Root Causes of Drug Addiction in Education Institutes with Workable Solutions

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The use of drugs has detrimental effects on individuals, posing a persistent challenge in contemporary society. Drug dependence within academic institutes presents a multifaceted challenge, impacting the well-being and academic success of students. This issue not only hampers the potential of future generations but also disrupts the social fabric of humanity. The main objective of this study was to explore the perspectives of educated young individuals regarding the increasing allure of drugs within educational institutions and society as a whole. Institutions wield significant influence in shaping the social and personal lives of students, making their role crucial in addressing the escalating issue of substance addiction among the youth. To accomplish this goal, an action research methodology was employed, involving a diverse sample of both male and female students. This study utilized a cross-sectional research design to investigate substance dependency triggers among 350 students enrolled across three prominent public sector universities in Lahore, Pakistan. The participants included 250 males and 100 females, selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across genders. Alongside restricted response questions, two open-ended questions were included to assess the reliability of the research, and their qualitative responses were analyzed using the theme analysis technique. Research findings indicate a rising trend in drug usage among young individuals, attributing it to the lack of attention and care from parents and academic stress. It is recommended that parents and educators should acknowledge their responsibility in eliminating substance addiction within educational settings. The focus of this study revolves around understanding the influence of drugs on young individuals within the context of higher education institutions.

Keywords: Substance Addiction, Theme analysis technique, Social Fabric of Humanity, Academic Institutes

Introduction:

The prevalence of drug dependency among students within academic institutions has become a pressing concern globally. The academic environment, often regarded as a hub for learning and personal development, also harbors complexities that may contribute to the emergence and perpetuation of substance addiction among its occupants. Addiction is characterized by an aberrant pattern of substance use, leading to notable clinical impairment or distress within any 12-month period. This involves elements like tolerance, withdrawal, and other associated symptoms [1]. On a global scale, approximately 15.9 million people are involved in drug injection, with the highest prevalence observed in China, the United States, and Russia [2]. In Pakistan, the documented annual prevalence of overall illicit drug use was 6% in 2013 [3][4][5].

Breaking down the prevalence rates for specific illicit substances in Pakistan, cannabis use is reported at 3.6%, opioids at 2.4%, tranquilizers at 1.4%, amphetamines at 0.08%, solvents

at 0.03%, and cocaine at 0.01% [6]. Significantly, Punjab outstrips other provinces in the number of intravenous drug abusers, particularly in Lahore, where a noteworthy incidence of polydrug abuse involving the simultaneous consumption of heroin and opium is evident among addicts. This underscores the intricate and diverse nature of substance abuse patterns in the Pakistani context, underscoring the necessity for tailored interventions and policies to address the unique challenges associated with different substances and regions [7][8][9].

Illicit drug usage is experiencing an upward trend within academic institutions, notably in university settings, where this pattern demonstrates a continuous and consistent rise. Various studies conducted in the fields of media and other disciplines have consistently highlighted the persistence and endurance of this challenge on a global scale, spanning different time periods. [5]. In recent years, the escalating prevalence of drug addiction among the youth demographic has emerged as a significant societal concern globally, including in Pakistan. This phenomenon poses multifaceted challenges, ranging from public health issues to socio-economic implications. Understanding the root causes and contributing factors is imperative for devising effective preventive measures and intervention strategies. The widespread occurrence of substance abuse within student populations is universally acknowledged as a substantial societal concern cutting across global communities [10]. The drug trade, in particular, targets individuals aged between 15 and 25, encompassing both males and females, who find themselves ensnared in the grip of drug addiction. Additionally, the phenomenon of drug addiction contributes to a myriad of physical and psychological health complications among the younger demographic. It is noteworthy that certain substances categorized as drugs are considered illegal in various jurisdictions, despite their widespread availability [7]

The production and dissemination of pharmaceuticals are widespread and exhibit a rapid global spread, with marijuana, derived from the cannabis plant, being widely recognized as the most frequently used substance. Extraction of this drug is considered illegal in the majority of global jurisdictions, with possession of even a small quantity potentially leading to several years of incarceration. Notably, this substance is highly prevalent among adolescents, ranking as one of the most commonly consumed substances in this demographic [11].

