



Drug addiction among the youth and its impact: A sociological study in Nagaon District, Assam

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Abstract

This paper attempts to present an overview of the profile of drug addicts to examine the trend and pattern of drug use among the youth of Assam. Drug addiction among youth is a rising social issue in the Northeastern region. India's Northeastern region has become a transit destination for Opium and Heroin produced in the Golden Triangle. Thus, increasing youth involvement in the substance abuse have become major treat in the region, not only to its economic development also to family instability and social security of the Northeastern region. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate on the social variables that are causing for addictive behaviour of drug among the young generation. For the purpose of the study 10 case study were selected and questionnaire survey was used who were under the treatment in a private rehabilitation centre run by N.G.O. Additionally, the case study was applied to bring out the core factor that are responsible for the young generation in addiction of drugs. Therefore, research finding suggest that influence of peer group, weaken family bonding, affluence and shortage of money are key responsible for the drug addiction of young generation. Also, the study highlights factors such as poverty, unemployment, and social inequality that hinder access to the treatment and support services of the addict.

Keywords: Drug abuse, gender, sociology

Introduction

Drug addiction among youth is a rising social issue in the Northeastern region. India's Northeastern region has become a transit destination for Opium and Heroin produced in the Golden Triangle. Thus, Northeastern states share a common international border with Myanmar, leading to an increased prevalence of drug addiction among the youth in the region, with easy access to a drug supply. The geographical location and easy availability of drugs have made the state of Assam one of the victims of drugs. The use of illegal drugs among the youth of Assam is now a significant problem. For instance, narcotics worth around Rs 80 lakh were seized during the police operation based on an alert in Nagaon. They found a four-wheeler containing heroin in soap cases, and two individuals, identified as Anarul Islam and Moinuddin Ahmed, were arrested in connection with the drug trafficking operation carried out to transport the illegal drug from Dimapur and Nagaland (THE TIMES OF INDIA, 2024). In another case, in Nagaon, Heroin worth over Rs 9 lakh in the international market was seized, and the suspected drug supplier was hiding in Kachua village (Mukut Das, THE TIMES OF INDIA, 2021). From the above two newspaper articles, it has been observed that Nagaon district is the entry point for drug trafficking in the state of Assam. Nagaon district's status as an entry point for drug trafficking could be due to various factors such as its geographical location, closeness to border areas or major transportation routes, and the presence of organised criminal networks within the region. There is a need to analyse the trends and patterns of drug addicts in society and address the types of challenges in complete eradication.

Furthermore, firstly, it will draw on an understanding of the social variables that are responsible for addictive behaviour. Additionally, it examines the economic and social factors such as poverty, unemployment, and social inequality that hinder access to the treatment and support services of the

addict. Secondly, in an analysis of the risk factors for drug usage among the Youth in Assam.

Drug Addiction among Youth: Causes and Impact

Despite the risk associated with drug abuse and addiction, the drug is quite a common problem. A study adopts a functional perspective to explore the motivations behind young people's use of psychoactive substances. Young people use psychoactive drugs for a range of distinct purposes; the top five functions were to 'help relax,' 'get intoxicated,' 'keep going,' 'enhance activity,' and 'feel better' (Boys, Marsden, & Strang, 2001)^[4]. The study aimed to investigate the patterns of drug and substance abuse among adolescents in the slum area of Meerut District. Drug abuse in India encompasses the misuse of substances like cannabis, heroin, and Indian pharmaceutical drugs. Various societal factors, such as the breakdown of traditional family structures and values, alongside industrialisation and urbanisation, are responsible for the contribution of drug abuse. This phenomenon has detrimental effects on society, including increased crime rates and emotional turmoil within families (Sharma & Chaudhary, 2016)^[5]. Another study, by the Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing, explores the various risk factors that contribute to drug addiction. The authors explained various risk factors, including biological, psychological, social, and environmental factors. Biological factors such as genetics play a vital role in individuals and make them prone to addiction. Psychological factors like stress, trauma and mental health disorders also contribute to drug addiction. Social and environmental factors such as peer pressure, family, socio-economic status and access to drugs. These external factors can significantly impact an individual's engagement in drug use and the development of drug addiction (Devi & Singh, 2023)^[6]. A study identifies the two factors that can contribute to drug abuse; (one)

