

## TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL INFLUENCES ON DRUG ADDICTION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

#### **Background:**

Drug addiction among undergraduate students is a growing public health concern, strongly influenced by social factors such as peer pressure, social norms, and media exposure. The transition to university life increases vulnerability to risky behaviors, making students more susceptible to experimenting with drugs.

#### **Objectives:**

To assess the impact of social influences on drug addiction among undergraduate students and identify key social determinants contributing to drug use.

#### **Methods:**

A cross-sectional study was conducted among 294 undergraduate students from Nursing and Allied Health Sciences colleges in Islamabad. Non-probability convenience sampling was used. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS version 22.

#### **Result Analysis:**

Findings revealed that 58% of students were encouraged by friends to try drugs, while 55% felt pressured in social gatherings. About 70% reported experimenting with drugs due to social influence. Additionally, 80% admitted imitating friends' behaviors, and 73% acknowledged the role of social media in shaping perceptions. However, 76% did not consider drug use socially acceptable, indicating awareness despite exposure.

#### **Conclusion:**

Social influence significantly affects drug-related behaviors among students. Peer pressure, social acceptance, and media exposure are key drivers. Preventive strategies focusing on awareness, peer education, and supportive environments are essential to reduce drug use.

**Keywords:** Drug addiction, Social influence, Peer pressure, Undergraduate students, Substance abuse

## CHAPTER NO. 1 INTRODUCTION

Social influence is a significant factor contributing to drug addiction among college students, as it directly impacts their attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyle choices during a crucial time in their lives. College students often navigate a transitional phase marked by increased independence, a reduction in parental supervision, and exposure to new social environments and groups. In this context, peer pressure becomes a key element that may lead to drug experimentation. A number of students are motivated by the desire for acceptance, the maintenance of friendships, or the fear of social rejection, which can drive them to use drugs despite being aware of the associated risks. Within peer groups, drug use is frequently normalized during gatherings such as parties or hostel activities, creating the impression that it is a widespread and socially accepted behavior. In addition to direct pressure, the way behaviors are modeled also plays a role in substance abuse, when students see their friends, older peers, or close associates using drugs to manage stress, amplify pleasure, or socialize, they may begin to mimic these actions and eventually integrate them into their own habits. This process not only starts drug use but also heightens the chance of continued use, which can lead to dependency.

Alongside peer influence, social norms and cultural acceptance are pivotal in shaping drug use among college students. Students might believe that using drugs boosts their social confidence, increases their popularity, or fosters a sense of belonging in certain groups, which can perpetuate detrimental behaviors. The university setting, which presents both academic pressure and newfound independence, often serves as a catalyst for these influences. Additionally, social media and contemporary culture exacerbate this issue by romanticizing drug use, depicting it as trendy, innocuous, or a marker of modernity. Online platforms, through music videos, celebrity endorsements, or content shared among peers, can create an acceptance of drug use and foster positive views about it, especially among impressionable young people. In contrast to other contributing factors, social influence not only

initiates drug use but also prolongs it, as ongoing group interactions and collaborative social activities make it harder to quit. Recognizing this influence is crucial for developing effective interventions, as modifying social environments can greatly lower risks. Consequently, preventive measures such as peer-led education, awareness initiatives, and counseling services are vital to combat harmful social pressures. By addressing the impact of social influence, universities and policymakers can foster healthier settings that discourage drug use and safeguard students from. Misuse of drugs and alcohol is a serious global public health issue, especially among youth and college students. The United States has the highest lifetime rates of marijuana use (42.4%) and cocaine use (16%), with rising rates of binge drinking and illegal drug use on college campuses. Similar problems are found throughout the world. In Bangladesh, there are an estimated 7.5 million drug users worldwide, with 80% of drug users being young people between the ages of 16 and 35, over half of whom are undergraduate students. With early initiation and high levels of alcohol and cannabis use among teenagers, South Africa has drug usage rates twice as high as the global average. Additionally, 25-44% of students in Pakistan use drugs, and binge drinking is associated with negative behavioral, social, and academic outcomes.

The issue of drug abuse among the youth population worldwide has escalated into a significant concern impacting everyone. Addiction frequently drives individuals, particularly young people, into a devastating cycle of despair that can occasionally result in death. This group includes a variety of individuals, from street children who sniff glue to teenagers who experiment with ecstasy, as well as those who are deeply entrenched in heroin and cocaine dependence (Nacada, 2005). The consequences of drug abuse include lost income, damage to property in educational institutions, rising healthcare expenses, and fractured families. It is a challenge that touches all of us—parents, children, educators, government representatives, taxpayers, and employees.

Raising awareness among the public about the risks associated with drug abuse has become a top

priority for the County Government's agenda. It is anticipated that this initiative will significantly lower the number of drug and substance abuse cases. The report highlighted that steps have been taken to decrease the manufacture and distribution of illegal brews, noting that area advisory committees set up under the County Commissioner's office have successfully closed down illicit brew establishments.

### **Rationale of Study**

Undergraduate drug abuse is on the rise, largely due to social influences. Peer pressure, social approval, and copying friends' actions are some of the factors that encourage drug use and make substance use seem normal in college settings. This study investigates how social factors influence drug use among students in order to help design effective prevention strategies, since the university experience increases the demand for social connection.

### **Aim of Study**

#### **Objectives**

- To determine the ways of social factors influence drug usage among college students.

## **CHAPTER NO. 2**

### **Literature Review**

An analytical cross-sectional study was conducted in France in 2021 by Jose Precioso et al and the aim of the study is to determine this age group continues to have the highest frequency of illicit psychoactive substance consumption, the issue of students in higher education using these substances is not new. The purpose of this study was to describe the frequency of illicit drug use among Portuguese university students and to examine the patterns and predicting factors of illicit drug use. A stratified random sample technique and a cross-sectional design were employed (n = 840). A validated self-administered questionnaire including questions about socio-demographic traits, patterns of illicit drug use, and attitudes and knowledge regarding illicit drug use was utilized. 22.2% of students reported using illegal drugs, and their overall knowledge and test results were mediocre. The prevalence of drug

consumption 22.2% of students reported using illegal drugs, and their views about drug use were generally moderate and their degree of understanding was poor. The likelihood of using illegal drugs was raised by being male, moving after starting college, having friends who use drugs, and having information about drugs. The study's findings may aid in the development of tactics to lower drug usage in educational environments, paying particular attention to the impact of friends and students who relocated after starting college.

An qualitative study was conducted in Australia by Hepworth Julie in 2015 and the aim of the study is to determine the Prior studies on the drinking habits of youth have examined how social practices affect their behavior and how they negotiate identities connected to drinking. Here, we look at how social factors affect young individuals from a discursive psychology approach are connected to problems related to drinking and identity. We held 19 focus groups with Australian undergraduate students, ages 18 to 24. Participants' explanations for why they drink or don't drink were subjected to thematic analysis in order to find conversational sections that discussed societal influence, paying close attention to phrases like "choice" and "pressure." Discourse analysis was then used to examine these passages in great depth in order to determine how participants took social influence into account. Participants took responsibility for their actions and came up with three types of explanations; (1) they minimized their options, (2) they defined drinking as a cultural practice, and (3) they detailed how they resisted peer pressure. Additionally, they handled drinking-related gendered social interactions. The participants were able to escape personal accountability for drinking or abstaining from alcohol thanks to these types of accounts. These results show that social influence itself becomes negotiable within local settings of drinking discourse, therefore the effects of social influence on young people's drinking behavior cannot be expected.