Furthermore, a researcher [12] conducted a study examining the prevalence of smoking addiction among students in educational institutions and its correlation with using cigarettes as a coping mechanism for stress relief. The availability of pharmaceuticals in various locations is linked to a comprehensive process that operates effectively in all desirable settings, including correctional facilities [13].

Each year, on the 26th of June, the United Nations coordinates a global observance known as the International Day against Drug Abuse. Cultivating a sense of awareness among students regarding the detrimental consequences associated with drug usage is imperative. In this context, the initial phase involves raising awareness among young individuals about the gravity of the issue [14].

[6][5][4] Moreover, according to the implementation of skill-based education among university students has been found to mitigate the underlying factors contributing to addiction. Additionally, the utilization of counseling techniques has been shown to enhance awareness among young individuals. It is worth noting that those with advanced skills tend to allocate less time towards engaging in substance abuse [15]. Furthermore, it is imperative to construct orientation centers aimed at providing information to young individuals regarding the detrimental effects of commonly used substances among students, such as marijuana, cocaine, alcohol, heroin, tobacco, ecstasy, cannabis, petrol sniffing, and the highly dangerous substance known as ice [12]. Furthermore, emphasized the imperative of regulating the presence of narcotics within educational institutions in Pakistan through collaboration with law enforcement organizations. The majority of the populace adheres to religious beliefs that classify drug and alcohol consumption as sinful, notwithstanding the prevalence of drug use in society. The

regulation of drug availability by civil workers is a crucial determinant due to its illegality and the ease with which students can get it, despite its distribution occurring on campus. Globally, two-thirds of individuals with addiction simultaneously experience a coexisting mental health problem [17]. Among male heroin users in Lahore, research indicates that parental disharmony, paternal absence, or maternal illiteracy heightens the risk of addiction. Psychosocial elements such as loneliness, parental coldness, and peer pressure emerge as significant contributors to the development of addiction. Additionally, curiosity to explore new experiences is frequently cited as one of the primary reasons reported by individuals engaged in drug use [18][19]

As per researcher [20], drug use has been identified as a factor that renders individuals prone to anger and a spectrum of emotional challenges. The lack of cognitive functions and mental clarity in individuals grappling with drug addiction contributes to the escalation of diverse societal problems, including conflicts and disruptions. The substance, according to the research, induces a condition of sensory and moral deprivation in individuals, resulting in the erosion of their intrinsic human qualities and values [21].[13][12][11][10][9][10][9] Drug addiction emerges as an issue of paramount significance, demanding attention, especially concerning students and young individuals who are susceptible to substance abuse [22]. Although some individuals may opt for drug use for personal motives, society often views drugs as a mechanism for seeking solace, and, in certain instances, individuals may employ drugs with the aim of attaining a state of ecstasy[15][14][13][12][11][12][11] [17][18]. A study Lagos, focusing on drug addiction among secondary school students, revealed that 50% of the participants grasp the dangers and consequences associated with drug use. However, 58.5% still exhibit positive attitudes toward the use of illicit drugs, many of which are socially acceptable but pose a risk of progression to stronger substances such as tobacco, cannabis, and alcohol. This underscores the need for vigilant drug sales monitoring and reinforcement of drug education in schools and universities [24].

As researcher [25] sheds light on the influential roles of parents and peers in impacting teenagers' choices to drink, smoke, and use marijuana. The study indicates variations in attitudes between boys and girls, emphasizing that smoking addiction among teenagers can potentially lead to the use of multiple drugs. A clinical psychologist who owns a rehabilitation center emphasizes the detrimental nature of addiction, whether it involves narcotics, alcohol, or idealism.

The utilization of various types of substances, particularly tobacco products such as cigars and shisha, has intriguing impacts on the younger population. These individuals perceive smoking as a means of attracting the opposite. In contemporary society, drug use is often regarded as a prevalent pastime within a certain social stratum. This habitual engagement with drugs has deleterious effects on the psychological and emotional well-being of the younger generation, as they seek solace and satisfaction through various substances. [18] in their study, examined the interconnectedness between drugs and social media, highlighting their detrimental impact on societal norms and regulations. Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that conflicts in perceptions can lead to attitude changes, driven by the need to justify behavior inconsistent with one's attitudes. Beman highlights the increased likelihood of students engaging in alcohol and drug use in schools where substances are easily accessible. Pearlman's system theory emphasizes the influence of individuals' behaviors on their surroundings and the potential problems for those involved. Attitudes, shaped by experiences, feelings, and positive or negative evaluations, comprise cognitive, affective, and behavioral components [26].

