

A Study
On
**“The Rising Issue of Substance Abuse among Youth and its Impact
on mental health.” With special reference to Moidomia, North Lakhimpur**

*A dissertation submitted to the Department of Social Work for the partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the award of the Degree of Master of Social Work*



SUBMITTED TO

Department of Social Work
MSSV, Guwahati Unit

SUBMITTED BY

Snigdha Dutta
MSW 4th Semester

Registration No: -MSSV-0023-008-001428

Roll No: - MSW 20/23

Session: 2023-2025

MAHAPURUSHA SRIMANTA SANKARADEVA VISWAVIDYALAYA

GUWAHATI UNIT, RUPNAGAR 781032, ASSAM

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মহাপুরুষ শ্রীমন্ত শঙ্করদেব বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় MAHAPURUSHA SRIMANTA SANKARADEVA VISWAVIDYALAYA

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CERTIFICATE

I have the pleasure to certify that Miss Snigdha Dutta, MSW 4th Semester student bearing Roll No:MSW-20/23with Registration No:MSSV-0023-008-001428of 2023, MSSV has successfully completed the dissertation entitled “A study on The Rising Issue of Substance Abuse Among Youth and its impact on mental health.”

She has made a successful completion of this research by her own.

I wish her bright future.

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CERTIFICATE FROM SUPERVISOR

This is to certify that **Miss Snigdha Dutta**, student of MSW 4th Semester bearing Roll No: **MSW-20/23** with Registration No: **MSSV-0023-008-001428** of 2023, MSSV, Guwahati Unit has successfully carried out her dissertation entitled “**A study on The Rising Issue of Substance Abuse Among Youth and its impact on mental health**,” as a researcher under my supervision and guidance for the partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK (MSW)**.

The work reported in this research has not been submitted elsewhere and the facts presented here are true to the best of my knowledge.

I wish her all the very best for her future endeavour.

Dipshikha
11/06/2025

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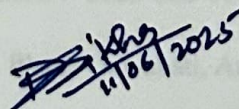
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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Miss Snigdha Dutta, student of 4th Semester, Department of Social Work, (Roll No. MSW 20/23 and Registration No: MSSV-0023-008-001428 of 2023), Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya, Guwahati Unit, hereby declare that the research study titled "A study on The Rising Issue of Substance Abuse Among Youth and its impact on mental health" is my original work under the guidance of Dipshikha Boruah, Teaching Associate, Department of Social Work, MSSV, Guwahati Unit., and that all sources used in the study have been properly cited and acknowledged.

I affirm that this research study has not been previously submitted for academic credit or publication, nor has it been copied or plagiarized in whole or in part from any other source.

I confirm that all data collected for the research study has been obtained through ethical means, and that all participants involved in the study were informed about the purpose and nature of the research, and gave their informed consent to participate.

Snigdha Dutta
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Almighty for providing me the strength, patience, and perseverance to complete this study. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my supervisor, Dipshikha Boruah, whose guidance, support, and constructive feedback have been invaluable throughout the course of this research. Their encouragement and insightful advice have significantly contributed to the development of this dissertation. I am sincerely grateful to the rehabilitation centers in North Lakhimpur (Khelmati, Lilabari) for granting me permission to conduct interviews and for their cooperation during the data collection process. I extend my deepest appreciation to all the participants of this study who courageously shared their personal experiences and provided honest responses, without which this research would not have been possible. I am also thankful to my family and friends for their constant emotional support, motivation, and understanding throughout this academic journey. Special thanks to my parents for their unconditional love and belief in my capabilities. Lastly, I acknowledge all the authors, scholars, and institutions whose works and contributions formed the backbone of my literature review and helped enrich this study.

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ABSTRACT: Substance abuse, also known as substance use disorder, is the harmful or excessive use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol, pharmaceutical medications, and illegal drugs. The study investigates the growing concern of substance abuse among youth in Moidamia, a semi-rural area in North Lakhimpur district, Assam. This region has seen a significant rise in drug-related incidents, particularly during and after the COVID-19 lockdown. The issue is exacerbated by socio-economic vulnerabilities, peer pressure, cultural normalization, and the lack of accessible mental health and rehabilitation services. A qualitative research methodology was adopted to explore the underlying causes, individual experiences, and mental health implications of substance use among youth. Data collection was conducted through unstructured interviews and participant observation, focusing on capturing the emotional and psychological dimensions of addiction. The sample consisted of 15 respondents aged 13 to 30, selected using purposive sampling a non-probability method. Data were analyzed using QDA Miner lite, a qualitative data analysis tool that enabled thematic exploration of recurring patterns and narratives. The study revealed peer influence, emotional trauma, cultural exposure, loneliness, and unaddressed mental health issues as critical factors influencing substance use and relapse. The findings underscore the need for community-based awareness programs, family counseling, and integrated intervention strategies that address both substance abuse and mental health.

Keywords: Substance abuse, youth addiction, Moidamia, North Lakhimpur, qualitative research, mental health, QDA Miner Lite, peer pressure, purposive sampling, rehabilitation

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Moidamia is a village located in the North Lakhimpur subdivision of Lakhimpur district in Assam. Positioned just 1.5 kilometers from the district headquarters of North Lakhimpur town, it serves as a semi-rural locality that benefits from close access to urban amenities. Moidamia's population includes 597 households, and children aged 0–6 years make up just over 10% of the population. The local economy is primarily agrarian, with most people engaged in farming, especially paddy cultivation, though a portion also participates in minor work. The village is connected by national and state highways, and a railway station lies within 5 kilometers, ensuring decent connectivity.

Substance abuse has emerged as a significant concern in the Moidamia area of North Lakhimpur district, Assam, reflecting broader regional challenges. The district has witnessed a notable increase in drug-related activities, particularly during the COVID-19 lockdown, which exacerbated existing vulnerabilities. Reports indicate a surge in drug peddling, with substances like heroin, cannabis (ganja), and pharmaceutical drugs being trafficked and consumed more openly. For instance, in June 2020, Lakhimpur police arrested several individuals involved in drug trafficking, seizing substantial quantities of narcotics. North East Now+2The Assam Tribune+2NorthEast Now+2

The rise in substance abuse has been linked to various factors, including peer pressure, lack of awareness and limited access to rehabilitation services. In response, the District Social Welfare Department has initiated awareness programs under the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan to educate the public about the ill effects of substance abuse. Additionally, the administration has taken strict action against unregistered private drug rehabilitation centers to ensure proper treatment protocols. Sentinel Assam

Despite these efforts, challenges persist, and there is a pressing need for continued community engagement, improved rehabilitation facilities, and sustained awareness

campaigns to fight against substance abuse effectively in Moidamia and the broader North Lakhimpur district.