An analytical cross-sectional study was conducted in Bangladesh in 2021 by Sahadat Hossain et al and the aim of the study is to determine Drug misuse, the primary cause of human self-destruction, is on

the rise among college students and is becoming a major global health issue. When it comes to academic performance, accomplishment, and other extracurricular activities, those who take drugs are falling behind. The purpose of this study is to examine the factors linked to drug usage among Bangladeshi university students as well as the disparities in academic performance between drug abusers and no abusers. Students from five public and semi-public universities in Bangladesh. The snowball sampling approach was used to determine the sample size. Data was gathered through in-person interviews, and SPSS 25.0 was used for analysis. Drug abusers made up 54.59% (n = 238) of the 436 participants. There was a considerable ( $p < 0.01$ ) increase in drug misuse among male students (68.43%). Drug misuse was substantially correlated with sociodemographic characteristics such as residential status, academic year in college, father's occupation, and personal income. Academic attainment, academic performance, and sustaining good health were all negatively correlated with drug misuse. The results of this study highlighted the detrimental effects of drugs on the abuser's academic life and physical well-being and revealed a significant prevalence and extent of psychoactive drug misuse among Bangladeshi university students.

An analytical cross-sectional study was conducted in Pakistan in 2020 by Bilal Ahmed et al and the aim of study is One of the major social issues facing Pakistani society today, which has one of the largest percentages of young people worldwide, is the sharp rise in drug addiction among academic students. The purpose of this study was to investigate the mechanisms underlying drug addiction in students of universities and how it influences their daily operations. The study used a qualitative research approach, conducting in-depth interviews with drug addict students from three public institutions in Pakistan, in order to obtain insights into the phenomena. Thematic analysis and narrative analysis were used to analyze the data. The findings show that because academic institutions have not taken significant action to address the problem on campus, students use drugs there with little risk or limitation. Pakistan must immediately devise a thorough plan to deal

with the concerning issue of drug addiction in to stop the supply chain and prosecute individuals implicated in the horrible crime of dealing illegal drugs, academic institutions must involve all relevant parties.

### **Operational Definition(S)**

The frequent and deliberate misuse of illegal substances or inappropriate use of prescription and over-the-counter drugs by undergraduate students that has a negative impact on their physical or mental health, academic performance, or social relationships is considered drug abuse for the purposes of this study (33). Social influences are all of the outside forces and interactions that have a big impact on students' attitudes and choices about substance use. These include peer pressure, the need for social acceptance, following group norms, and being exposed to drug-related behaviors in both real-world and virtual settings (34). Individuals enrolling in a higher education institution seeking their first academic degree are referred to as undergraduate students; they are usually between the ages of 17 and 25. These definitions offer a narrow perspective that makes it possible to methodically analyze and comprehend the intricate connection between drug usage and social dynamics (35).

## **CHAPTER NO. 3 METHODOLOGY**

### **Study Design:**

The cross-sectional study design was used to conduct this study Nursing and Allied Health Sciences Colleges at Islamabad, Pakistan.

### **Study Settings:**

The study was conducted in public and private Nursing and Allied Health Sciences Colleges in Islamabad, Pakistan.

### **Duration of Study:**

This study was carried out for three months.

### **Sample Size:**

Rao soft sample size calculator was used to calculate the sample size if the present study according to significance level and margin of

error. The present study has a representative sample size of 294 at a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%.

**Sampling Technique:**

The non-probability convenience sampling was used to collect data.

**Sample Selection;**

**Inclusion criteria;**

- Undergraduate students currently enrolled in a colleges.
- Aged between 17 and 25 years.
- Willing to participate and able to provide informed consent.
- Enrolled in on-campus (face-to-face) academic programs.
- Students of any gender, background, or field of study.

**Exclusion criteria;**

- Postgraduate, diploma, or non-degree students.

**Chapter No. 04**

**Result Analysis**

The table 01 illustrated that there were 203 (69%) male participants in the sample, while there were 91 (30%) female participants. This shows a glaring gender disparity in the study group, indicating that men were more prevalent and might have a greater impact on the study's conclusions.

- Individuals under 17 or over 25 years of age.
- Students diagnosed with severe mental health disorders.
- Students enrolled in fully online or distance-learning programs.
- Individuals who decline or withdraw informed consent.

**Data Collection Procedure**

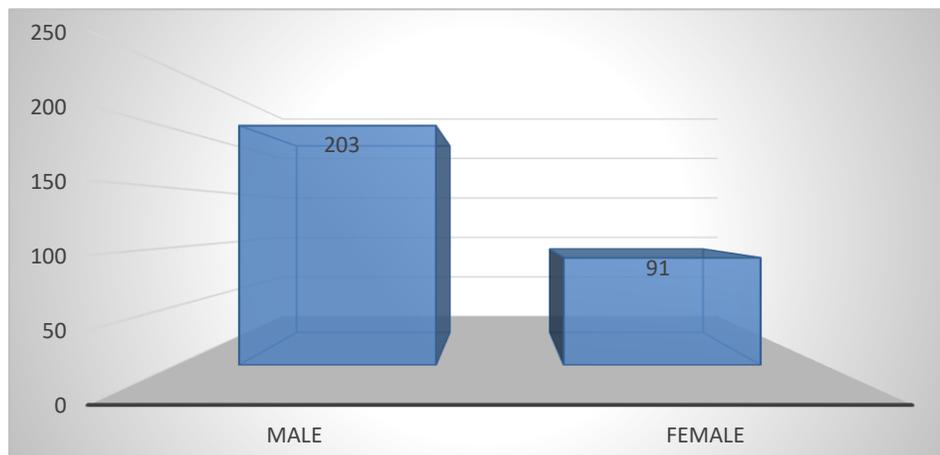
After the approval of the research committee of Pace and Kedge Institute of Health Sciences Islamabad. Data was collected from the public and private hospitals in Peshawar. Prior permission took from the institute for data collection purposes. Data collected through a valid questionnaire and a self-structured interview.

**Data Analysis Procedure**

The SPSS version 22 was used for the data entry management and analysis.

**Table 4.1. Gender wise Frequency and Percentage of Respondents.**

Gender	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Male	203	69%
Female	91	30%



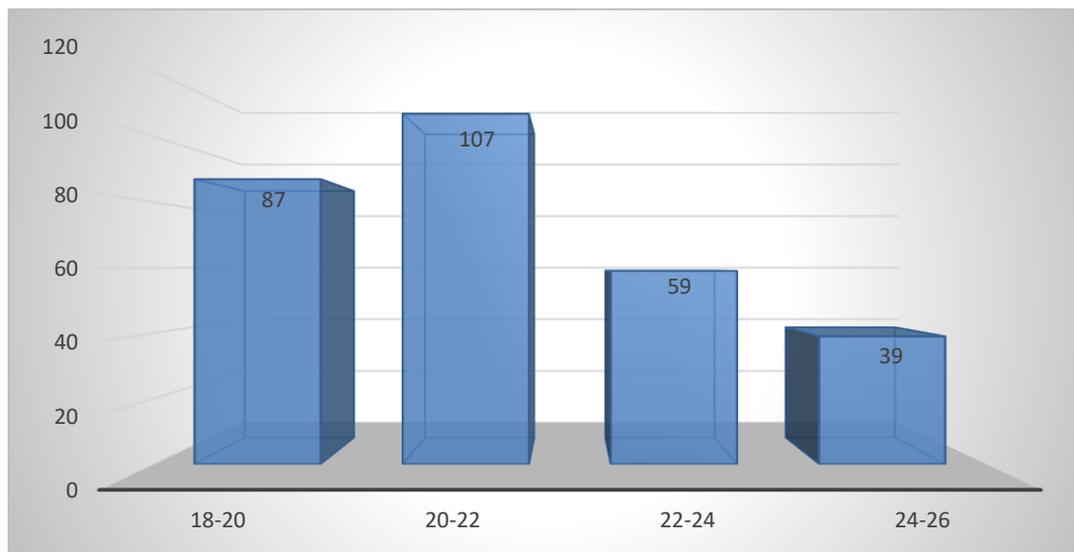
**Graph 4.1. Gender wise Frequency of Respondents**

4.2. When analyzing the age distribution, the majority of respondents were between the ages of 20 and 22 (n= 107, 36%), followed by those between the ages of 18 and 20 (n=87, 29%). (n=

59, 20%) of participants were between the ages of 22 and 24, and (n= 39 ,13%) were between the ages of 24 and 26. This suggests that young adults in their early adult years represented the majority of responders.