Daryl Ben's self-perception theory posits that attitude changes are driven by individuals seeking satisfaction with their previous behavior. Attitudes are often shaped by parental influence and direct experiences. As per researcher [27] discuss various components of attitudes, linking beliefs, intentions, goals, and attitude formation to individuals' liking, biases, and

prejudices. As per researcher [28] meta-analysis underscores the impact of past experiences and behavior on future behavior.

The term "drug addiction" refers to the excessive use of substances leading to reliance, compassion, and abandonment. As per researcher [29] suggest that attitudes can change through effective cognitive aspects and emotional nodes. In resisting persuasion and attitude change, producing counterarguments in an effective network can be challenging [21]. Students who experience mental frustration may be drawn to various outlets where they feel free from judgment or intervention regarding their thoughts and actions. The individuals began to experience a reduction in their physical discomfort, primarily manifesting feelings of rejection and a desire to seek solace from the harsh reality they face [21].

The mental health of pupils is also influenced by cultural variables. At the societal level, access to essential treatment is lacking during the early phases. Consequently, young individuals subsequently resort to consuming drugs in many accessible formats. Moreover conducted a study examining the influence of peer groups on drug misuse among young individuals, as well as the impact of engaging in peer group activities on students' academic achievement [30]. Moreover, over time, pupils tend to exhibit inconsistency in their academic pursuits. Various challenges connected to time management and health are encountered by students. The detrimental impact of addiction on academic performance has been observed, leading to the potential consequence of obtaining low grades that may have enduring implications on their social and professional trajectory [29].

The prevailing issue of drug addiction in universities is posited to originate from an underlying cause, creating a pervasive atmosphere of despair and distress within educational institutions. Those grappling with drug addiction extend its deleterious impact on their household environments, resulting in mental anguish and physical ailments. The negative consequences of substance addiction are evident in the cognitive and social behaviors of young individuals in university settings. Students face challenges in efficiently managing their daily routines. Universities are implored to discharge their administrative duties effectively and scrutinize interactions between academic staff and students. Additionally, the provision of counseling services is recommended to address student concerns and guide them towards appropriate resolutions [24].

Moreover, a surge in reported cases of drug addiction has been observed in universities in southern Punjab. The imperative implementation of counseling processes is emphasized to raise awareness about available measures for mitigating drug addiction among the youth, acknowledging the paramount importance of recognizing potential future ramifications. The establishment of a system of checks and balances is deemed necessary for monitoring students' activities within university settings [31]. This research study carries significant potential for institutions and educators in developing measures to curb drug misuse in educational universities in Pakistan. The findings have the capacity to elevate awareness among various industries and regulatory bodies involved in drug control, serving as a valuable resource for future research endeavors. The primary focus of this study is to delineate the research objectives, methodology, and design [30].

Research Objectives of the Current Study:

The study aims to investigate the determinants fueling the elevated incidence of drug addiction among young individuals in educational institutions in northern Punjab. Furthermore, this action research endeavors to suggest prospective measures and activities to be implemented for addressing the challenge of drug addiction among young individuals in educational settings. The study's scope was confined to male and female students attending three public sector universities in Lahore. Furthermore, the current research is described as having a descriptive approach.

Research Methodology:

The population of this study consisted of students from the National College of Arts, Lahore, Women University, Lahore, and the Government college university, Lahore. The survey encompassed a total population of 10,000 students in Lahore. Due to the large size of the population, a representative sample of 350 students was selected for the study. The study sample comprised 350 individuals, with 250 being male and 100 being female. These students were selected from a total of fifteen Bachelor programs. The present study examines the departments included in the research, which are derived from the social sciences disciplines, namely from three public sector universities located in eastern Punjab. The departments were chosen using a convenient sampling method, followed by the application of a snowball sampling technique to select 250 male and 100 female students as the sample. Among these students, some were found to be addicted to various drugs, while others provided their perspectives on how to address this issue. The sample selection percentage was determined to be 10% of the overall population. This proportion was recommended and computed using an internet software tool known as raw soft [32][33].

