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## Root Causes of Substance Abuse among Youths of Guwahati City, Assam, India

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### **Abstract:**

*Substance abuse and addiction is one of the major public health challenges across the Globe. Adolescents are among the most vulnerable group. The present study was descriptive in nature and centered around males of age group 18 to 30 years. 100 drug abusers from 3 rehabilitation centers were interviewed. Purposive sampling techniques were used to collect data. Alcohol and heroin was found to be main substance abused by the youths. Peer pressure, for fun and amusement and curiosity were found to be main instigator for youth to indulge in drug abuse. The main consequences of addiction among youth were found to be negative impact on health, loss of social reputation and broken families.*

**Keywords:** Drug abuse, youths and consequences

### **1. Introduction**

Drug abuse has now assumed global dimensions. Substance abuse creates a huge hindrance for survival, protection, growth and development of healthy youth. India is no exception. The worst thing about drug abuse in India is that it is trapping young men and women who constitute the best human resource of the country. WHO estimates that globally 25 to 90 % of children and adolescents indulge in substance abuse<sup>i</sup>. Research and seizure statistics show it has a steady upward trend. Those between 16 to 30 years of age, a critical period in one's development are most affected<sup>ii</sup>

Drug abuse remains a critical problem in most countries and is associated with several social and economic consequences. This assumes greater relevance in developing countries like India, which is already burdened with inadequate health-care facilities<sup>iii</sup>. Drug addiction is also associated with a variety of social problems such as loss of employment, disordered family relationships and criminal activities<sup>iv</sup>.

Brook, Feigin, Sherer and Geva (2001) reported that high school students have inadequate knowledge on illicit drugs and their attitudes become more liberal as age increases<sup>v</sup>. Some studies revealed that attitudes towards drug use also consistently predicted (Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992; Petriatis, Flay, & Miller, 1995)<sup>vi,vii</sup>. Best and Barrie (1997) reported that positive attitudes about the illicit drug use are positively linked to drug use in adolescents<sup>viii</sup>. In another study by Gary and Barry (1985) gender was found to be one of the significant predictors of attitudes towards substance use. Research also indicated that certain variables increase the risk of drug abuse<sup>ix</sup>.

Alcoholism and drug abuse in their present form, are an alien concept so far as India and other similar developing countries of the world are concerned. The tribal societies used to have a round of locally brewed drinks on festive occasion<sup>x</sup>. Drugs like Bhang were not unknown in India, but their use was restricted to a very microscopic minority. These substances were never regarded as the 'in thing'. In the highly developed societies, a stage come when the young were able to experience most of the pleasure at a very early age and started suffering from frustration of achievement'. They started looking for the exotic realm of feelings and fascinating hallucinogenic experiences beyond the ordinary joys afforded by simple things of life. The use of alcohol and drugs got glamourized and attracted the attention of the youth whose counterparts in developing societies had to struggle for sheer existence<sup>5</sup>.

Incidences of drug and alcohol abuse and related anti-social behaviour have tremendously increased in recent years. It cuts across socioeconomic, cultural, religious and ethnic boundaries. WHO has estimated that globally 25 to 90 % of children and adolescents indulge in substance abuse<sup>1</sup>. Statistics reveal that In India at least 25,426 people committed suicide due to Substance and addiction related problems in the last 10 years (2004 – 2013). This comes down to an average 2,542 suicides every year, 211 per month and 7 per day<sup>4</sup>(National Crime Record Bureau)

Protecting youth from substance abuse has to be considered the most essential and urgent need for creating a 'World fit for youth' and for a meaningful achievement of the 'Millennium Development Goals'.

## 2. Materials & Methods

The present study is carried out with the principal objectives such as (i)To study the prevalence of drug abuse by the youth (ii)To find out the instigator factor for drug abuse and(iii)To analyses the consequences of addiction on addict.

### 2.1. Area of Study

For being the principal city of the entire northeastern India, Guwahati was chosen as the study area for the present wok.Guwahati is located approximately along 26<sup>0</sup>11' N latitude and 91<sup>0</sup> 45' E longitude. The present study is carried out for the three reputed rehabilitation center based in city.

S/N	Name of Rehabilitation Center	Description of Each Centres
1	Kripa Foundation	Kripa Foundation Started in the Year 1981 in Mumbai and started its Assam Center in April, 2006 in Guwahati. It is situated at Hatigarh Chariali, Guwahati-5.It has already treated more than 1000 addicts from various parts of Assam.
2	A to Z Foundation	A to Z Foundation (Nesha Mukto Kendro), a govt. registered organization is situated at Lal Ganesh, Near Jay Dutta Press, Guwahati -781034. The year of establishment of this organization is September 2011. It mainly works for drug addicts, alcoholics and mild psychological disorder.
3	Serenity	Serenity, a govt. registered organization is situated at Beltola, Guwahati.The year of establishment of this organization is February 2014. It also mainly works for drug addicts, alcoholics and mild psychological disorder.