1.2 OPERATIONAL DEFINATION

Substance Abuse: Substance abuse, also known as substance use disorder, is the harmful or excessive use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol, pharmaceutical medications, and illegal drugs. It occurs when an individual regularly consumes these substances in ways that negatively impact their health, relationships, or daily functioning. Substance abuse can lead to a wide range of issues, including addiction, health problems (like liver disease, heart disease, or mental health disorders), legal troubles, and affect relationships. It is a serious health issue that often requires professional treatment, such as therapy, counseling, and support groups, to overcome.

Psycho active substances: A psycho active substance is any chemical that, when consumed, and affects a person's mental state by affecting the brain's function. These substances influence thoughts, emotions, perceptions, or behaviors and can have a range of effects, from mild mood changes to severe changes in consciousness or reality. It can be used for recreational purposes, medical treatment, or even out of habit. However, when it is abused, they can lead to **addiction, mental health disorders, and physical harm**. They can also lead to **tolerance** (requiring more of the substance to achieve the same effect) and **dependence** (a state where the body becomes reliant on the substance)

Illicit Drugs: substance that is illegal to possess, distribute, or use due to their potential for harm, addiction, or abuse. The use of illicit drugs can lead to serious legal, physical, psychological, and social consequences. Because illicit drugs are often free, their purity and power can vary, which increases the risks of unintentional consequences, such as overdose. As a result, prevention and treatment for substance abuse and addiction are critical in addressing the issues surrounding illicit drug use.

Depression: It is a common but serious mental health condition that affects how a person feels, thinks, and handles daily activities. It's more than just feeling sad or going through a rough patch, depression is a persistent feeling of sadness, hopelessness, and a loss of interest in things that once brought joy and make a person happy. It can interfere with work, school, relationships, and overall functioning

Anxiety: It is a feeling of nervousness, worry, or fear that can range from mild to severe. It's a natural response to stress or danger and can be helpful in certain situations, like when it keeps us alert or helps us avoid danger. However, when anxiety becomes constant, excessive, or overpowering, it can interfere with daily life and lead to anxiety disorders.

Trauma: This refers to a deeply upsetting or disturbing experience that can have a lasting impact on an individual's mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Trauma can occur after an event or series of events that overwhelm a person's ability to cope or process the experience at the time it happens.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Substance abuse among youth, particularly in the age group of 13 to 30 years, has become a growing concern in many areas across India, including in North Lakhimpur moidomia, Assam. Often face unique socio-economic challenges, such as poverty, lack of education, unemployment, and limited access to healthcare services, which increase the vulnerability of youth to engage in substance use. In North Lakhimpur, Moidomia the prevalence of substance abuse has been rising in recent years, with young individuals turning to drugs, alcohol, weed and other harmful substances as coping mechanisms for stress, peer pressure, and the harsh realities of their living conditions.

This issue has significant implications for the physical and mental health of young adults, leading to long-term consequences such as addiction, mental health disorders, and criminal behavior. Moreover, substance abuse hampers academic and career and social relationships, contributing to a cycle of poverty and social exclusion in these communities. The problem is further dominated by limited awareness, a lack of effective prevention programs, and insufficient support from healthcare systems and community organizations.

Given the increasing rates of substance abuse in Moidomia, there is an urgent need to understand the underlying factors contributing to this issue, such as socio-economic conditions, Peer influences, family dynamics, and psychological factors. There is also a need to explore the existing coping mechanisms among the youth and evaluate the effectiveness of current interventions aimed at reducing substance use.

This study aims to investigate the growing issue of substance abuse among youth in North Lakhimpur Moidomia, Assam, and identify the factors that contribute to this epidemic. The findings from this study could inform targeted interventions, policy recommendations, and awareness campaigns to address the problem of substance abuse in these vulnerable populations, ultimately fostering a healthier and more productive generation

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The **significance of a study** refers to the importance, value, or probable impact of the research. It explains **why the study matters**, who will benefit from it, and how it contributes to existing knowledge, practice, or policy. It explains how the study fills a gap or adds new understanding to a field. It can influence policies, improve lives, or lead to further research.

The study holds huge significance as it highlights on the growing issue of drug abuse among youth (ages 13 to 24 years) in Moidomia area of North Lakhimpur, Assam, presents a critical public health, mental health and social challenge. This study holds major importance for various reasons. By focusing on this area, the study aims to uncover the root causes behind the increasing trend of substance use among young people such as peer pressure, unemployment, stress, family problems, and lack of proper guidance and how these are directly or indirectly linked to mental health issues. It also seeks to highlight the gaps in community response, health care, education, and support systems that may be contributing to the intensity or extent this dual crisis. The findings of this study can serve as a foundation for designing localized intervention programs, awareness campaigns, school-based mental health initiatives, and support services specifically to the socio-economic and cultural context of Moidomia. It can also help future researchers, local authorities, educators, NGOs, and healthcare providers better understand the urgent need for integrated mental health and substance abuse services in the area. The study can be utilized for future policy implementations or initiatives for government to reduce the percentage of substance use youths in the area. Ultimately, this research can contribute to the well-being of the youth population by promoting early intervention, reducing stigma, improving coping mechanisms, relapse prevention techniques and encouraging a healthier, more supportive community environment in North Lakhimpur.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY: The researcher coined three specific objectives to conduct the study, are listed below:

- To understand the patterns of drug use among youth
- To assess the impact on mental health among youth due to excess use of Drugs
- To explore the causes of increase number of youth engaged in Drug use

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS: A research question is the initial element of any academic or scientific study. It defines the researcher's inquiry to discover, why it matters, and how the investigation should proceed, in a study it is a clearly defined query that the research aims to answer. It guides the path, scope, and purpose of the study.

- What are the common patterns and types of substances used in the Moidomia area?
- What are the social, economical, physiological, factors contributing to increasing substance use among youth?
- How does excessive drug use impact in mental health of youth in this region?

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A literature review in research is a written section that critically examines and summarizes existing academic work relevant to a specific research topic or question. It provides an overview of what is already known, identifies key theories, methods, and findings, and highlights gaps, inconsistencies, or debates within the literature. The purpose of the literature review is to place the current study in context, representing how it builds upon or challenges previous work. It helps justify the need for the research by showing what has been studied and what still remains unexplored. Rather than simply listing sources, a good literature review synthesizes information from various studies, drawing connections between them and evaluating their significance and quality.