**Table 4.2. Age-wise Frequency and Percentage of Respondents.**

Age	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
18-20	87	29%
20-22	107	36%
22-24	59	20%
24-26	39	13%



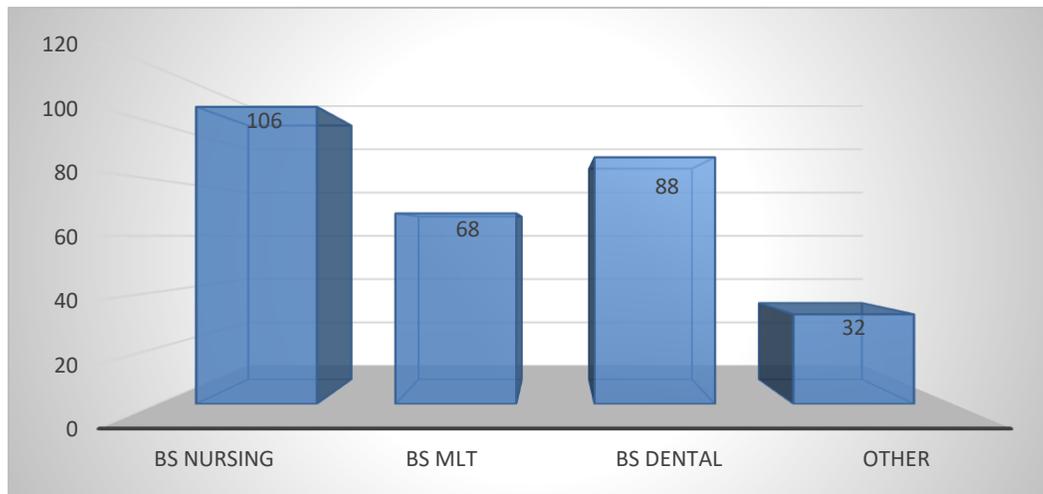
**Graph 4.2. Age wise Frequency of Respondents.**

4.3. The program-wise results suggest that most respondents belonged to the BS Nursing program, with a frequency of (n=106) (36%), showing its high participation in the study. Following this

were MLT with (n= 68) responders (23%) and BS Dental with (n= 88) respondents (29%). Other programs contributed the least, with (n= 32) responders (10%), showing decreased involvement.

**Table 4.3. Programs wise Frequency and Percentage of Respondents.**

Programs	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
BS Nursing	106	36%
BS MLT	68	23%
BS Dental	88	29%
Other	32	10%



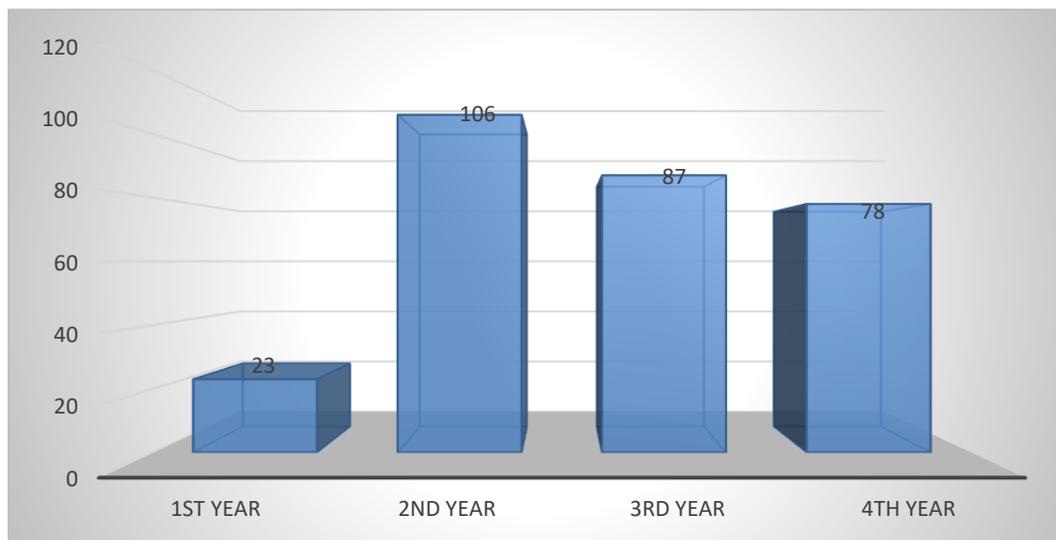
**Graph 4.3. Programs wise Frequency of Respondents.**

4.4. The year-wise graduation statistics show that the majority of respondents were from the 2nd year, with a frequency of (n= 106; 36%). Third-year students (n = 87; 29%) and fourth-year

students (n = 78; 26%) came next. First-year students made up the smallest group (n=23; 7%), suggesting that mid-level students were more likely to participate.

**Table 4.4. Years wise Graduation of the respondents.**

Year of Graduation	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1 <sup>st</sup> year	23	7%
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	106	36%
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	87	29%
4 <sup>th</sup> year	78	26%



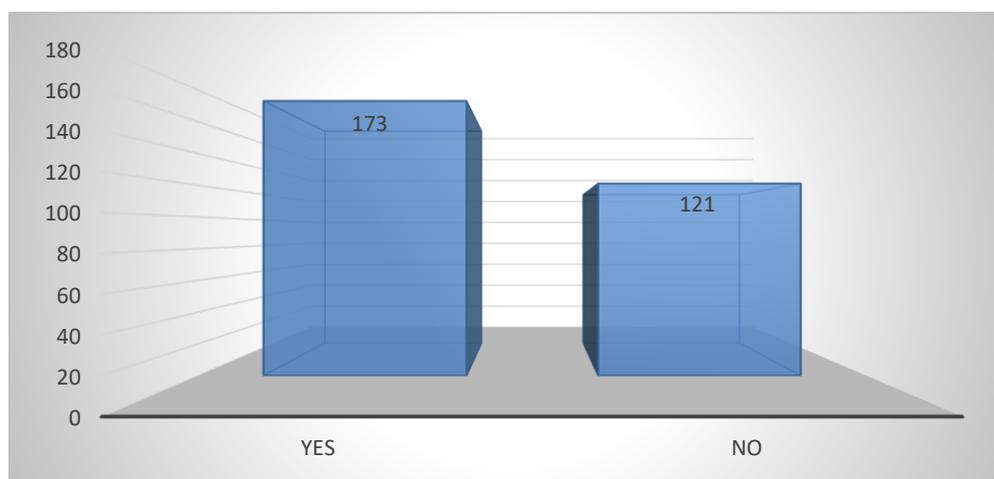
**Graph 4.4. Years wise Graduation of the respondents.**

4.5. The findings show that a significant percentage of respondents (n=173; 58%) said that friends had urged them to try drugs, underscoring the powerful influence of peer pressure. On the

other hand, (n=121) respondents (41%) reported no such encouragement. This result implies that individuals' attitudes and behaviors about drug usage are greatly influenced by their social circles.