frequency of usage and (two) demographic characteristics. The findings also shed light on the age of first using drugs, on average, most drug users commence some form of drug use between 11 and 20 years. Smoking is the first bad habit which leads to taking drugs. At the last stage of smoking, they start taking heroin and marijuana. This study shows the effects of drug abuse on academic performance, mental health and overall well-being of students. The study concluded with the fact that it is a matter of great sorrow that an increasing number of schools, college and university students are addicted during their student life (Shahjahan & Haque, 2024) ^[2]. The studies indicate that the primary reasons behind the usage of drugs are mainly due to poor employment opportunities and less business scope for local people, which leads to frustration among the youth. Thus, there is a correlation between social problems and the increasing rates of addiction and drug abuse, particularly among youths. Society is a web of social relationships. The aspects of increasing social problems in society have been attributed to addiction and drug abuse. One of the dangerous impacts of addiction and drug abuse is the breakdown of social relationships, which leads to social disorganisation and crimes, particularly in urban areas. The study on the street children in Dhaka city lives in harsh living conditions, exposed to various risk factors including violence, exploitation, and lack of access to basic needs like food and shelter. The impact of drug addiction among street children is (one) Physically it retards their health, leading to malnutrition and other health issues. Secondly, drug abuse can cause mental disturbance, contributing to anxiety and depression, and drug addiction hampers their overall development, hindering their future. Finally, it limits their opportunities for education, employment, and social integration (Sultana, Hossain, Parvin, Islam, & Mithy, 2024) ^[1]. Drug addiction not only affects the individual but also has a significant impact on their family members, particularly parents who often face feelings of guilt and shame associated with their children's addiction. The study shows the emotional burden carried by parents of adult children with drug addiction. The study was conducted in Sweden on the lived experiences of parents facing the challenges of having adult children with drug addiction. One key finding of the study is the feeling of shame experienced by parents, stemming from societal judgment and perceptions of parenting failure. After that, the parents seek support from trusted individuals or support groups, further helping reduce drug usage (Flensburg, Richert, & Fritz, 2023). Therefore, it is important to also emphasise providing adequate support systems, knowledge and support measures that could help reduce drugs. For example, A study conducted on animated video media has influenced an effective way of increasing knowledge about drugs among the youth. The study provides valuable insights into different learning media processes in delivering drug abuse education to students, and educating students about drug abuse is done through video animation and e-books (Alifariki, Rahmawati, Sukurni, & Siagian, 2023) ^[3]. Addiction affects people of all ages, backgrounds, and socio-economic statuses. Youth are particularly prone to drug addiction due to various factors such as peer pressure, curiosity, experimentation, the influence of media and pop culture and coping with stress. Furthermore, the critical role of the family is in both preventing and intervening in substance use among young people. It discusses various

family processes and structures associated with the initiation and later misuse of substances, emphasising the importance of family involvement. The family plays a crucial role in influencing young people's engagement with substance use and misuse, both by exposing them to risk factors and by fostering protective factors. Individuals use drugs among adolescents also due to the strain of familial relationships. Families of addicts often experience emotional distress, feelings of guilt and shyness, financial burdens and disruptions in daily functioning (Velleman, Templeton, & Copello, 2005) ^[10].