REVIEWS DONE BY THE RESEARCHER

Segal, B.M., Stewart, J.C. "*Substance use and abuse in adolescence: An overview. Child Psych Hum Dev* 26, 193–210 (1996)" the article through light and examine the multifaceted issue of adolescent substance use, highlighting its prevalence and the various factors contributing to this behavior. They note that youths often turn to substances seeking excitement, consolation, a sense of belonging, rebellion, or as symbols of maturity and independence. The authors identify several societal and familial factors influencing adolescent substance use, including family destabilization, permissiveness, adult indifference, ethical confusion, peer pressure, and a decline in self-discipline among young people. They also critique existing prevention and treatment efforts, pointing out issues such as disagreements in diagnosis and strategy, lack of cohesiveness, insufficient funding, and inadequate follow-up procedures. The article underlines the complexity of adolescent substance use, emphasizing that while experimentation with substances is common during adolescence, a significant proportion of youths develop patterns of abuse or dependence. For instance, studies have shown that by age 18, nearly one in three adolescents report daily smoking and approximately 8.6% meet criteria for tobacco

dependence. Additionally, alcohol remains the most commonly abused substance among adolescents, with a notable percentage meeting criteria for dependence on marijuana as well. Segal and Stewart's work contributes to the broader understanding of adolescent substance use by integrating historical, clinical, and research perspectives. Their insights align with other scholarly works that explore the etiology, prevention, and treatment of substance misuse among youths. For example, the book "Substance Abuse in Children and Adolescents" discusses patterns of substance abuse, underlying theories, and various intervention approaches, emphasizing the need for comprehensive prevention programs and thorough evaluation of treatment outcomes.

Dykes.G, Casker.R, 21 March 2001. *"Adolescents and substance abuse: the effects of substance abuse on parents and siblings"* aimed to explore the adverse effects of adolescent substance abuse on family care giving and well-being. Using a qualitative case study design, the researchers focused on families of substance-abusing adolescents in Mitchells Plain, a township in Cape Town, as a representative example. Purposive sampling selected 12 participants, including seven mothers and five siblings, who participated in semi-structured interviews. The data were analyzed through qualitative thematic analysis, revealing four key themes: financial strain, physical and emotional stress, and a breakdown of trust within the family. These findings highlight the significant impact of living with a substance-abusing adolescent on the overall well-being of family members, underscoring the need for support and intervention for affected families.

Ellen Hopkins. (2004) *"Crank"* discuss about a powerful and haunting young adult book that explores the devastating impact of drug addiction. Written in free verse poetry, the novel is loosely based on the real-life experiences of the author's daughter, who struggled with methamphetamine addiction. Through the protagonist, Kristina Georgia Snow, Hopkins delivers a raw and emotional narrative that sheds light on the dark world of substance abuse and its consequences. Kristina Snow is a bright, well-behaved teenager

with a seemingly perfect life. However, everything changes when she visits her estranged father and is introduced to meth referred to as "the monster." Under the drug's influence, she transforms into her rebellious and uninhibited alter ego, Bree as Kristina spirals into a dangerous world of addiction, toxic relationships, and self-destruction, ultimately losing control over her life. The novel follows her descent into addiction, portraying how meth changes her relationships, self-image, and decision-making. Through Kristina's story, Hopkins highlights the harsh realities of substance abuse, illustrating how quickly and easily drugs can take hold of a person's life. *Crank* is a gripping and emotionally charged novel that provides a harrowing look at the dangers of drug addiction. Through its poetic structure and raw storytelling, Ellen Hopkins creates a deeply impactful narrative that lingers in the minds of readers. While it may not be suitable for all audiences due to its mature themes, it is an important book that raises awareness about substance abuse and its consequences.

Ellen Hopkins (2007) "*Crank* (2nd Ed.) *Glass*" Continuing the gripping and heartbreaking story of Kristina Snow and her struggle with methamphetamine addiction Picking up where *Crank* left off, *Glass* develop deeper into the protagonist's downward spiral as her addiction worsens, affecting her relationships, self-worth, and future. Written in Hopkins' signature free verse style, the novel offers a raw and unfiltered portrayal of the devastating effects of drug abuse. After giving birth to her son, Hunter, Kristina initially tries to stay clean. However, the pull of meth referred to as "the monster" proves too strong. Believing she can manage her addiction, she starts using again, but this time, her descent is even steeper. Kristina's choices become increasingly reckless as she loses control, becoming entangled with dangerous people, toxic relationships, and criminal activities. As her addiction deepens, Kristina's life falls apart she alienates her family, neglects her son, and finds herself in increasingly desperate situations. The novel follows her attempts to balance her love for her child with her overwhelming need for the drug, ultimately showing how addiction consumes every aspect of her existence. *Glass* is a

haunting and emotionally raw continuation of Kristina's story, offering an unflinching look at the destructive power of meth addiction. Through Hopkins' poetic storytelling, readers are immersed in the chaos, desperation, and heartbreak of Kristina's world. While difficult to read at times due to its heavy subject matter, *Glass* is a powerful and necessary novel that sheds light on the harsh realities of substance abuse.

Sussman.S, Skara.S, Ames.L, (03 July 2008) "*Substance abuse among adolescents*" Explores several complex aspects of substance abuse, treatment, and terminology it critiques the diagnostic category of "substance abuse," arguing that it often disembowels users and is grounded more in ideological and cultural beliefs than in scientific evidence. Treatment is framed as a goal-directed process, with multiple models ranging from professional and tradition-based to self-help emphasizing that no unique techniques are exclusively used for substance users. It also addresses the emerging concepts of harm reduction and quality-of-life models, which offer alternative goals to traditional abstinence-driven approaches. The journal points out the historical shift in categorizing drug users, from immoral sinners to criminals, and now as individuals with substance use disorder (SUD), a chronic condition assessed through abstinence rather than remission. Key distinctions between prevention and treatment are emphasized, alongside the importance of a comprehensive treatment approach, including pretreatment, treatment, and post treatment phases. The journal also critiques the overuse of terms like "drugs of abuse," highlighting their unscientific and misleading nature. Finally, it highlights the normative development of risky behaviors during adolescence and the challenges of treatment matching in an era of limited resources.

Nahvzadeh MM, Akhavan S, et al. (2014) "*Review Study of Substance Abuse Status in High School Students, Isfahan, and Ira*", suggests substance abuse is a major social issue worldwide, and Iran is no exception. It has become a significant problem, especially among adolescents, with adverse consequences for their health and well-being. Substance

abuse, defined as a non adaptive model of drug use leading to harmful effects, includes cognitive, behavioral, and psychological symptoms. In Iran, certain factors contribute to the high rates of substance use among adolescents. These factors include age, gender (with males at higher risk), engagement in high-risk behaviors, and family dynamics, such as the presence of a smoker in the household. Studies have shown that adolescents are more likely to engage in smoking if they have positive attitudes toward smoking, have peers or family members who smoke, or have previous exposure to substances. Furthermore, the likelihood of cigarette smoking in both males and females in Iran is nearly equal, with approximately 11.2% of adolescents engaging in cigarette use. However, alcohol consumption shows a gender difference, with a slightly higher prevalence in males (22.4%) compared to females (19.3%). Despite the high rates of substance use among Iranian adolescents, there is limited research on the specific patterns of substance abuse in this demographic. While various studies have collected data on the types of substances used, such as tobacco, alcohol, and opiates, there is no widely recognized, standardized pattern of substance use for Iranian adolescents. The World Health Organization (2005) reported that opiate addiction is a major issue in Iran, with the country having one of the highest prevalence's of opiate addiction in the world. Iran's addiction problem primarily affects the 25–35 year age group, but the onset of drug use often begins in adolescence. This early exposure to substances can have long-lasting impacts, and studies suggest that substance use behaviors in adolescence, such as smoking and alcohol consumption, often serve as precursors to later drug abuse.