**Table 4.5. Frequency and Percentage.**

My friends have encouraged me to try drug	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Yes	173	58%
No	121	41%



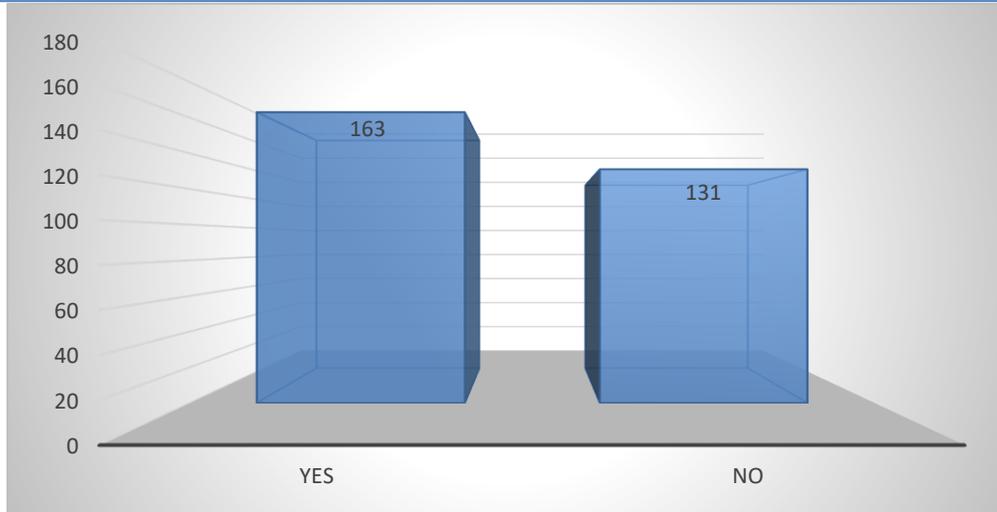
**Graph 4.5. Yes and No Frequency of the respondent.**

4.6. The results demonstrate that more than half of the respondents (n=163; 55%) felt pressured to take drugs during social gatherings, showing a considerable influence of social surroundings on

drug-related behavior. (n=131; 44%) did not experience this kind of pressure, nevertheless. This implies that for many people, social environments can be a major risk factor for drug use.

**Table 4.6. Frequency and Percentage.**

I feel pressured to use drugs in social gathering	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Yes	163	55%
No	131	44%



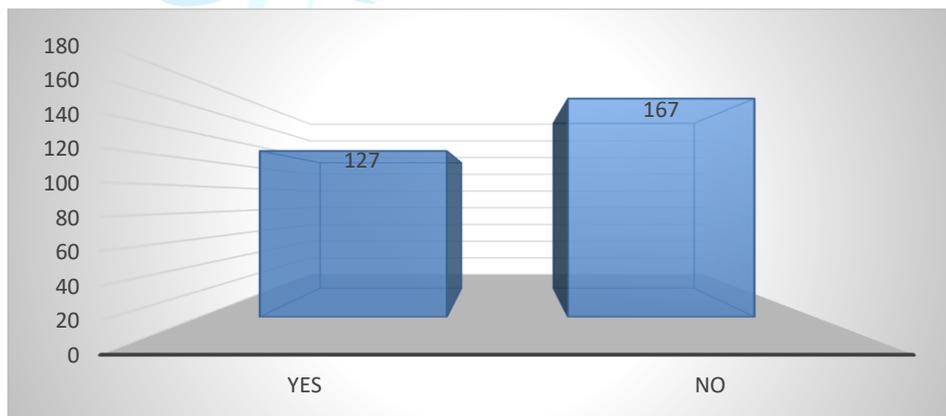
**Graph 4.6. Yes and No Frequency of the respondent.**

4.7. The importance of social acceptance on drug-related behavior is shown by the results, which show that (n = 127; 43%) reported using drugs to avoid feeling excluded by their peers. For

this reason, a higher percentage of individuals (n=167; 56%) weren't use drugs. This implies that although many people are impacted by peer pressure, other people show resistance in the face of such social constraints.

**Table 4.7. Frequency and Percentage.**

I use drugs to avoid feeling left out by my peers	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Yes	127	43%
No	167	56%



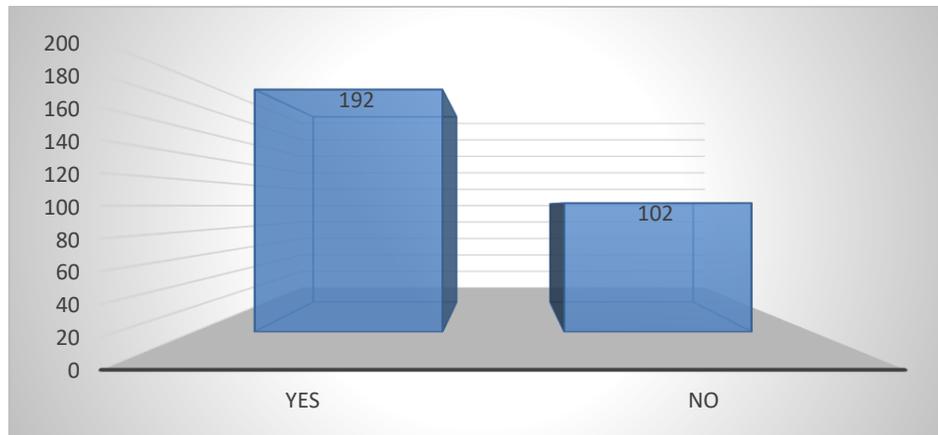
**Graph 4.7. Yes and No Frequency of the respondent.**

4.8. The findings show that most respondents (n=192; 65%) believe that drug use is frequent among university students, indicating that the conduct is widely known or observed. However,

this perspective was not shared by (n=102;34%). This demonstrates how common drug-related problems are in academic settings and the importance of raising awareness and taking preventative action.

**Table 4.8. Frequency and Percentage.**

Drug use seems common students in my University	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Yes	192	65%
No	102	34%



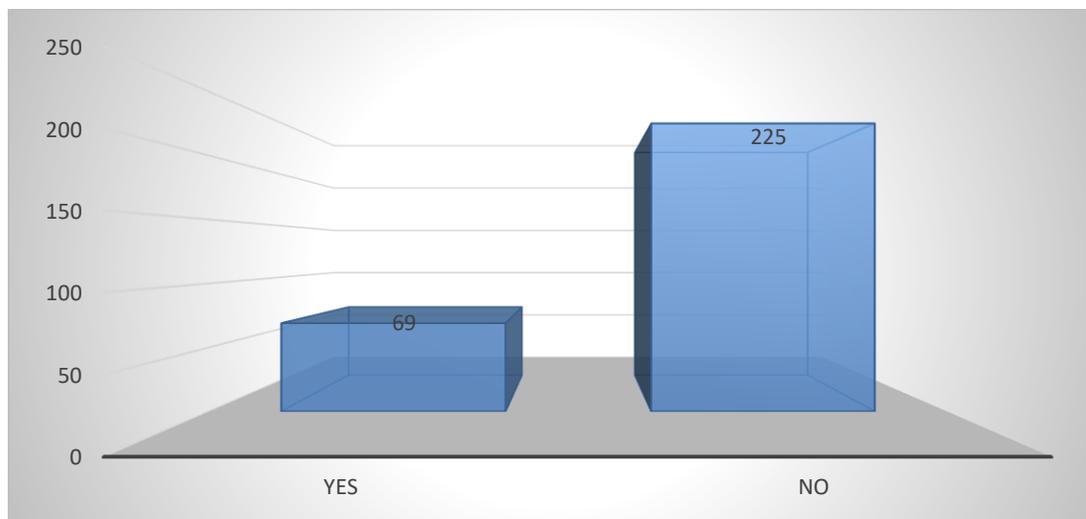
**Graph 4.8. Yes and No Frequency of the respondent.**

**4.9.** Only a tiny percentage of respondents (n=69; 23%) think that drug usage is socially acceptable among their peer group, according to the results, while the majority (n=225; 76%) disagree. This

suggests that the majority of students are aware of how drug use is seen negatively by society, which reflects strong peer norms that discourage such behavior.