In conclusion, Drug abuse in Assam is not merely an individual issue but a structural and social problem rooted in economic, cultural, and institutional factors. A multi-dimensional approach involving policy reforms, rehabilitation, awareness, and community participation is essential to address this growing menace. The study aimed to identify substance abuse patterns among young people (10-24 years) in the urban slums of Jorhat, Assam. Results indicated that males aged 22 to 24 years were more prone to substance abuse, with tobacco being the most abused, followed by alcohol. The study recommended awareness workshops and camps to address the issue and create social awareness about the ill effects of substance abuse. This study recommended awareness workshops and camps to create social awareness among people and their families about the ill effects of substance abuse. Household factors, particularly lower socio-economic status, lack of guidance, and instances of household violence, were identified as significant contributors to substance abuse within the studied demographic (Kovilveetil, 2021) ^[11]. The study in Pakistan reveals that the surge in drug users has increased due to various forms of societal challenges like Poverty, Unemployment, and Illiteracy. One of the most devastating problems when considering poverty and drug addiction is the lack of access to rehabilitation and recovery. If there are no financial resources, there is no access to a Rehabilitation Centre, which can put a person at risk of dying from an overdose. Unemployment due to limited work prospects contributes to drug use, impacting both individuals and families too (Nadeem, Nawaz, Ashraf, 2024) ^[12].

In recent report on rising drug abuse cases and theft in Guwahati, particularly in the Panbazar area, highlights an alarming urban crisis. The joint eviction drive conducted by Panbazar Police and the Railway Protection Force (RPF) around railway gates 2, 3 and 4 reflects the seriousness of the drug issue. Many individuals involved in theft and illegal activities are reportedly drug dependent, often coming from marginalized backgrounds or migrating from other regions in search of livelihood (Distirupa Bordoloi, The Assam Tribune, 2025). The recent data from Times of India highlights a significant shift in the pattern of HIV transmission in Assam, where injecting drug use (IDU) accounts for nearly 65% of new infections. This marks a transition from earlier trends where heterosexual transmission was dominant, indicating deeper structural and social issues (Kangkan Kalita, The Times of India, 2025). The issue of drug abuse in Assam has emerged as a serious social problem, with nearly 3 lakh drug users reported in the state, including a significant concentration in Guwahati. Initially, the region functioned mainly as a transit route due to its proximity to the "Golden Triangle," but it has now become a centre of consumption, indicating a structural shift in the nature of the problem. The problem is aggravated by

the nexus between addiction and trafficking, where around 10% of users are involved in peddling (Mukut Das, the times of India, 2021). This situation is not merely a law-and-order problem but complex social issues in an urban area. One of the major concerns raised in the report is the increasing prevalence of drug addiction among youth. Institutionally, the state faces challenges such as the absence of a comprehensive rehabilitation policy, limited treatment centres, and reliance on central schemes. This indicates a gap in welfare mechanisms and highlights the need for stronger state intervention. Therefore, the understanding of socio-economic landscape and its impact on drug addiction, policymakers, and stakeholders helps to develop targeted interventions and strategies that would address the root causes of the problem. The study investigates the core factor that are responsible for the young generation in addiction of drugs in the Nagaon district of Assam. The influence of peer group, weaken family bonding, affluence and shortage of

money are key responsible for the drug addiction of young generation. Also, the study highlights factors such as poverty, unemployment, and social inequality that hinder access to the treatment and support services of the addict.

Methodology

The study was conducted in the two de-addiction centres at Nagaon, Assam. The rehabilitation centres are (1) Willing Way Wellness Rehabilitation Centre and (2) Wellbeing Rehabilitation Centre, as mentioned in Table 1. Both the centres are administered by private and government organisations working to improve society, focusing on the youth. The main goal of the de-addiction centre is to assist individuals in confronting and overcoming substance dependence, eliminate substance abuse, and prevent legal, psychological, financial, and social repercussions. The study consists of a total of addicts, 23 youths, and all are within the age group of 15 to 30 years.

