequently used interchangeably. Since migration refers to the broad movement of people from one location to another. Emigration is the act of leaving one's home country to live abroad, whereas immigration is the act of entering and settling in a new one (Attestation & Apostille Service, n.d.), but according to the (Tenement Museum, n.d.) They define "Immigration as one type of migration. Immigration is usually done by choice and is always a move from one country to another." So the review also tries to focus on comprehending immigration as a type of migration. So, the terms "first-generation" and "second-generation" are used without widespread agreement when referring to immigrants (Moffett, 2021). However, the Harvard Graduate School of Education states that a first-generation immigrant is born outside of the United States. Those who immigrated to the United States as children are known as first-generation immigrants. Although their parents were born overseas, second-generation immigrants were born here (Immigration initiative, 2021). One of the typical characteristics of immigrants and migrants is substance abuse, and numerous studies have indicated that the risk is higher for immigrants from different generations of immigrants. Several factors influence youth immigrants' substance-use behaviors. Adolescents who come from cultures that firmly forbid substance use and place a high value on parental authority, for instance, are less likely than adolescents from nations where substance misuse is widespread to abuse substances. (*Substance Use and Immigrant Youth*, n.d.)

According to a study conducted in the United States, substance use disorders are less likely in first- and second-generation immigrant adolescents than in third- or later generations. The same survey indicates that recently arrived immigrants (those who have been settled for less than four years) have the lowest rates of substance misuse (Almeida et al., 2012). Additionally, immigrants were found to use illegal substances, alcohol, and tobacco less frequently than their U.S.-born counterparts. Additionally, they often adopted substance usage patterns similar to those of the native-born population as a result of their exposure to mainstream American society (Bui, 2013). Interm of Asian Indian immigrants in the United States face the combined stresses of acculturation, lack of familiar sources of support, racism, and discrimination (Rastogi & Wadhwa, 2006a). Ethnic identity is another challenge that the younger generation faces. Understanding the distinctive cultural traits of this community, such as gender and generational hierarchy in families and the role of shame that make it "vulnerable" to drug use, is crucial. Outside of the extended family, Asian Indians typically keep strict boundaries. (Das & Kemp, 1997; Rastogi & Wadhwa, 2006b; Sadowsky et al., 1995). However, Many studies have shown that native-born children of immigrants experience more depression and family conflict and perceived discrimination and are at a higher risk for drug use than their parents (Salerno et al., 2019).

In another study, it was discovered that native-born Americans had the highest prevalence of substance use disorders, followed by second-generation immigrants, who had a slightly lower prevalence, and first-generation immigrants, who had a significantly lower prevalence. According to (Salas-Wright et al., 2014). Those who immigrated throughout adolescence (ages 12–17) and adulthood (ages 18 and above) had the highest adjusted risk ratios. The prevalence and patterns of substance use and substance

use disorders among people in humanitarian settings may be influenced by the type of substance used in their home or host nation, as well as changes in the availability and cost of substances (Substance Use Disorder in Humanitarian Setting, 2023).