**Table 4.9. Frequency and Percentage.**

I believe drug use is socially acceptable among peer group	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Yes	69	23%
No	225	76%



**Graph 4.9. Yes and No Frequency of the respondent.**

**4.10.** The findings show that (n=77;26%) believed that seeing other people use drugs made the

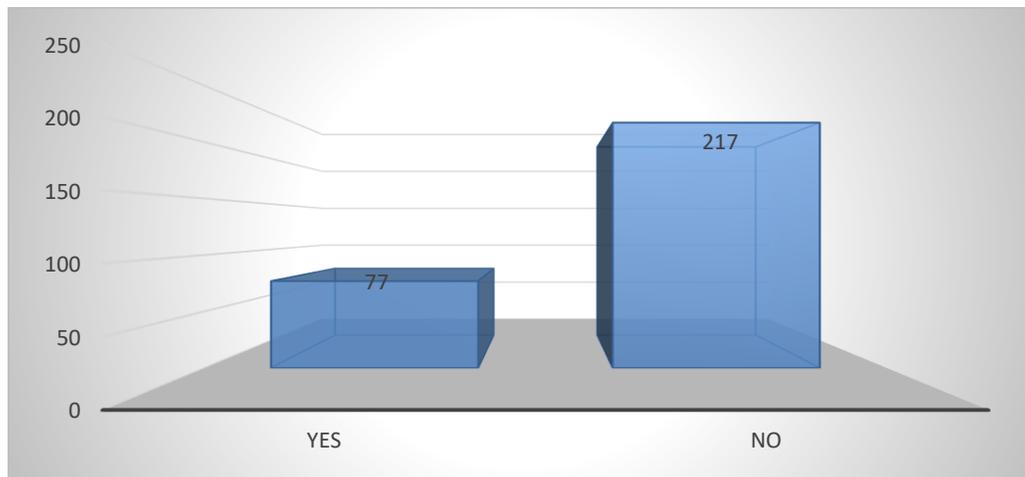
conduct seem less dangerous, suggesting some vulnerability to social modeling. Despite

witnessing others take drugs, the majority (n=217; 73%) did not believe that drug use was less dangerous. This implies that the majority of

students continue to be wary of the dangers associated with drugs.

**Table 4.10. Frequency and Percentage.**

Seeing other using drug makes it seem less risky	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Yes	77	26%
No	217	73%



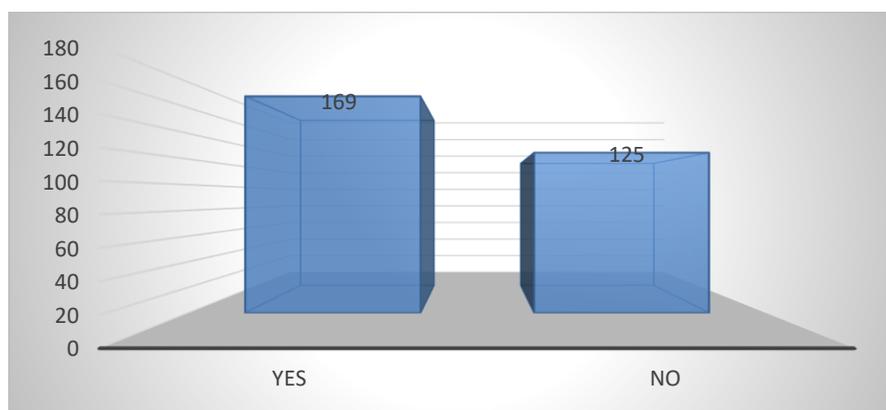
**Graph 4.10. Yes and No Frequency of the respondent.**

**4.11.** The findings emphasize the possible influence of intimate peer networks on drug-related behaviors, as 169 respondents (57%) reported having powerful friends who use drugs.

In comparison, 125 participants (42%) did not have such friends. This implies that adolescents' attitudes and choices about drug usage are greatly influenced by their peers.

**Table 4.11. Frequency and Percentage.**

I have influential friends who use drugs	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Yes	169	57%
No	125	42%



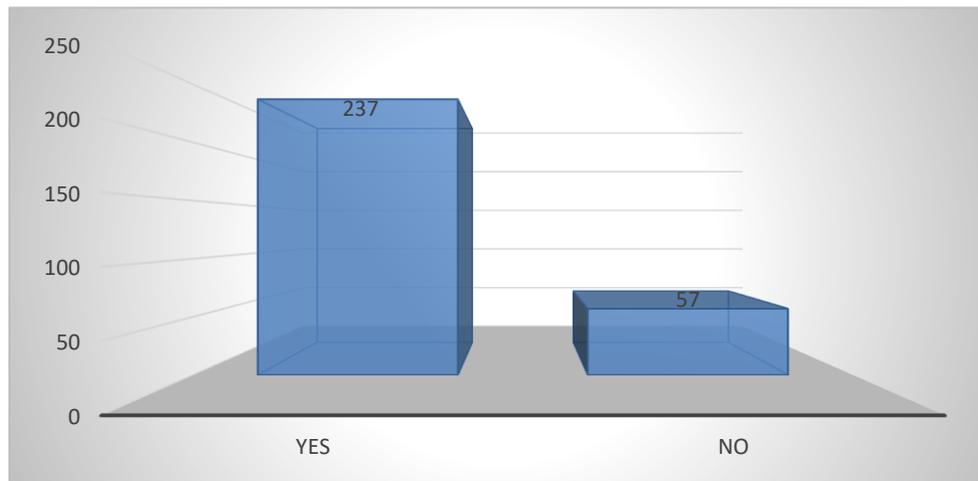
**Graph 4.11. Yes and No Frequency of the respondent.**

4.12. According to the findings, a sizable majority of respondents (n=237; 80%) frequently copy the routines of their roommates or close friends, demonstrating a considerable behavioral effect

from their immediate social circle. Merely (n=57, 19%) did not adhere to these trends. This demonstrates the significant influence that peer behavior has on students' personal behaviors and lifestyle decisions.