Table 1: Types of Rehabilitation Centre

Name of the Rehabilitation Centre	1. Willing-Way Wellness Rehabilitation Centre	2. Wellbeing Rehabilitation Centre
Drug addicts	10	13
Workers of the Centre	3	3
Establishment year	2021	2023

Source: Field survey, 2024

Results

In this study, field data were collected through in-person interviews with the adolescent boy with a history of substance abuse and with the professional working in the rehabilitation centre. A study of the respondent's social characteristics helps to indicate the direct and indirect relation between the dependent and independent variables that have an impact on the incidence of drug abuse. Variables such as age, education qualification, religion, and ethnicity domicile, prove to be useful in ascertaining the personalities of respondents to a greater extent and the consequences of their reaction towards the situation.

Respondent Profile

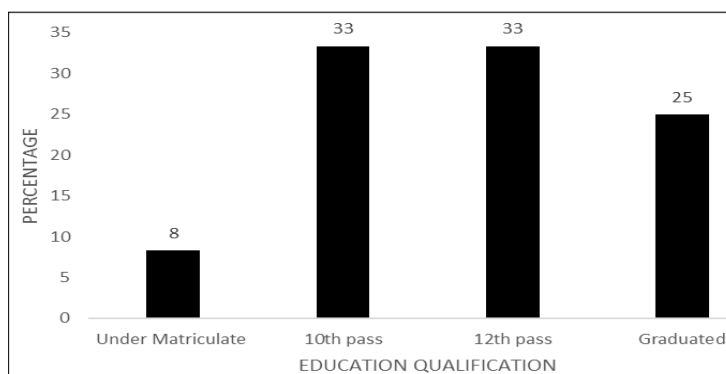
Table 2 indicates that age composition is categorised into three categories: 15 to 20 years, 21 to 25 years and 26 to 30 years. The majority (42%) of the respondents belong to the 21-25 age group. And (25%) belong to the age group of 26-30 years. Only 33% of respondents belong to the 15 to 19 years age group. Therefore, the respondents are admitted to the rehabilitation Centre between the age categories of 15 years and 30 years. Therefore, the above indicates that the age group between 21 to 25 years are more prone to drug addiction.

Table 2: Age of the Respondents

Age category	Frequency	%
15 – 20 years	4	33
21 - 25 years	5	42
26 - 30 years	3	25
Total	12	100

Source: Fieldwork

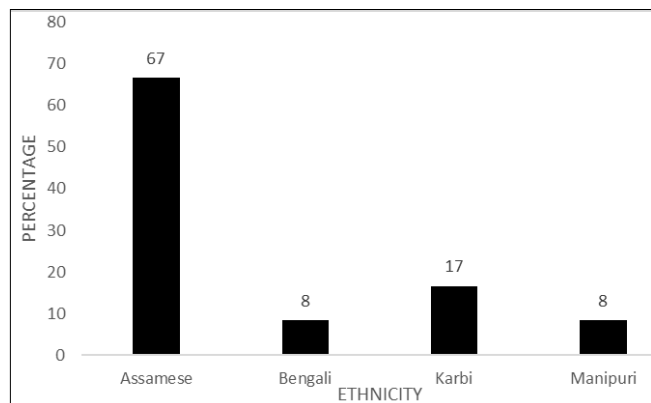
The gender composition of the inmates depicts that all the study participants are male population in both the rehabilitation centre. Also, respondents are admitted at the younger age of 15 years which means all are young, unmarried, and single. Therefore, the study indicates that teenagers are more vulnerable to experimenting with new traits in their lives. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the education status observed (66 %), the majority of the respondents have completed 10th grade, and 8% of the respondents are Under Matriculate (10th fail). Also, Figure 1 indicates that 33% of the respondents have completed 12th grade and 25% of the respondents have graduated. Thus, 92% of the respondents have attended school and completed their primary education.