Jai K. Das, et.al *“Interventions for Adolescent Substance Abuse: An overview of systematic reviews journal of adolescent health 2016 October”* Highlights a comprehensive overview of adolescent substance abuse, emphasizing its significant impact on health, social, and economic outcomes. It highlights the early onset of substance use, including tobacco, alcohol, and cannabis, during adolescence and the associated long-term consequences such as increased morbidity, mental illness, and lower

life expectancy. The article outlines various risk factors for substance abuse, including socioeconomic status, peer influence, and biological predispositions, and stresses the importance of early identification, prevention programs, and routine monitoring of adolescent health. It calls for targeted interventions focusing on modifiable risk factors and enhancing protective factors through family, school, and community programs. Additionally, the article discusses the development of a conceptual framework for evaluating effective interventions that address substance abuse, among other adolescent health risks, and emphasizes the need for comprehensive strategies that can improve both individual and societal health outcomes.

Somani.S, Meghani.S, "*Substance Abuse among Youth: A Harsh Reality (May26 2016)*". Highlights the global prevalence of underage drug abuse, noting its significant impact on the growth and development of adolescents. In the United States, the onset of alcohol use begins as early as 14 years, with a marked increase in regular use between the ages of 13-14 and 17-18 years, particularly among males. Gender differences in substance abuse are also noted in other regions, such as Kenya, where male adolescents show higher rates of tobacco use compared to females. Key risk factors for adolescent drug abuse include poverty, peer pressure, exposure to drug-related media, and family dynamics. Adolescents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to engage in substance use, often as a coping mechanism for stressors like unemployment and inadequate housing. Peer pressure, especially in environments like hostels, and media portrayals of drinking and smoking also contribute significantly to initiation. Family structure plays a crucial role, with single-parent households and poor family relationships increasing the risk of substance abuse. Additionally, adolescents with parents who use drugs are more likely to engage in similar behaviors. These findings suggest that interventions should focus on improving family dynamics, reducing poverty, limiting exposure to harmful media, and addressing peer pressure.

Fatima. I. (2017) *"Drug Abuse among youth: causes, effects and control. J Integ Comm Health 2017"*, elaborate the alarming statistics on the extent of substance abuse among teenagers, covering drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, and other harmful substances. The data emphasizes the prevalence of various substances in the lives of adolescents, their sources, and the significant risks associated with early use, nearly 50% of high school seniors have used a drug, with marijuana being the most common. By 8th grade, 15% of children have already tried marijuana, and by 12th grade, 43% have used it. Other substances such as hallucinogens, synthetic marijuana, and bath salts also show concerning use rates, with some teens using dangerous substances like cocaine, crack, and prescription pain killers. A key takeaway is that peer influence and access to substances at schools are major contributors to this behavior. Over 60% of teens report drugs being sold, kept, and used at their schools, making it easier for teens to engage in substance abuse. The article paints a sobering picture of the substance abuse problem among teens. It highlights the need for stronger prevention programs, early intervention, and better education on the risks of drug, alcohol, and tobacco use. The data also suggests that social environments, peer influence, and easy access to substances play significant roles in teen substance abuse. The article serves as a reminder of the importance of addressing these issues early to prevent lifelong consequences for these young individuals. Interestingly, the article points out those teenagers who drink alcohol are more likely to try drugs such as cocaine, indicating a link between alcohol and the use of harder substances. Early alcohol consumption also increases the likelihood of addiction and harmful behaviors later in life, particularly for those who start drinking before the age of 15.

Beeber. LS. (2018) *"Mental Health Issues and Substance Use in the United States: Pulling the Power Levers. Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association"* cites a critical review of existing literature to examine the complex and intertwined nature of mental health disorders and substance use in the U.S. healthcare system. The article underscores the persistent prevalence of co-occurring disorders and the systemic

shortcomings that exacerbate these issues, such as limited access to integrated behavioral health services, workforce shortages, and ongoing stigma. Beeber synthesizes evidence showing how individuals with dual diagnoses often fall through the cracks of a fragmented system, receiving inadequate or delayed care. The review highlights successful models of integrated care but also notes that these are not yet widely implemented. Moreover, Beeber emphasizes the importance of addressing social determinants of health like poverty, trauma, and housing instability which are frequently overlooked in treatment approaches. A key theme in the literature Beeber reviews is the need for a multi-level strategy: pulling "power levers" such as research-informed policy, inter professional collaboration, leadership in nursing practice, and increased funding for community-based services. Ultimately, the article calls for systemic reforms and stronger advocacy from psychiatric-mental health nurses to promote equity, integration, and innovation in mental health and substance use care.

Mogan KA, et.al (2019) "*Determinants of substance use among young people attending an urban primary health center in Delhi*" through light on the mean age of the study participants was 18.6 years, with a wide age range from 10 to 24 years. This age range is significant because it captures critical stages of adolescent and young adult development, where substance use often begins and can escalate into more chronic patterns. Among the 48 substance users studied, 43.7% reported using only tobacco, 22.9% consumed only alcohol and 33.3% were poly-substance users, combining two or more substances. These patterns are consistent with previous research that highlights the growing concern of poly-substance abuse among young people, as it often signals more severe substance use disorders (McCabe et al., 2017) The study found that 46.3% of the participants had a history of substance use within their family. Family history of substance abuse is a well-documented risk factor for adolescent substance use. Research consistently shows that individuals with parents or close family members who abuse substances are at a higher risk of initiating substance use at an earlier age (Brook et al., 2006). This familial

influence could be attributed to genetic predispositions, learned behaviors, or environmental factors within the family setting that either normalize or enable substance abuse.

Richert, T., Ander berg, M. et.al. "*Mental health problems among young people in substance abuse treatment in Sweden*". (2020) highlights and provides a compelling examination of the mental health challenges faced by adolescents undergoing substance abuse treatment. Drawing on self-reported data from outpatient clinics across Sweden, the study reveals a high prevalence of mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and concentration problems particularly among female participants. The findings underscore significant gender differences, with girls reporting more emotional distress and boys exhibiting more behavioral problems. The study also highlights a strong correlation between the severity of substance use and the intensity of mental health symptoms. While the research is limited by its cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported data, it emphasizes the urgent need for integrated treatment approaches that address both substance use and mental health, tailored to the specific needs of young individuals.