**Table 4.12. Frequency and Percentage.**

I often imitate the habits of close friends or roommates	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Yes	237	80%
No	57	19%



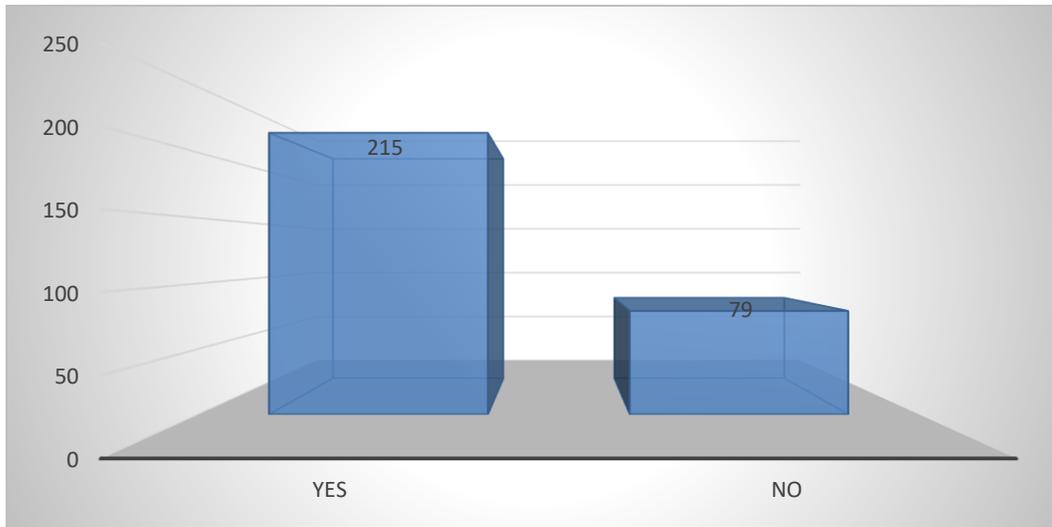
**Graph 4.12. Yes and No Frequency of the respondent.**

4.13. The results reveal that (n= 215 ;73%) feel that social media or famous figures influence their opinion of drug usage, highlighting the considerable impact of media and celebrity

behavior on students' attitudes. On the other hand, (n = 79; 26%) did not report any such influence. This implies that perceptions and awareness regarding drug usage are greatly influenced by public and online venues.

**Table 4.13. Frequency and Percentage.**

Social media or public figures influence my perception of drug use	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Yes	215	73%
No	79	26%



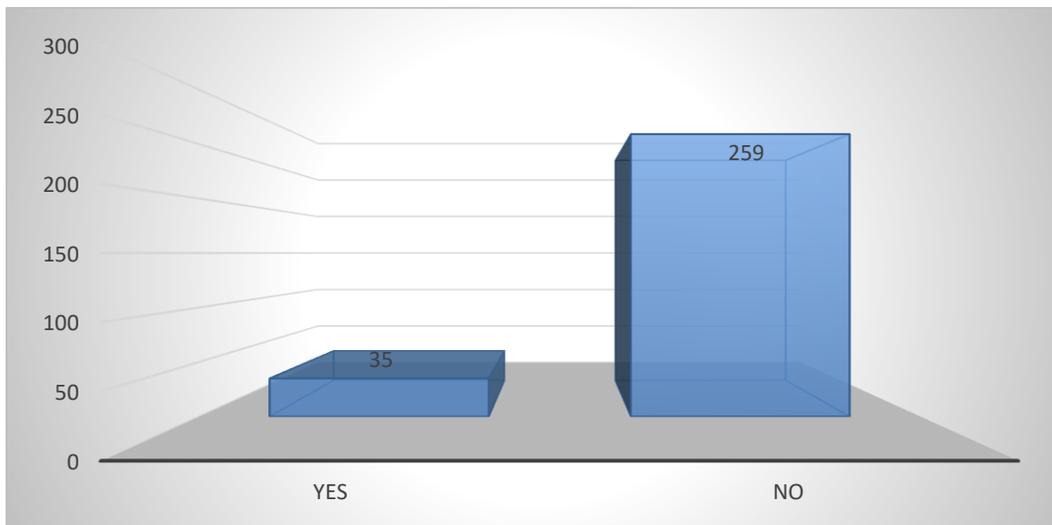
**Graph 4.13. Yes and No Frequency of the respondent.**

4.14. According to the findings, only a tiny percentage of respondents (n=35; 11%) think that parties and activities on campus encourage students to drug use, whereas the majority (n=259;

88%) disagree. This indicates that social gatherings have little effect on drug-related behaviors, as the majority of students see campus activities as low-risk settings for drug usage.

**Table 4.14. Frequency and Percentage.**

Campus parties and events expose students to drug use	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Yes	35	11%
No	259	88%



**Graph 4.14. Yes and No Frequency of the respondent.**

4.15. The findings show that while the majority (n=231; 78%) disagree, 63 (21%) believe that

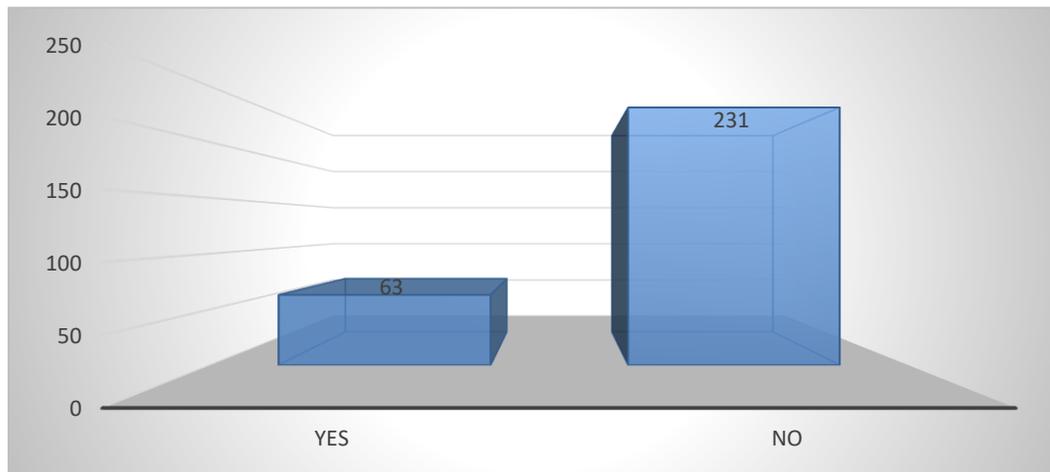
drugs are easily accepted in their social group. This suggests that peer groups primarily discourage

such activity and preserve unfavorable views toward drug acceptance, as the majority of

students feel considerable social opposition to drug usage.

**Table 4.15. Frequency and Percentage.**

Drugs are easily acceptable in my social circle	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Yes	63	21%
No	231	78%



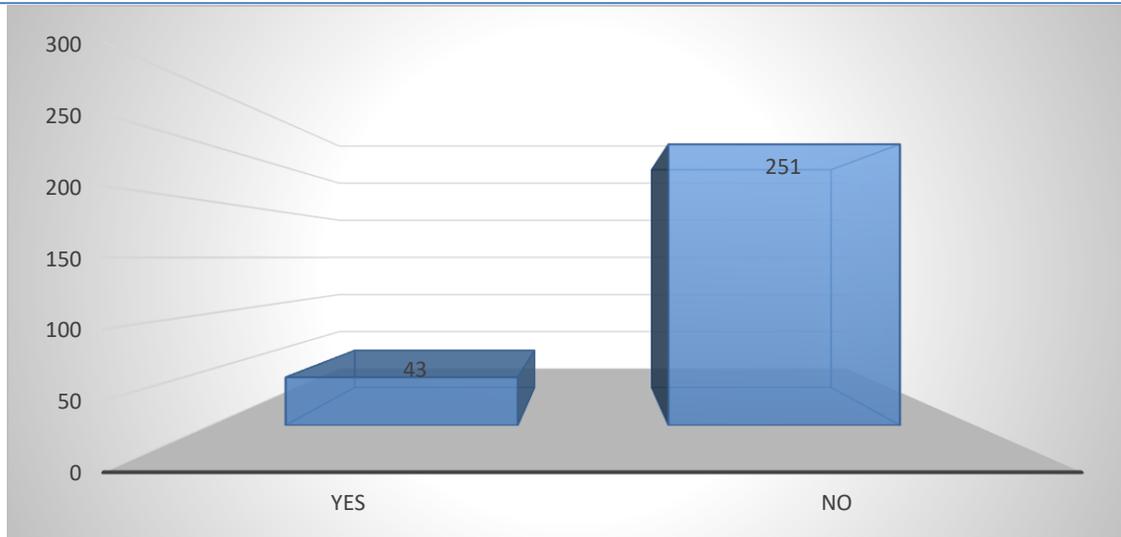
**Graph 4.15. Yes and No Frequency of the respondent.**