The Construction of Tools or Instruments:

This study aims to explore the perspectives of young individuals on the growing issue of drug addiction within university settings. To achieve this goal, an attitude scale was developed to assess the viewpoints of university students. In addition to restricted response questions, to garner valuable insights, two open-ended questions were incorporated into the questionnaire. Questionnaire data were collected from a sample of universities in Lahore. The study aimed to explore the factors contributing to the increasing prevalence of drug addiction among university students and in Pakistani society. A survey instrument with a variety of response options was crafted to capture the perspectives of the student population. Subsequent to the preparation of the research tool, a pilot study was conducted to evaluate its validity. The researcher gathered insights from students on drug abuse in Pakistani universities by visiting various departments.

Results and Discussion:

After scrutinizing the responses from 87.25% male and 73% female students, it was discovered that a noteworthy number of university students turn to drug usage as a method of escaping the difficulties and intricacies of life. A minority of 12.75% males and 27% females disagreed with this assertion. Furthermore, the study's results indicate that a considerable portion of students, as indicated by the high mean score of 3.92, use drugs as a way to seek refuge from the challenges and pressures of daily life.

According to the presented findings, a significant proportion of both 57% male and 57% female respondents believe that students engaging in drug use at universities face neglect from their families. A minority of male respondents, specifically 43%, and a slightly larger minority of female respondents, specifically 44%, disagreed with this statement. The average score of 3.5 suggests that a substantial number of university students who use drugs experience familial neglect.

Table 1: Students using drugs in universities as an escape

Aspect of Study	Male Respondents (%)	Female Respondents (%)
Students Using Drugs as an Escape	87.25	73
Disagreement with Drug Usage as an Escape	12.75	27
Mean Score for Drug Usage as an Escape	3.92	3.92
Belief in Family Neglect for Drug-Using Students	57	57
Disagreement with Family Neglect	43	44
Average Score for Family Neglect	3.2	3.2

The data demonstrates that a significant proportion of both male up to 71.72% and female up to 64% respondents think that students easily access drugs in society. A minority of 29% males and 36% females expressed dissent. Furthermore, the average score of 3.4 suggests that a significant proportion of university students find it easy to obtain drugs. The findings also

reveal that a significant proportion of 73.67% male students and 72% female students prefer using pharmaceuticals to enhance their memory before examinations. A minority of 27.33% male participants and 28% female participants disagreed with this statement. The average score of 3.6 suggests that a substantial number of students use drugs to enhance their memory before exams.

Table 2: Usage of drug due to its easy access

Aspect of Study	Male Respondents (%)	Female Respondents (%)
Belief in Easy Access to Drugs in Society	71.72	64
Disagreement with Easy Access to Drugs	29	36
Average Score for Easy Access to Drugs	3.4	3.4
Preference for Pharmaceutical Memory Enhancement	73.67	72
Disagreement with Memory Enhancement	27.33	28
Average Score for Memory Enhancement with Drugs	3.7	3.7

The findings illustrate that a considerable number of 68% males and 76% females agree with the notion that youth turn to drug addiction to suppress memories of their criminal history. A minority of 32% males and 24% females disagreed. The average score of 3.5 suggests that a significant proportion of young individuals' resort to substance abuse to cope with their previous involvement in criminal activities. According to the presented data, a significant proportion of both 62% male and 81% female students reported using drugs to experience sensations of happiness and joy. Only 48% of males and 19% of females disagreed with this statement. The elevated average score of 3.9 suggests that drugs serve as a significant source of pleasure and satisfaction for the students.

Table 3: Drug usage to Suppress Criminal Memories

Aspect of Study	Male Respondents (%)	Female Respondents (%)
Agreement with Drug Use to Suppress Criminal Memories	68	76
Disagreement with Drug Use for Memory Suppression	32	24
Average Score for Drug Use to Suppress Criminal Memories	3.5	3.5
Drug Use for Sensations of Happiness and Joy	62	81
Disagreement with Drug Use for Happiness	48	19
Average Score for Drug Use for Happiness and Joy	3.9	3.9

The data indicates that a significant proportion of 69% male and 80% female individuals engaged in drug misuse exhibit health concerns and have experienced various traumatic events in their past. A minority of 31% males and an even smaller proportion of 20% females disagreed with this statement. A mean score of 3.7 suggests that a significant proportion of students who use drugs experience multiple medical complications.