Kovilveettil (2021) in the article "*A study on substance abuse among young people (10-24 years) in urban slums of Jorhat*", explores the increasing issue of substance abuse among young people in the urban slums of Jorhat, Assam, focusing on the sources, contributing factors, and household environments leading to substance use. The research was conducted among 174 young people with a primary aim to understand the trends of substance abuse in this population. The majority of the respondents were male, with the most affected age groups being 22-24 years and 19-21 years. This indicates that young adults and late adolescents are the most vulnerable age groups for substance abuse in this region. Tobacco emerged as the most commonly abused substance, followed by alcohol. This is consistent with broader global trends, where tobacco and alcohol are often the first substances young people experiment with. The primary reason for substance use was to

experience a calm and relaxed feeling, followed by euphoria and addiction. This highlights how the immediate emotional and physical effects of drugs can encourage continued use. The study highlights that substance abuse among young people in urban slums of Jorhat, Assam, is influenced by a combination of social, environmental, and economic factors. The most common substances used are tobacco and alcohol, with peer pressure and household factors like poverty and violence contributing significantly to the issue. The findings underscore the need for targeted interventions, such as education on the dangers of substance abuse, community support programs, and addressing socio-economic challenges to mitigate the impact of this growing problem.

Nawi, A.M., Ismail, R., Ibrahim, F. et al. "*Risk and protective factors of drug abuse among adolescents: a systematic review*. *BMC Public Health* 21, 2021" identifies a wide range of risk factors linked to adolescent drug use. These include individual traits such as high impulsivity, rebelliousness, emotional regulation impairment, low religious engagement, and alexithymia. Environmental factors, such as maltreatment or negative upbringings, psychiatric disorders (e.g. conduct problems and major depressive disorder), previous exposure to e-cigarettes, behavioral addictions, and low-perceived risk of drug use, also emerge as significant contributors. Additionally, high perceived accessibility to drugs and positive attitudes toward synthetic drug use further exacerbate the likelihood of substance abuse. The family-related risk factors include prenatal maternal smoking, poor maternal psychological control, low parental education, neglect, inadequate supervision, uncontrolled pocket money, and the presence of substance-abusing family members. The review also highlights the community risk factor of having peers who abuse drugs. Peer influence is well-established factors in adolescent substance use, as adolescents are particularly susceptible to the behaviors of those within their social circle. On the other hand; the review identifies several protective factors that can help mitigate the risk of drug abuse. These protective factors include individual traits like optimism, mindfulness, and having strong beliefs against substance abuse, as well as a desire to maintain good health.

Family-related protective factors include high paternal awareness of drug abuse, while school-related factors such as school connectedness, participation in structured activities, and having strong religious beliefs also play a key role in shielding adolescents from drug use.

Amate.Shraddha.et.al. (30 April 2022) "*A Review on: Drug Abuse Among Youth.*" highlights about issue of drug abuse among adolescents. They define drug abuse as the illegal, non-medical use of substances that alter mental states in undesirable and hazardous ways, highlighting commonly abused substances such as alcohol, heroin, cocaine, opium, and marijuana. The authors identify several immediate causes of drug addiction among youth; including curiosity, peer pressure, and the availability of substances like cigarettes and alcohol. They emphasize that adolescents are particularly susceptible to these influences, especially when exposed to negative peer groups or environments where substance use is normalized. The article also critiques the role of media in promoting substance use, noting that advertisements for alcohol and cigarettes often portray these substances as performance enhancers, thereby misleading young audiences. The authors argue that such promotions contribute to the normalization and increased accessibility of drugs among youth. To address the issue, the authors suggest a comprehensive approach that includes understanding the causes, recognizing the effects, and implementing control measures to combat drug abuse among adolescents. They underscore the importance of considering social and cultural aspects when developing prevention and intervention strategies. Overall, this review provides valuable insights into the factors contributing to drug abuse among Youth and calls for concerted efforts from families, communities, and policymakers to mitigate this pervasive issue.

Nath. A, Choudhari S G, Dakhode S U, et al. (November 07, 2022) "*Substance Abuse Amongst Adolescents: An Issue of Public Health Significance*", elaborates Adolescent

drug and alcohol addiction is a growing global concern, and its impact on morbidity and mortality has been well-documented. Research consistently indicates that the abuse of substances such as cannabis, alcohol, and tobacco is increasingly prevalent among youth, posing serious health risks and contributing to both short-term and long-term physical and psychological harm. Numerous studies show that substance abuse among adolescents is influenced by a combination of individual, familial, societal, and environmental factors. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), early exposure to drugs and alcohol is a significant risk factor, as the adolescent brain is more susceptible to addiction. Peer pressure, family history of addiction, mental health disorders, and exposure to dysfunctional environments are also cited as key contributors to substance misuse (Lanza et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2019). In India, studies have revealed an alarming rise in adolescent substance abuse. The National Survey on Extent and Pattern of Substance Use in India (2019) found that nearly 11% of adolescents engage in alcohol use, while cannabis and tobacco use are also prevalent. Factors such as peer influence, stress, academic pressure, and the normalization of substance use in some communities further exacerbate the issue. Adolescent substance abuse remains a complex and pervasive issue, requiring concerted efforts from various stakeholders. While the problem is global in nature, targeted, culturally appropriate interventions are necessary to reduce the rates of substance misuse among youth. Given the profound impact of mental health and psychological factors on adolescent decisions, comprehensive strategies that combine awareness, counseling, family support, and education are essential. With sustained efforts, positive changes in adolescent behavior can be achieved, leading to healthier future generations.

Hsiung H, Patel K, et al. (July 27, 2022) "Preventing Substance Abuse in Adolescents: A Review of High-Impact Strategies" highlights adolescence is a time of significant brain development, which continues into the mid-20s. During this period, the brain undergoes extensive reorganization, particularly in areas involved in impulse control, decision-

making, and reward processing. The prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for higher-order functions such as impulse control and risk assessment, is not fully developed during adolescence. Conversely, the brain's reward system is more sensitive to pleasurable stimuli, including drugs. This combination of heightened sensitivity to rewards and an underdeveloped ability to assess risks makes adolescents particularly vulnerable to substance use disorders (SUDs). Additionally, adolescents are in a stage of life where they are still forming their identities and social roles. Peer influence, social pressures, and the desire for acceptance can strongly contribute to risk-taking behaviors, including experimenting with drugs. This dynamic makes adolescence a critical window for intervention in preventing long-term substance use problems.