2. Migrant Students And Their Association With Substances

Several countries acknowledge the worth of students as embryonic skilled migrants who provide the benefits of new information to the labor market at an affordable price (Raghuram, 2013). The migration data portal reports that there were over 6.4 million international students in 2021, an increase from 2 million in 2000 (Migration data portal, 2023b). The United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Canada, France, Türkiye, China, the Netherlands, and Korea were home to over half of the 6.4 million international students. As of 2021, the United States of America (2%), Germany (2%), Uzbekistan (2%), France (2%), and China (16% of all international students worldwide) were the most common countries of origin for international students (Migration data portal, 2023b). The young adult's life undergoes a transformation when entering university. These people's susceptibility to new experiences and the formation of new social networks may grow, which may have an impact on their use of illegal drugs.(Demenech et al., 2019). Numerous variables contribute to students' substance usage, beginning with the strain of applying to colleges and managing their stress. Since universities are located in urban areas in countries like India, students there relocate to live in hostels, adjust to a new course, and deal with family separation, unmonitored spending, loneliness, despair, and worry (Pradeep Kumar et al., 2024). Research conducted in Brazil and Mexico has demonstrated an association between academic migration and an increased incidence of illicit drug usage (Demenech et al., 2019). Additionally, a need for socialization and feeling good is often what keeps substance use going less parental supervision, interaction with different people, a larger social circle, peer pressure and influence, peer acceptance, curiosity, easy availability, and a sense of growing up are all significant variables in the initiation of substance use (Gopiram & Kishore, 2014; Pradeep Kumar et al., 2024). Studies conducted on college students show that those who are male, younger, smokers, and have acquaintances who use drugs are more likely to use illegal drugs themselves. Conversely, people who practiced religion and lived with family members had a lower likelihood of engaging in this behavior.(Demenech et al., 2019)

However, according to some research, acculturation and generational levels can have an impact on substance and alcohol use. Research indicates that among students of Latinx origin who were more integrated into US culture, there was an increase in alcohol consumption, heavy drinking frequency, and binge drinking (Greene & Maggs, 2018). Similar findings were found in a Swedish study, which found that while immigrant adolescents were more likely than their Swedish majority population to use illicit drugs, they tended to use tobacco, alcohol, and drugs less than their national peers when it came to alcohol use and binge drinking. In contrast to their non-immigrant peers, first- and second-generation immigrants showed significantly lower rates of smoking(Di Cosmo et al., 2011). Similar trends in weekly intake of alcohol and marijuana were noted. The apparent protective impact against alcohol and marijuana use and the characteristic of acculturation of first-generation immigrants did not affect the association between smoking cigarettes and generational status (Substance Use Disorder in Humanitarian Setting, 2023).

Yet, there are numerous reasons for a student to relocate to a new location, as well as numerous reasons for migratory individuals or students to become involved in substance abuse. Substance use among migrant students is caused by a mental breakdown or other psychological issues, but there are additional elements that are associated with substance use. Additionally, People from ethnic minorities are more vulnerable to becoming involved in illicit drug use, which is often exacerbated by a low understanding about and access to drug treatment facilities (Lemmens et al., 2017). As more people relocate from their cities to attend universities, a number of issues arise. Drug use as a coping strategy might result from a persistent lack of psychosocial integration brought on by removing oneself from one's previous social and cultural background. The complex relationship between psychological integration and academic migration may be a risk factor for drug use among students(Demenech et al., 2019).

3. Forced Migration And Substance Use

Forced migration is defined by IOM as "a migratory movement" that involves force, compulsion, or coercion, although the drivers may be diverse."(Migration data portal, 2023a). In this instance, forced migration denotes that, in contrast to natural reasons, which usually precede displacement brought on by disasters, displacement brought on by conflict is usually referred to as a human cause.Forced migration is occurring at an unprecedented pace. Forced migrants may be more likely to use substances for a variety of reasons, including dealing with traumatic events, co-morbid mental health issues, acculturation difficulties, and social and economic inequity(Horyniak et al., 2016).

According to some literature, refugees abuse substances as a coping technique for enduring suffering during displacement, followed by their subsequent journey and resettlement in host nations (Aleer et al., 2023; Horyniak et al., 2016). These challenges include post-traumatic stress disorder, language and communication difficulties, cultural impediments, prejudice, marginalization, high unemployment, and abject poverty (Horyniak et al., 2016; Aleer et al., 2023). Young Russian migrants in Finland have been found to be more likely to use cannabis due to acculturation, which is demonstrated by longer stays and younger migration ages. In contrast, Kurdish and Somali migrants reported fewer lifetime cannabis use than the rest of the population (Marginean et al., 2023; Salama et al., 2020). On the other hand, refugees are individuals who, as a result of persecution, conflict, or violence in their place of origin, are protected by international law and are entitled to seek safe relocation (Marginean et al., 2023). Even so, the specific interaction between migration and legal status may have a major impact on risk factors and future behaviors. It has been shown that refugees are less likely than non-refugee immigrants to use illicit substances in the United States (Salas-Wright et al., 2014). Nevertheless, a study revealed that while some migrants were forced into the drug trade, others did it in order to raise money for survival (Muenstermann, 2023). Forced migration heightens substance use risks due to immigration vulnerability, restricted treatment access, and fear of legal repercussions, affecting health outcomes for immigrants with substance abuse disorders (DeFries et al., 2022).