Table 4: Drug induces Traumatic Health Concerns

Aspect of Study	Male Respondents (%)	Female Respondents (%)
Agreement with Health Concerns and Traumatic Events in Drug Misusers	69	80
Disagreement with Health Concerns and Traumatic Events	31	20
Mean Score for Health Concerns and Traumatic Events in Drug Misusers	3.7	3.7

According to the presented data, a significant majority of 82.24% male respondents and 76% female respondents agree with the notion that young individuals are influenced by movies and performers, leading to their engagement in drug usage. A minority of respondents, specifically 17% of males and 24% of females, disagreed with this statement. The average score reflects the high impact of media influence on drug usage among students.

The phenomenon of a significant number of young individuals being influenced by media, including movies and performers, leading to an increased propensity to engage in drug use, is elucidated by the concept of a high rating of such influence. According to the findings, a significant proportion of 64% male students and 80% female students agree with the notion that drug usage among university students is influenced by relationship breakups. A minority of respondents, specifically 36% of males and 20% of females, disagreed with this statement. The average score of 3.09 suggests that a significant proportion of university students engage in drug usage as a result of experiencing relationship terminations.

Table 5: Impact of Media on Drug Users

Aspect of Study	Male Respondents (%)	Female Respondents (%)
Disagreement with Media Influence	49	51
Average Score for Media Influence on Drug Usage	53	54
Agreement with Relationship Breakups Influence on Drug Usage	64	80
Disagreement with Relationship Breakups Influence	36	20
Average Score for Relationship Breakups Influence	3.09	3.09

The data presents perspectives from 79% male and 80% female participants about the efficacy of drug usage in mitigating feelings of sadness and loneliness. A minority of respondents, specifically 21% of males and 20% of females, disagreed with this statement. Moreover, the average score of 4.01 indicates that a significant proportion of university students agree with the notion that the utilization of drugs can alleviate emotions of sadness and loneliness.

Table 6: Drug Usage as an Escape from Sadness and Loneliness

Aspect of Study	Male Respondents (%)	Female Respondents (%)
Agreement with Efficacy of Drug Usage for Mitigating Sadness and Loneliness	79	80
Disagreement with Efficacy of Drug Usage	21	20
Average Score for Efficacy of Drug Usage	4.01	4.01

The data reveals that a significant proportion of students hold the belief that drug usage contributes to an enhancement of their self-assurance, as evidenced by the rating of 3.7. According to the presented data, a significant proportion of 60% male students and 47% female students attending university express their support for the notion that students resort to drug usage due to biased attitudes exhibited by their lecturers. A minority of 40% male students and a slightly larger minority of 53% female students expressed their disagreement with this statement. Furthermore, the average score of 3.1 suggests that a significant number of students engage in drug use due to perceived bias on the part of their teachers.

Table 7: Drug Usage as a Source of Self Assurance

Aspect of study	Male Respondents (%)	Female Respondents (%)

Belief in Drug Usage for Self-Assurance (Average Score)	5	4.2
Agreement with Drug Usage due to Lecturer Bias	60	47
Disagreement with Drug Usage due to Lecturer Bias	40	53
Average Score for Drug Usage due to Lecturer Bias	3.1	3.1

According to the data presented, a majority of 70.83% male students and 74% female students believe that teenagers engage in drug use as a means to seek attention from others. A minority of male respondents, specifically 29.27%, and a slightly smaller proportion of female respondents, specifically 26%, expressed their disagreement with this statement. The average score of 3.8 suggests that a significant proportion of young individuals engage in substance abuse as a means of seeking attention from their peers.

Table 8: Usage of Drugs to Seek Attention

Aspect of Study	Male Respondents (%)	Female Respondents (%)
Agreement with Teenagers Using Drugs for Attention	70.83	74
Disagreement with Teenagers Using Drugs for Attention	29.17	26
Average Score for Teenagers Using Drugs for Attention	3.8	3.8

The current study seeks to perform a qualitative analysis, with this segment of the research focusing on elucidating the qualitative analysis conducted within the study. To gather perspectives on the prevalence of drug use in educational institutions and explore potential solutions for addressing this issue in universities, two open-ended questions were presented to the students. The qualitative data collected from their responses were systematically processed and subsequently organized into various thematic categories. The survey responses indicate a lower prevalence of specific drug usage, such as heroin, cocaine, and alcohol, among university students. Instead, students frequently engage in the consumption of substances like smoking, ecstasy tablets, marijuana (Chars), inhalants, solvents, and ice. The study reveals a higher prevalence of drug misuse among male students and those residing in hostels compared to their female counterparts. Thematic analysis results highlight the prevalence of smoking (57%), sheesha/hookah (15%), ice (13%), marijuana (10%), alcohol (4%), heroin (4.4%), and cocaine (1.6%) among young university students.