### 2.2. Research Methodology

The present study was conducted on males of age group of 18-30 years. Purposive sampling method was used to select the 100 samples for the study. For that Investigator personally approached each and every respondent with a questionnaire<sup>xiii</sup>.The all necessary official's formalities were observed during the field study.

## 3. Results & Discussions

In the present study the prevalence and types of substance used by the youths are shown in Table 1. It has been observed that predominant substance is alcohol among the various drugs. It has been reported during survey that most of the youths takes alcohol (49%) followed by Heroin (22%) and Polydrug (19%) shown in fig1. Similar result reported by Budhathoki et. al.<sup>xiv,xv</sup>

S/N	Drug	No of respondent N=100	% of Respondent
1	Alcohol	49	49
2	Heroin	22	22
3	Marijuana	2	2
4	Ganja	3	3
5	Inhalant	2	2
6	Polydrug	19	19
7	Cocaine	3	3

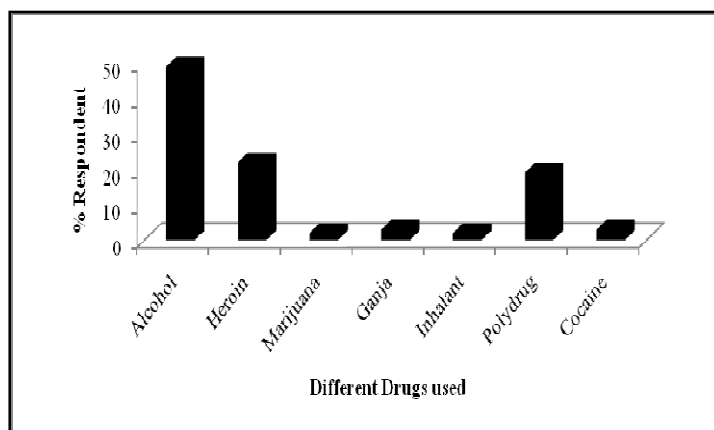


Table 1: Prevalence and types of substances used Figure 1: the prevalence and types of substance used by the youths

The various causes for using substances by youths are shown in Table 2. The results in Table 2 revealed that for Fun is the most reported reason (29%) for the use of substance. This has been followed by Peer influence (25%) and for curiosity (23%). Similar result reported by R Ghulam et al., Anees Ahmad et al.<sup>xvi, xi</sup>. Again 9% youths reported that they use substance for relief from stress (fig2). It has been observed that multi reasons are very negligible. The present study endorsed the findings of Hennigfield (1991) that influence of peers acted as a major instigator factor<sup>xvii</sup>.

S/N	Various Causes	No of respondent N=100	% of Respondent
1	Relief from stress	9	9
2	No reason given	4	4
3	To keep awake at night to read	2	2
4	Curiosity	23	23
5	For fun	29	29
6	Peer influence	25	25
7	Relief from stress and Religious purpose	1	1
8	Relief from stress and Family/Peer influence	2	2
9	Curiosity and For fun	1	1
10	Curiosity and Family/Peer influence	2	2
11	For fun and Family/Peer influence	2	2
	Total	100	100