4. Transnational Migration And Substance Use

Transnational migration is defined as the movement of people who are immersed in social fields involving linkages and interactions across the borders of nation-states (Migration Research hub, n.d.). Transnational migration challenges standard research paradigms on substance misuse. Transnational migrants have their substance use subculture, which spans locations and national lines and cannot be researched and understood using normal research methodologies (Garcia, 2007). The development of the economy can also be impacted by transnational trafficking. Underprivileged communities may benefit from the flow of illicit commodities, weakening their ties to the state, particularly those living near borders (Targba, 2023). Transitional migration has a substantial impact on substance usage in India. Studies demonstrate that migration, whether permanent or temporary, is associated with risky sexual activity, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and alcohol consumption (Nadeem et al., 2009). Furthermore, forced displacement due to violence has resulted in increasing substance misuse among displaced communities, with alcohol being a major issue (Meena et al., 2019). Migration exacerbates the problem in areas where substance misuse is already high, such as Northeast India, due to variables such as economic hardship and weaker social support systems (Ezard et al., 2021; Gupta et al., 2010). Research has shown that migrant workers in some places, such as Bikaner and Rajasthan, have an exceptionally high prevalence of substance misuse. This highlights the need for focused interventions and legislative measures to address this issue (R & Muthukumar, 2022). Thus, the impact of transitional migration on the patterns of substance use in India is significant.

5. Motivations Behind Drug Use Among Migrants

In the modern world, migration is not particularly new, even though the reasons for moving differ from those of our predecessors. Most migrations occur in search of a better standard of living. Migration is one of the primary characteristics that is inherent from our ancestors. But the truth is much more complex than what makes the news. Most migration is stable, safe, and localized; it is strongly tied to opportunities and resources for survival. However, politics and false information have clouded public discourse, necessitating a detailed and unambiguous explanation of migration trends. The same research claims that the number of people displaced by conflict, violence, natural disasters, and other causes has increased to 117 million, the largest figure in modern history, highlighting the critical need to solve displacement problems (International Organization for Migration, 2024).

This paper tries to comprehend the choice of substance by the migrants over time. Migration occurs in two ways: with or without choice, and as a result, individuals must face various obstacles; or, at times, time or circumstances arise that require people to flee, and they seek refuge in substance. In the systematic global review paper (Lemmens et al., 2017), a number of factors that contribute to the migrants' substance use have been identified, including trauma, poverty and unemployment, the loss of social and familial support, and a more permissive normative environment. So in a country like Mexico, the study (Marsiglia et al., 2011) has given three reasons for the choice of substance. The influence of globalization, the change of Mexico from a drug transportation country to a drug producing country, and its consequences of a constant circular migration process. A similar study