**4.16.** The findings demonstrate that just a tiny minority of respondents (n=43; 14%) believe that social gatherings involve drug usage, whilst the vast majority (n=251; 85%) do not associate such

events with drug intake. This implies that most students view social gatherings to be mainly devoid of drug-related activities, implying that drugs are not commonly used in these situations.

**Table 4.16. Frequency and Percentage.**

Social gathering also involves drug use	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Yes	43	14%
No	251	85%



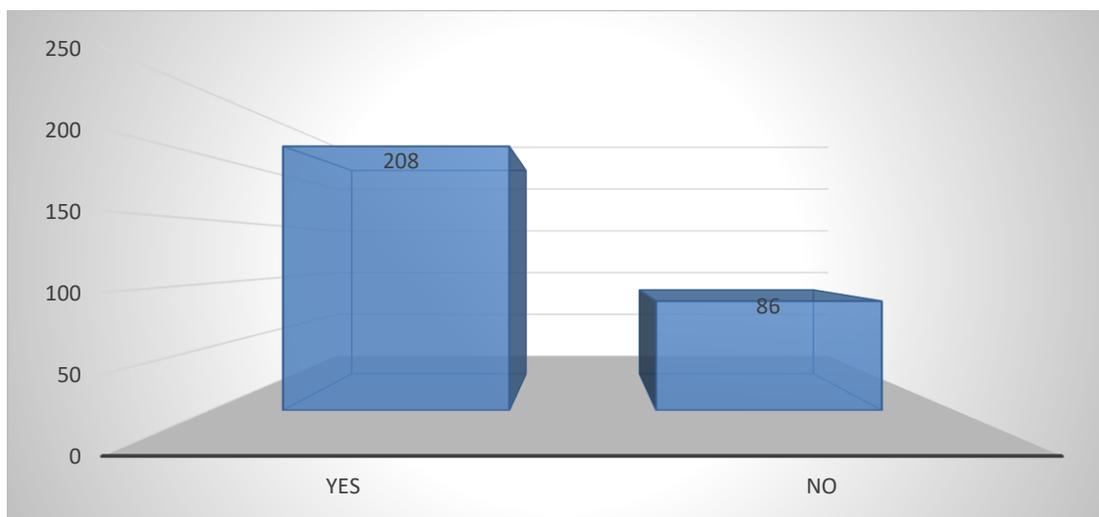
**Graph 4.16. Yes and No Frequency of the respondent.**

4.17. The findings show that a considerable majority of respondents (n=208; 70%) had dabbled with drug usage due to social influence, highlighting the powerful influence of peers and social settings on behavior. In contrast, (n=86;

29%) did not experiment under such conditions. This finding underlines the impact of social pressure in commencing drug use among students, as well as the importance of prevention interventions.

**Table 4.17. Frequency and Percentage.**

I have experimented with drug use to social influence	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Yes	208	70%
No	86	29%



**Graph 4.17. Yes and No Frequency of the respondent.**

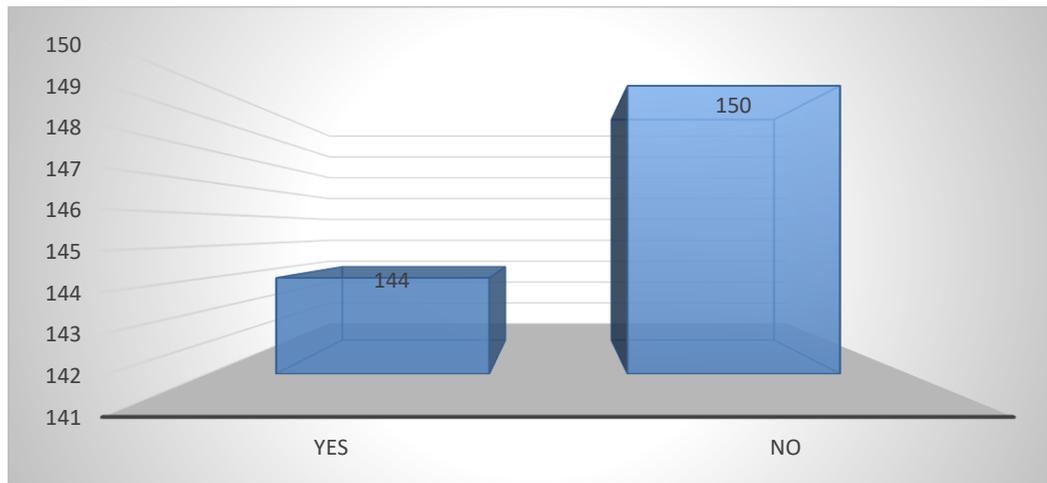
4.18. The findings suggest that over half of the respondents (n=144; 48%) felt more confident or calm while using drugs in social situations,

implying that some students equate drug use with increased social comfort. However, a slightly greater number (n=150; 51%) do not perceive this

effect, indicating a range of personal responses and views regarding drug use in social settings.

**Table 4.18. Frequency and Percentage.**

I feel more confident or relax when using drug in social gathering	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Yes	144	48%
No	150	51%



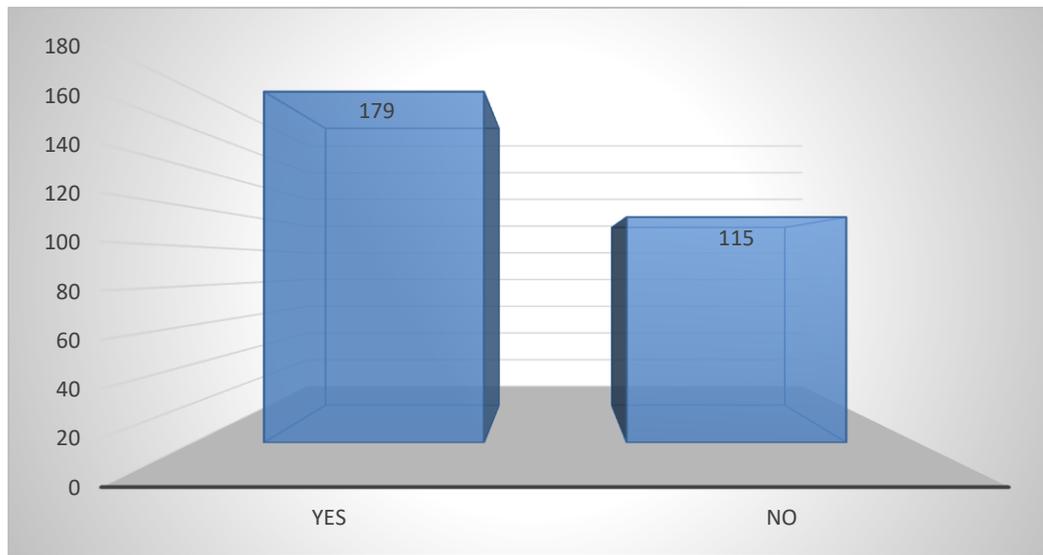
**Graph 4.18. Yes and No Frequency of the respondent.**

**4.19.** According to the findings, 179 respondents (60%) believe that social interactions influence their drug use decisions, emphasizing the importance of peers and close connections in

shaping behavior. In contrast, 115 people (39%) do not see influence. This implies that social networks have a major impact on students' views and decisions about drug usage.