Nebhinani.N, Singh.P, Mamta. 2 April 2022. "*Substance Use Disorders in Children and Adolescents*" elaborates the psychoactive substance use often begins in adolescence, a critical period marked by rapid physiological and neurobiological changes, making young people particularly vulnerable to experimentation and peer influence. Research shows that over half of all psychiatric disorders, including substance use disorders (SUD), begin before the age of 14. In India, where 42% of the population is under 18, a significant portion of substance abusers are under 20 years old, with many initiating drug use during adolescence. Substance use in this age group is typically episodic rather than chronic, with adolescents more likely to experiment with different substances. However, early substance exposure can lead to co-occurring psychiatric disorders, family disruption, academic struggles, and delinquency. As the age of initiation drops, the risk of developing severe SUD in adulthood increases, with more severe social, academic, and occupational consequences. This narrative review aims to explore the patterns, epidemiology, risk factors, and management of substance use among those under 18, highlighting the need for timely prevention and treatment strategies to mitigate long-term harm.

Hadeel O. Abdalla, et al, (2023), "Effect of Drug Abuse Among Adolescents: A Narrative Review Article, *J. Addiction Research and Adolescent Behavior*" highlights that the drug abuse, particularly among adolescents, has far-reaching consequences on individuals' mental, physical, emotional, and social well-being. It is responsible for more deaths, illnesses, and disabilities than any other avoidable health problem. While smoking and alcohol abuse have decreased globally, drug use remains alarmingly high, with trends differing by gender and culture. Adolescents, often influenced by peers and the misconception that drugs enhance academic performance, are increasingly experimenting with substances, particularly in university settings. In Sudan, the rise in drug abuse has become a national concern, with growing numbers of drug-related deaths and an escalating drug trade. This issue not only harms individuals but also delays societal development, prompting significant investments in law enforcement to curb the spread of drugs. This review focuses on the impact of drug abuse on adolescents, stressing the urgent need for more research and effective interventions to address the problem.

Nasirzadeh. M, et.al "The mental health and substance abuse among youths aged 18 to 29: A comparative study". Explores and investigates the psychological factors specifically depression, anxiety, and stress among young adults with and without substance abuse issues. Conducted in Isfahan, Iran, the research involved 183 drug users and 207 non-users, all aged 18–29. Utilizing the DASS-21 questionnaire, the study found that drug users exhibited significantly higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress compared to their non-using counter parts. Notably, anxiety was identified as the most strongly correlated psychological factor with drug abuse. Additionally, a lower educational level was associated with a higher likelihood of substance use. The study's cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported data are limitations, yet the findings underscore the critical need for integrated mental health and substance abuse interventions targeting young adults.

3.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Research methodology refers to the systematic approach used to conduct research. It encompasses the strategies, techniques, and tools used to collect, analyze, and interpret data in order to answer a specific research question or test a hypothesis. The methodology outlines how the research will be conducted and justifies the choices made to ensure the study is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the research objectives. The researcher will use Qualitative method for the data collection of data.

This study will use a **Qualitative Research** approach will help to explore the impact of substance abuse among youth and its impact over mental health. The research will involve gathering detailed, descriptive data to understand the experiences of the youth. Substance abuse and mental health are deeply personal and sensitive issues. A qualitative approach allows researchers to explore the **underlying causes, personal experiences, and perceptions** surrounding substance use and mental health among youth. This method can help to know **how many** young people are using substances, **qualitative methods reveal why** they're doing it. **This method of data collection adds human emotional depth,** helping to understand the real-life stories of substance abuse and mental health issues among youth. This method will help the researcher to understand the exact issue and can help to find the solution for the substance use problem.

3.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: The **theoretical framework** is the structure that supports and guides a research study by grounding it in existing theories and concepts. It provides a lens through which the research problem is analyzed and interpreted, helping to explain the relationships between variables or phenomena being studied. The researcher will use social Learning Theory (SLT), developed by Albert Bandura, explains that behavior is learned through observation, imitation, and modeling, particularly within the context of social environments. The theory emphasizes that people learn not only from their direct experiences but also from the behavior of others, particularly those in their

social circles like family, peers, and media. Basically it explains how young people feel pressured to use substance to fit in with their peer groups. In the context of the **growing issue of substance abuse and mental health problems among youth (aged 13 to 30) in Lakhimpur, specifically in Moidomia**, SLT provides a valuable understanding how such behaviors may be acquired and supports. Young individuals may observe others in their community or social circles engaging in substance use and begin to perceive it as acceptable or even desirable behavior, especially if it appears to offer relief from stress, peer approval, or social inclusion. Therefore, Social Learning Theory not only explains the mechanisms behind the increase in substance abuse and mental health issues but also highlights **intervention strategies** focused on reshaping social influences and modeling healthier behaviors for youth.

Applying Social Learning Theory to Substance Use among Youth and Mental Health Issues:

□ **Peer Influence:** Young people are highly influenced by their peers. If a youth observes friends or older siblings using substances (alcohol, drugs, etc.) and adopts the behavior as acceptable or even fun, social acceptance, or coping mechanism they may be more likely to imitate this behavior. Peer pressure and the desire for social belonging are significant forces that may influence or turn in the development of substance use habits among youth.

□ **Media and Celebrity Influence:** web-series, movies, music, and social media can normalize substance use. Youth may see their favorite celebrities or influencers getting engaged in such behaviors like smoking, drinking, or drug use. These behaviors, often can serve as a model that youth may imitate, especially if these figures are portrayed as successful or popular despite their substance use.

Beliefs and Expectations: According to SLT. If a youth believes that using substances will make them feel better or help them deal with anxiety or social situations, they may be

more likely to try substances. Mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, or trauma, can make youths more vulnerable to these beliefs, as they seek quick or easy fixes for their emotional pain.

□ **Self-Control:** Bandura also emphasizes the role of self-control-one's belief in their ability to control their behavior. Youth with low self-esteem or poor coping skills may struggle to resist peer pressure or handle mental health problems without turning to substances. On the other side, youth who believe they can successfully handle stress or emotional issues without drugs or alcohol are less likely to engage in substance use.

Youths who watch movies or TV shows where characters glamorize substance use as a way to deal with stress, depression, or anxiety might perceive this behavior as a legitimate coping mechanism. Similarly, if mental health issues are stigmatized or not addressed in their social circles, youths may seek substances as a way to manage their emotional struggles instead of seeking professional help or using healthier coping strategies.

3.3 UNIVERSE OF THE STUDY: The researcher has chosen the area of Moidomia village in the district of North Lakhimpur comprises young adults aged 13 to 30 from various socio-economic backgrounds. The study focuses on the youth who are engaged in substance use due to peer pressure, family issues, and limited access to mental health resources. The study was conducted on the rehabilitation centre of North Lakhimpur (Khelmati, Lilabari) area.



https://www.google.com/search?q=north+lakhimpur+moidomia&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUqCggAEAAAY4wIYgAQyCggAEAAAY4wIYgAQyBwgBEC4

PHOTO: Moidomia, North Lakhimpur Assam

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN: Research design is the **plan or framework** that guides a study from formulation of the research question to the conclusion. It ensures that the data collected enables the researcher to successfully address the research problem.