also discovered that Mexican migrants typically work in low-skilled professions with little pay, are subjected to bad living situations, and have limited or no access to healthcare resources. Mexican migrants also report experiencing emotional difficulties such as prejudice, alienation, nostalgia, a lack of social support, and the fear of deportation. The experiences linked with the migration process can have an impact on migrants' health behaviors, such as alcohol, tobacco, and drug usage, as well as their health consequences. Existing research suggests that migrants may use drugs as a coping mechanism in the face of the unfavorable economic, social, and legal conditions they frequently encounter in the United States (Zhang et al., 2015). These vulnerabilities arise when a young person from a developing country leaves their home country for employment or a better way of life. According to some studies, young men and women are misinformed about their chances of finding better jobs abroad. These young people become victims of recruiters with gang affiliations who facilitate their activities abroad (Muenstermann, 2023). Another study in Nigeria found a significant rate of drug usage among irregular migrants. The experience of migration frustration and trauma was one of the factors that contributed to drug usage among migrants. In addition, the study found that some migrants who engaged in illegal drug trafficking did so to earn money for their survival, while others were forced to do so. (Molobe & Odukoya, 2021). (Horyniak et al., 2016) discovered that among African migrants in Australia, drinking was a significant drinking motivator for coping with trauma, boredom, and frustration, as well as for social reasons. In the paper (Lemmens et al., 2017) have mention that many factors have contributed in substance use by the migrants such as Hostile environments after migration (like discrimination or stress) increase the chances of drug use. Children of less integrated immigrant parents are more likely to misuse drugs due to cultural gaps. Ethnic minorities often lack awareness and access to drug treatment services. Long waits for legal status can lead to more mental health and drug issues, but overall, service use remains low. However, some ethnic groups are more at risk of drug use, while strong religious beliefs (like being a devout Muslim) can protect against it. Irregular migrants may be vulnerable to substance use for reasons such as coping with traumatic events, pre- and post-migration stress, co-morbid mental health illnesses, acculturation difficulties, and social and economic disparity (Kennedy et al., 2015).

V. CONCLUSION

In today's world, where competition is fierce in all spheres of education, employment, etc., many of the younger generation have left college and moved abroad in the quest for a better life and a new career. However, during this process, individuals may run into several challenging situations, some of which may be stressful enough to push them to take drugs. In a similar manner, following the migration, you may have different problems with substance abuse. That puts these migrant workers at risk; at times, they fail to get the proper medical care, legal assistance, etc. The cultural alteration in an individual, group, or population as they adopt characteristics from other cultures or adjust to their own.

The connections between migration and substance use are complex, shaped by social, cultural, and economic factors. First- and second-generation immigrants may exhibit varying patterns of substance use influenced by their level of acculturation, generational standing, and socio-economic conditions. Migrant students have increased hazards stemming from the pressures of adjusting to unexpected academic and social situations. Displaced individuals, encompassing refugees and asylum seekers, are especially prone to the trauma of displacement, persecution, and marginalization within host nations. This study studied the intricate relationship between migration and substance abuse, highlighting the ways in which a number of variables, including stress from acculturation, generational disparities, socioeconomic pressures, legal uncertainties, and cultural dislocation, influence substance use patterns among migrants.

The primary area of concern for the study is the influences of substance use on different forms of migration. It makes an effort to investigate the risk factors associated with drug use, such as the manner and motivations behind drug use among migrants. However, migration has become an integral element of every individual, family, and government in emerging nations like India since it creates everyone more chances to advance structurally, financially, and economically through a variety of channels. By understanding the primary causes of substance abuse among migrants, we can more effectively support the most vulnerable individuals and cultivate healthier, more resilient communities.

Nevertheless, we cannot overlook the vulnerabilities brought by migration, such as substance abuse, which affects people everywhere in the world, not just in India. Migration may offer growth and progress, but it also brings hidden burdens that require collective attention. To effectively support migrant communities and reduce substance-related harms, more research is needed,

especially in underexplored contexts like humanitarian crises and transnational settings. Only through such understanding can we foster resilience, integration, and health equity across increasingly mobile societies. The paper emphasizes how substance abuse is a coping strategy and a sign of the larger psychological, social, and financial stresses brought on by migration. It also emphasizes the necessity of policies that address the particular vulnerabilities of migrant populations, improved access to mental health care, and focused, culturally appropriate therapies.

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