Table 2: Various Causes of substances use

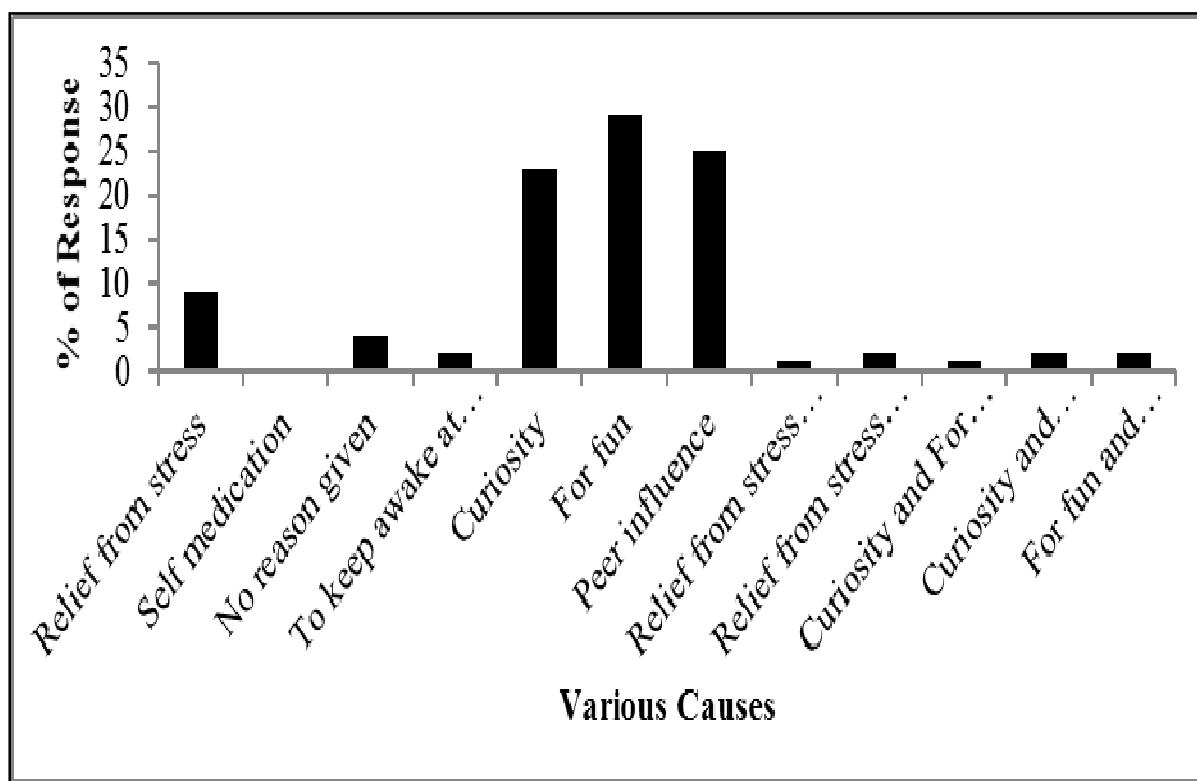


Figure 2: The various causes for using substances by youths

The Consequences of Substance use on the abused youth is shown in Table 3. The results revealed that 100% respondent reported the negative effect of substance abuse on health and their relations with family (fig3). Similar result reported by Amanpreet Singh at Punjab<sup>xviii</sup>.

S/N	Various Consequences of drug abuse	No of respondent N=100	% of Respondent
1	Negative effect on health(In terms of decreased weight, skin diseases consumption etc.)	100	100
2	On social reputation	80	80
3	Decreased work efficiency	40	40
4	Negative effect on their relations with family	100	100

Table 3: Various consequences of substances use

Again 40% substance abused youth reported that their work efficiency decreased up to 50%. 80 % Respondents reported that due to substance use they lost their social reputation and credibility. The present study coincides with the study of Kaur and Gulati (2007) as they also reportedimplication of drug abuse like damage of health, frustration and negative consequences on family<sup>xix</sup>

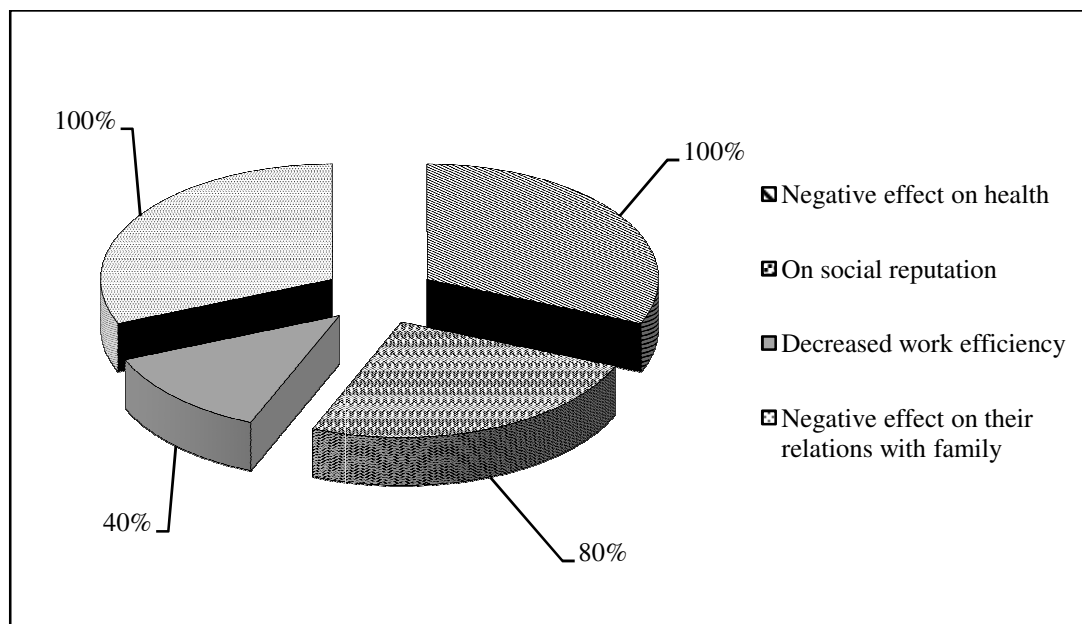


Figure 3: The Consequences of Substance use on the abused youth

#### 4. Conclusion

The present study concludes that the main substance abused by the youths is Alcohol and heroin. The main instigator for youth to indulge in drug abuse in Guwahati City is Peer pressure, for fun and amusement and curiosity. The main consequences of addiction among youth are negative impact on health, loss of social reputation and broken families. Substance use and abuse are out individuals, families and communities. The problem of drug abuse is multidimensional and solution to the problem, not falls entirely within legal or health arenas. Prevention is the most important component of the “war on drugs” which is fulfilled by qualitative scientific research. This problem should be tackled on the family front, medical front, legal front and community front. Further, indepth study is required about the role of family, community and government in collaboration with each other to prevent this menace of substance abuse.

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