Source: Field Survey, Nagaon, April 2024

Fig 1: Education Qualification

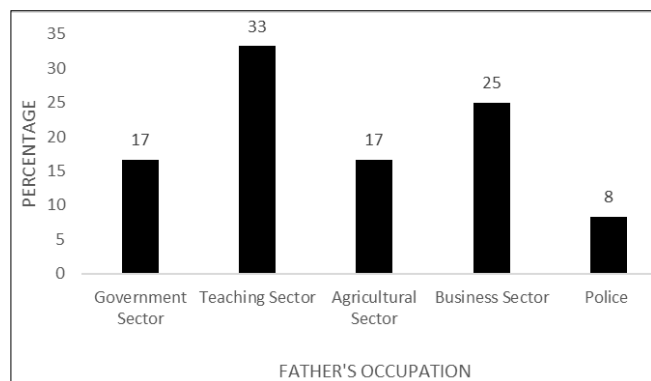
Figure 2 indicates the distribution of ethnicity categorised, which depicts that the majority (67%) of the respondents are Assamese, 8% of the respondents are Bengali, 17% are Karbi, and 8% are Manipuri. It is observed that the majority (67%) of the respondents are Assamese.



Source: Field Survey, Nagaon, April 2024

Fig 2: Ethnicity

Figure 3 displays the distribution of the father's occupation status (33%). The majority of the respondent's ' fathers' occupations are in the Teaching Sector, and 8% of the respondents' fathers work in the Police Department. Thus, 17% of the respondent's ' fathers' occupations are in the Agricultural Sector, and the other 17% of the respondents ' fathers' occupations are in the Government Sector. 25% of the respondent's ' fathers' occupations are in the Business Sector. The study depicts that the majority of the respondents are from the upper middle class. The majority of the respondents have suffered from addiction for a very long time.



Source: Field Survey, Nagaon, April 2024

Fig 3: Father's Occupation status

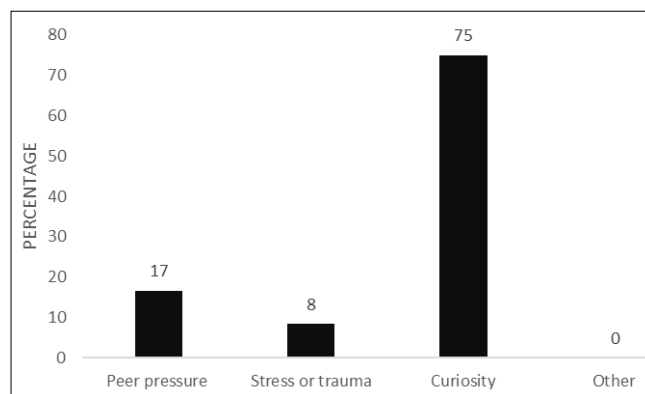
In accordance with the present study findings, the report examines the selected variables such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, occupational status, father occupation, and place of residence, with an understanding of the behaviour pattern of drug addicts admitted to the addiction centres. The study mentions that respondents initially started taking drugs out of curiosity to experience how it feels.

Initiating of Consumption: Peer and Pleasure

Fig. 4 The majority (75%) of the respondents consume drugs because of self-curiosity. Only 8% of the respondents consume the drug to get rid of stress or trauma. Also, 17% of the respondents consume drugs because of peer pressure

among their social groups. Another factor study indicated that Peer Pressure is a significant factor for the respondents to start taking drugs. They might feel pressured to fit in with their peers who are using drugs. Nowadays, the media openly showcases drug consumption and alcohol consumption, which makes individuals very curious to try all these things.

One respondent said; "I started taking drugs basically due to media influence, as there was a reality show named Gumraah on the V channel that depicted drug use and alcohol consumption openly, which misled the viewers. After watching the reality show, I felt curious to try the drug once, and I thought that it would be cool".