**Table 4.19. Frequency and Percentage.**

I believe social relationships influence my decisions about drug use	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Yes	179	60%
No	115	39%



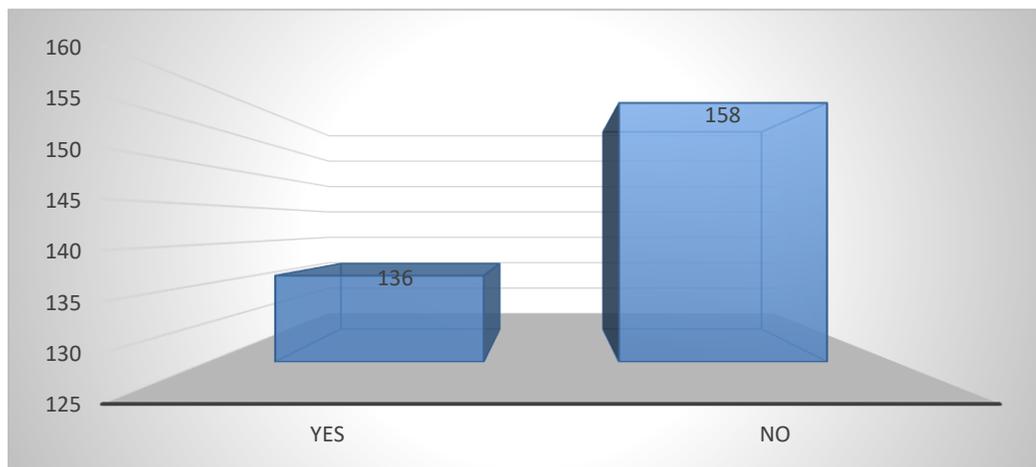
**Graph 4.19. Yes and No Frequency of the respondent.**

4.20. The findings demonstrate that (n=136; 46%) reported using drugs more frequently when they were around certain friends, demonstrating that specific peer groups influence drug-related

behavior. However, a significantly higher proportion (n=158; 53%) did not use drugs in similar contexts, indicating that peer influence and individual self-control vary among students.

**Table 4.20. Frequency and Percentage.**

I used drugs more when I am with certain friends	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
Yes	136	46%
No	158	53%



**Graph 4.20. Yes and No Frequency of the respondent.**

## CHAPTER NO. 5

### DISCUSSION

The results of this research suggest that social influence significantly impacts students' attitudes and behaviors regarding drug use within the university environment. The majority of participants were young adults, a demographic particularly susceptible to peer influence because of heightened social interactions and the desire for acceptance. This vulnerability often leads students to experiment with drugs, especially in social settings. Peer pressure was identified as a crucial factor, with numerous students indicating that friends encouraged them and that they felt compelled to use drugs at social events. The inclination to mimic the behaviors of close friends or roommates further reinforces the concept that actions are learned and normalized among peer groups. The general belief that drug use is ubiquitous on campus may lower perceived risk and encourage experimentation, despite the fact that many respondents did not consider drug use to be socially acceptable. Furthermore, it was discovered that students' views on drug usage were influenced by social media and public figures, which helped to normalize it. While some students said that using drugs in social situations made them feel more at ease or confident, others said that their drug use was dependent on who they were with. This emphasizes how crucial social context is when making decisions.

This study demonstrates the significant impact of social factors on drug use habits among university students. The majority of respondents reported peer encouragement, pressure at social gatherings, and greater exposure to drugs through friends, demonstrating that peer interactions play an important role in influencing drug-related attitudes and behaviors. These findings are consistent with international research indicating that peer pressure and social acceptance are important determinants of substance use in young adults (Borsari & Carey, 2001; Hawkins et al., 1992).

Furthermore, a sizable proportion of participants reported drug use as prevalent in the university setting, reflecting previous global research indicating that perceived norms have a major

influence on individual behavior (Perkins, 2002). This study's findings on exposure to influential friends and copying of peers' practices are consistent with social learning theory, which explains how people adopt behaviors observed in tight social networks (Bandura, 1977).

Regionally, research in South Asia have highlighted peer influence, social gatherings, and media exposure as key drivers to student drug use (UNODC, 2018). Locally, research from Pakistani institutions indicates that peer groups, hostel life, and social stressors promote vulnerability to substance use (Khan et al., 2019).

Interestingly, while many respondents felt social pressure, the majority did not consider drug use to be socially acceptable, demonstrating understanding of the negative implications. Overall, the findings support current international, regional, and local literature, emphasizing the importance of peer-focused preventive programs, awareness campaigns, and supportive campus regulations for reducing drug use among university students.

### CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social influence plays a critical role in shaping students' attitudes and behaviors toward drug use within the university setting. The findings show that most respondents were young adults, a group particularly vulnerable to peer pressure and social expectations. Students from various academic programs reported similar experiences, indicating that socially influenced drug use is a widespread issue rather than one limited to a specific discipline. The results highlight peers as a major source of influence, with many students reporting encouragement from friends, pressure in social gatherings, and experimentation with drugs to fit in. The strong tendency to imitate close friends or roommates further emphasizes how social acceptance and belonging affect decision-making. Although a large number of respondents did not consider drug use socially acceptable, the perception that drug use is common on campus may normalize the behavior and reduce perceived risk. Additionally, social media and public figures appear to reinforce these perceptions. Overall, the study suggests that

students' drug-related behaviors are strongly shaped by their social environment. These findings emphasize the need for university-based interventions that address peer influence, promote healthy social interactions, and raise awareness about the risks of drug use. By focusing on social dynamics, institutions can help reduce pressure on students and encourage safer, more informed choices.

### RECOMMENDATION

Universities should launch thorough drug awareness and prevention programs aimed at young adults, especially those between the ages of 18 and 24, according to the study's conclusions. Educational interventions should concentrate on developing refusal skills, decision-making ability, and understanding of the risks connected with substance use because peer pressure, social gatherings, and social media have a substantial impact on students' beliefs and behaviors about drug use. To help students who are under social pressure or experimenting, counseling services should be improved and made more readily available. To lessen exposure to drug-related surroundings, universities should encourage involvement in constructive extracurricular activities and foster healthy peer networks. To reduce potential for drug exposure, strict oversight and control of parties and gatherings on campus are also advised. Additionally, collaboration with parents, healthcare professionals, and community organizations can help reinforce anti-drug messages. Future programs should also utilize social media responsibly to counteract harmful influences and promote drug-free lifestyles among students

### Declaration

I hereby declare that the work accomplished in this thesis is my research effort carried out at the PAK (Pace and Kedge) Institute of Health Sciences Islamabad. The thesis has been written and composed by me. The work in this research project has neither been previously submitted for the examination leading to the award of a degree, nor does it contain any material from the published

resources that can be considered a violation of the international copyright law.

I also declare that I am aware of the terms 'copyright' and 'plagiarism.' I will be solely responsible for the consequences of violation of these rules (if any) found in the thesis.

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