The researcher had use descriptive qualitative research design. The case study involves analysis of specific individual event or any situation over a period of time. It includes analysis of telephonic interviews and in the rehabilitation centers.

3.5 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE: Sampling technique refers to the method used to select a sample from a larger population for the purpose of conducting a study or survey. The goal is to draw conclusions about the entire population based on the results from the sample.

The researcher had chosen Purposive Sampling under Non-Probability Sampling to select the participants for the study. Participants were identified through collaboration with rehabilitations supervisors as well as through personal referrals from individuals familiar with the idea of rehabilitation and substance use disorder.

3.6 SAMPLE SIZE: Sample size refers to the number of individuals or observations included in a sample chose from a population. The researcher has included 15 respondents from the Moidomia area of North Lakhimpur which helped to analyze the issue and reason behind increasing substance use among youth of the particular area and impact in their mental health.

3.7 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION: Data collection refers to the process of collecting data for research purpose. They ensure that the data collected is accurate, consistent and relevant to the research objectives. There are various methods of data collection including interviews; observations. The researcher used unstructured interview schedule and observation as a method for the data collection.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION Researcher should prioritize ethical considerations throughout their studies. Obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring their privacy, and treating them with respect should be on prime. While conducting the study researcher will maintain participant sensitivity and maintaining confidentiality.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

- The research was confined to a specific location (Moidomia, North Lakhimpur) and conducted within selected rehabilitation centers.
- The study offers valuable insights into substance use patterns and mental health but due to limited time the study may not provide show full effects of substance among youth.

- Restricted access to respondents: rehabilitation centers did not permit the researcher to conduct one-on-one interviews with respondents in private.
- some participants may have some sensitive information or refrained from speaking openly about deeply personal experiences related to trauma, relapse, or mental health
- Given the sensitive nature of substance use and mental health, some respondents may have been emotionally distressed during interview.

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

INCLUSION CRITERIA The following criteria were used to select participants for the study

1. Age Group: Participants aged between 13 and 30 years, consistent with the focus on youth and young adults.

2. History of Substance Use: Individuals with a current or past history of substance abuse, regardless of the type of substance used like alcohol, heroin, cannabis, pharmaceutical drugs.

3. Rehabilitation Status: Participants currently undergoing treatment or detoxification at rehabilitation centers in North Lakhimpur (Khelmati and Lilabari).

4. Willingness to Participate: Only individuals who voluntarily consented to share their experiences were included in the study.

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5. Mental and Emotional Stability: Participants who were not well mentally stable enough as assessed by rehabilitation staff to take part in an interview without significant psychological risk.

EXCLUSION CRITERIA The following individuals were excluded from the study:

1. Individuals under 13 or Over 30 Years of Age: To maintain the focus on youth, individuals outside this age range were not considered.

2. Non-Substance Users: Those without a personal history of substance use or addiction were excluded from the sample.

3. Non-Consenting Individuals: Any individuals who declined to participate or withdraw consent at any stage of the interview process were excluded.

4. Severely Unstable Mental State: Participants experiencing acute psychiatric distress, psychosis, or suicidal ideation at the time of data collection as identified by staff were not interviewed, to avoid emotional harm and ensure ethical integrity.

5. Language Barriers: Participants who could not communicate in Assamese, Hindi, or English were excluded from interviews to ensure accurate data collection and analysis.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

4.1 Factors influencing for addiction among youth

4.1.1 Peer: Peer pressure emerges as a significant factor influencing substance addiction among youth, as seen across several respondents who began using substances primarily to fit in with peers or avoid social rejection. Many respondents described a strong desire to be accepted or not be the "odd one out," which led them to imitate the behaviors of older, more confident or influential groups. This need for social belonging often overshadowed their personal discomfort or reluctance, resulting in gradual but deepening substance use. Even those with stable upbringings, were vulnerable due to an internalized pressure to conform and seek approval. Peer influence not only initiated substance use but also played a major role in repeated relapses, especially when individuals returned to environments where such behaviors were normalized, highlighting how deeply social circles can shape and sustain addiction patterns.

4.1.2 Culture

Cultural influence plays a significant role in the substance use patterns observed across several respondents, shaping both their perceptions and behaviors toward addiction. For many Western media and digital content glamorizing drug use heavily influenced their curiosity and eventual dependence, promoting an image of confidence, identity, or emotional escape tied to substance use. In contrast, individuals normalized drinking and drug use from a young age due to its presence in local traditions or family environments, where substance use was rooted in social celebrations or accepted as routine. This normalization reduced perceived risk and made early experimentation more likely. Respondents like also highlight how cultural restrictions, such as opposition to inter cultural relationships, led to emotional trauma and substance dependency as a means of escape. Collectively, these stories reflect how both traditional and modern cultural narratives whether through societal norms, media portrayals, or family values can act as

strong underlying forces in shaping substance use behavior, making cultural awareness essential in addressing addiction and recovery.

4.1.3 Media:

One of the most striking themes that emerge across several narratives is the powerful influence of media and pop culture on substance use among youth. Respondents highlight how web series, movies, and online content glamorized drug use, portraying it as a symbol of modernity, confidence, and uprising. These portrayals, often seen in Western shows or idolized celebrity lifestyles, were perceived as inspirational by young viewers. The normalization of substances such as weed, alcohol, and pills in these platforms led young individuals to believe that using drugs was a natural part of growing up or fitting in, the media not only influenced their initial experimentation but also acted as a recurring trigger during recovery, relapsing after watching shows that romanticized drug culture. This indicates how deeply media driven imagery shapes youth perception, not just initiating use but reinforcing the belief that drug consumption helps to emotional liberation, status, or personal identity. Such patterns reflect the urgent need for critical media literacy and preventive education, addressing how curate digital narratives can twist reality and increase harmful behaviors.

4.2 Emotional Triggers

4.2.1 Loneliness Narratives shared by multiple respondents, loneliness emerges as a deeply rooted emotional trigger that significantly contributes to substance use and relapse. For many, loneliness isn't merely the absence of people it is a painful internal void, shaped by early emotional neglect, familial disconnect, or fractured relationships describes the prolonged isolation he experiences while working from home, intensifying cravings due to lack of daily companionship, when his wife and mother leaves for work. Similarly, the other respondents highlight how emotional loneliness persists even in the presence of partners, revealing how unresolved inner voids can endure despite physical

closeness.. Respondents speak of **loneliness following heartbreak or betrayal**, where substance use becomes a coping mechanism for emotional abandonment. Even those with externally stable childhoods such as confess to an inner emptiness rooted in **feeling unseen or misunderstood**, where peer influence or the desire to fit in masked a deeper craving for connection. Collectively, their stories highlight how **loneliness functions not just as a background, but as a powerful emotional force** that both initiates the cycle of addiction making it a critical area to address during recovery and rehabilitation.