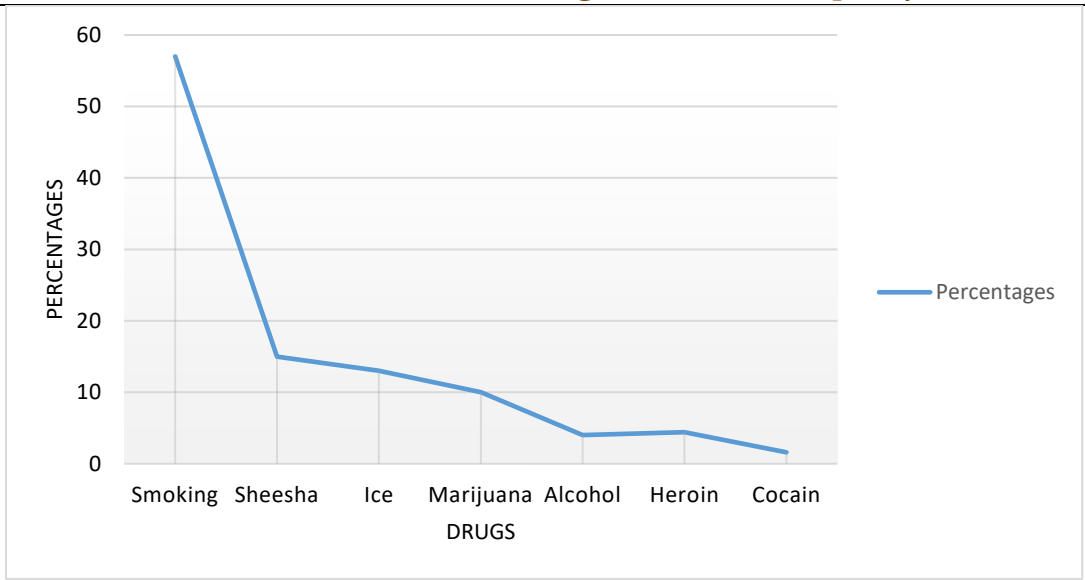

Figure 1: Percentage of Different Drugs Being Used by Young University Students.

Conclusion:

The data indicates a strong consensus among both male and female students regarding the prevalent use of drugs as a coping mechanism for various challenges and emotional states in university settings. The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of motivations behind drug usage and highlight the need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms for students facing these issues.

Recommendations for Addressing Drug Addiction in University Settings:

Government and Educational Institution Prioritization:

Government and educational institution administrations, particularly universities, should prioritize addressing drug usage among students.

Media Campaign for Public Awareness:

Launch a media campaign to raise public awareness about the profound ramifications of drug addiction on physical and psychological well-being. This aims to emphasize the impact on overall quality of life.

Promotion of Positive Attitudes and Values:

Promote the development of positive attitudes and values among students to discourage engagement in objectionable activities.

Family-Institution Partnership:

Foster a partnership between families and institutions to prevent student involvement in drug abuse.

Effective Measures and Perspectives:

Cultivation of Moral Values:

Respondents (27.2%) highlighted the need to cultivate moral values among students as the most pressing factor.

Awareness Lectures on Drug Addiction:

Organizing awareness lectures on drug addiction is recommended by 20.8% of respondents.

Family Meetings and Instructor Guidance:

Family meetings and guidance from instructors contribute to 18% of the overall impact.

Institutional Rules and Punishments:

Institutions enforcing stringent rules and punishments account for 21.8% effectiveness in combating drug addiction.

Social Media Regulations:

The positive influence of social media regulations plays a role of 12.8% in controlling drug addiction.

Gender Perspective on Drug Addiction:

There is a discernible disparity between the mean scores of males (76.99%) and female (75.99%) students, suggesting a higher propensity for male students in drug addiction. However, the insignificant significance value (0.224) indicates a nearly identical viewpoint between male and female students regarding drug addiction in universities.

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