Source: Field Survey Nagaon, April 2024

Fig 4: Reason for consuming the drug

Continuation of Consumption: Coping and Performance

The study indicates that the majority of respondent had consumed drugs to relieve stress from their life. Drug use can harm a person's health. It can lead to a wide range of physical and mental health issues and even death in some cases. Youths believe that consuming drugs will temporarily alleviate their stress and other problems in life. At times, drug use leads the respondent's behaviour to become more aggressive and ruder, leading to constant arguments at home that have caused embarrassment and guilt in society. Therefore, the study observed that due to drug use, the relationship of drug users with their families often deteriorated as they prioritised seeking drugs over anything, and they used to spend less time with their families. Respondent consuming drugs severely risked the financial condition of their household and even got involved in illegal activities like stealing money to purchase drugs. They even forcefully demanded money from their parents, relatives and friends, which ultimately worsened their social relationships and led to isolation. One of the respondents said:

"The drug use has impacted my relationships with my family members. My drug use makes my parents feel guilty and ashamed. Being a drug user, I have become rude to my family members. My parents used to isolate themselves from other members of society because of the feeling of guilt and shame. It impacted my social life and relationships with his family members".

However, due to lack of opportunities, they become addicted to drugs and crimes. Police officials describe the eviction was necessary to disrupt the illegal activities and curb rising crimes along the railway line. However, the residents also fear the problem may resurface unless rehabilitation, monitoring and consistent enforcement are in motion simultaneously. This article reflects deeper structural

and social problems associated with rapid urbanization and inequality. In order to properly address this issue, there is a need for a balanced approach of control with care.

Discussion

This reflects a cycle of deviance and aligns with Differential Association Theory by Edwin Sutherland, which suggests that criminal behaviour is learned through interaction with others. Institutionally, the state faces challenges such as the absence of a comprehensive rehabilitation policy, limited treatment centres, and reliance on central schemes. This indicates a gap in welfare mechanisms and highlights the need for stronger state intervention. In conclusion, Drug abuse in Assam is not merely an individual issue but a structural and social problem rooted in economic, cultural, and institutional factors. A multi-dimensional approach involving policy reforms, rehabilitation, awareness, and community participation is essential to address this growing menace.

Drug addiction among youth is a rising issue in India. The major factors of drug addiction include peer pressure, trauma, mental health disorders such as depression or anxiety and lack of parental supervision or support. Initially, taking drugs might seem exciting or cool, but soon it becomes a struggle. Addiction hijacks their lives, affecting relationships, financial difficulties, and poor performance in school and work. Drug addiction can also directly affect the brain system, leading to cardiovascular disease and respiratory disorders, to mental health issues like depression and anxiety.

Conclusion

Drug addiction has become a matter of serious concern. The young generation should be aware and pay attention to the unpleasant consequences of this problem. Drug abuse is endangering the present as well as the future of the youth. This study shows the impacts of drug addiction among youth and the various factors affecting drug addiction. The major impact of drug addiction on individuals includes deteriorating physical health, strained relationships with family and friends, financial difficulties, decreased productivity and performance in school or work, etc. The major factors include peer pressure, trauma or stressful life events, mental health disorders such as depression or anxiety, and lack of parental supervision or support. The time has come to rethink the problem of drug addiction among students, both in rural and urban areas. It is a matter of great sorrow that an increasing number of schools, college and university students are becoming addicted during their student life. It directly or indirectly affects thousands of families in cities, towns and even rural areas. Respondents mentioned that the prime reason for drug addiction among youth is curiosity and peer pressure. Besides, psychological factors and media influence are also liable for involvement in drug addiction. Drug addiction causes sufferers to experience physical and psychological disorders, and it directly affects the brain system. Brain changes that occur over time with drug use challenge an addicted person's self-control and interfere with their ability to resist intense urges to take drugs. This is why drug addiction is also a relapsing disease. Relapse is the return to drug use after an attempt to stop. Drug addicts are also

involved in illegal activities to manage the cost of buying drugs. Moreover, drug addiction decreases the power to differentiate between right and wrong and thus some addicted people are more crime-prone than others. Various thinkers are of the opinion that criminology must be used to measure crimes and their roots, and eventually prevent them from further spreading. However, increasing urbanisation and changing societies make the grounds suitable for the emergence of vulnerable citizens, or criminals. Similarly, breaking the law and committing crimes is a threat to the welfare and the normal conditions of the people of any society.

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