4.2.2 Boredom

Boredom emerges as a persistent and powerful emotional trigger across several respondents' experiences, often acting as the gateway to initial substance use and a key contributor to relapse. For many, boredom is not simply the lack of activity **it represents a deeper absence of purpose, stimulation, or emotional fulfillment**, creating a psychological emptiness that substances temporarily fill. Respondents explicitly mention boredom especially during unstructured times like evenings as the moment when cravings become strongest. Respondents describe how, after being sent home or away from structured routines they were pulled back into drug use due to the absolute inability to tolerate empty time deeply influenced by digital content, boredom led to mental triggers and relapse. Respondents link his relapse cycles directly to the return to old social circles during their no use time, pointing out how easily unfilled moments turn into relapsing episodes also reinforce this theme describing how **free time without emotional tools or meaningful engagement leads to substance use** as a means of escape. Overall, boredom is not just a filler of silence in these narratives but a **significant emotional state tangled with purposelessness**, demanding greater attention in rehabilitation programs through structure building, meaningful engagement.

4.2.3 Failure to handle success: Respondents described about their triggering point to relapsing or re-using of their substance. One of the respondent coded "I can't handle my

success" most of them uses substance to cope with their failure like emotional, relationships, or familial failure but in case of the one respondent it was different whenever he gets any promotion in his job or any success, achievement, or appreciation it drives him to use his substance again and again.

4.2.4 Intake due to social engagement: Respondents describe to enjoy any moment or to socialize while they go for any social event or gatherings, also when they go for any trip without using the substance they couldn't enjoy the moment or they couldn't feel anything for better experiences or happiness they need to consume substance which is again a reason of relapsing.

4.3 Physical and Psychological consequences resulting from substance abuse

4.3.1 Sleep pattern Insomnia is frequently described by respondents mentioned disrupted sleep patterns, like- "I have gain insomnia and I can't sleep my pattern of sleep has been disturbed" ranging from complete loss of sleep to staying awake for nights due to restlessness or cravings. This sleep disturbance not only contributes to physical tiredness but also deepens emotional distress, creating a loop of relapse weakness. One of the respondent coded "I recall crying at nights in secret, concealing it from all" depression started before substance use, rooted in academic or personal pressure, and was later intensified by the effects of addiction which directly disturbed their sleep pattern.

4.3.2 Depression From the provided narratives, depression emerges as a central emotional trigger that often triggers for substance use and relapse. For many respondents, depression is not simply sadness but a deep, remaining emotional numbness, often rooted in unresolved trauma, and depression respondent highlights how unprocessed grief and isolation fuel his relapses and depression while others, describe the silent burden of academic pressure that spiraled into depression, leading to substance use as a means of coping. Respondents reflect on childhood emotional neglect and family breakdowns that cultivated feelings of abandonment and emptiness, which later translated into substance

use to fill that void. Even respondents without over trauma, also few of them acknowledge how emotional discomfort and internal disconnection led them to seek escape through drugs. Across cases, **depressions not just a consequence but also a powerful pioneer** often lying at the core of the addiction cycle. The inability to tolerate emotional pain, lack of coping strategies, and failure to process inner struggles collectively underscore how deeply intertwined depression is with the trigger and maintenance of substance dependency.

4.3.3 Withdrawal symptoms Across the diverse narratives a clear and recurring theme is the physical toll of substance use, particularly ending up in withdrawal symptoms. Depression is also widely present during withdrawal Respondent coded "due to my substance I have faced depression and stress which again forced me to relapse" respondent describe persistent sadness, emotional numbness, and a lack of self-worth during the abstinence period. Withdrawal symptoms are notably intense for multiple respondents, one of the respondent coded "I have noticed during my using time also I can't eat feels like chewing stone. Weight loss is the major symptoms for them respondents mention physical effects like headaches, vomiting, dizziness, and lack of appetite during detoxification or clean periods. These symptoms often act as primary triggers for relapse, especially when paired with emotional isolation or unstructured time, as highlighted by Overall, the data reveal that while emotional pain is a strong entry point into substance use, the persistence withdrawal significantly impair recovery, underlining the critical need for integrated care that addresses both psychological and physiological dimensions of addiction.

4.4 Social Factors

4.4.1 Family A deep and frequent theme emerges the interplay of trauma especially rooted in family dynamics and relationships are a inner force shaping substance use patterns. While the substance used, the frequency, and the relapse triggers vary, nearly

every respondent's journey begins with emotional wounds rooted in family neglect, instability, or unmet emotional needs. For instance, respondents cited that "I had a dysfunctional family since childhood" "My mother was having an affair. It ripped everything asunder. My father, humiliated and broken hearted, left. Within months, he remarried another woman" and few experienced broken or dysfunctional family environments whether through parental affairs or divorce which planted seeds of emotional isolation and a lifelong struggle with attachment and trust. A key observation is that relapse often occurs during isolation when individuals are alone and emotionally unanchored, whether due to working from home, distance from family, or internal emotional voids.

4.4.2 Relationship respondents described how betrayal or emotionally unprocessed romantic relationships led to severe emotional spirals in substance dependency as a form of coping in the absence of emotional regulation or support systems can push individuals into experimentation and later addiction. Even.. Despite varying socioeconomic backgrounds, what binds these stories is how early emotional trauma particularly from fractured or emotionally unavailable relationship structures, coping mechanisms, pushing individuals toward substance use as a substitute for connection, acceptance, or emotional safety. Therefore, substance use in these cases is not just a chemical dependency, but an emotional response to abandonment, rejection, loneliness, and unprocessed trauma. Recovery, for most, depends not just on detoxification but on rebuilding trust, learning emotional regulation, establishing supportive relationships, and redefining identity beyond past trauma.

4.5. Pattern of use: most of the respondents have described about their using pattern and said it is again reason for their relapsing and affects in their both mental and physical health. Respondents described the initial stage where they started using was normal when they could stop after using it for a time but gradually the body demands for more and hence it lead them to use it without mixing water but directly injecting it to the body for

the high kick. Respondents coded "In the morning the first doze I consume mixing with water but till the evening the body demands for more kick I consume it without water."

4.6 Impact in daily life: respondents described how it has changed their day to day life many of them described the problem of insomnia and withdrawal symptoms like head ache, dizziness, which directly impacts to their day to day activities. One of the respondent described he was terminated from his job many times due to the problem of using substance. Also due to the disturbing sleeping pattern they couldn't continue their daily work properly hence it impacts their daily life.

FINDINGS

The study conducted on the rising issue of substance use among youth of North Lakhimpur Moidomia, these findings illustrate the comprehensive role that different factors influence the youth for substance use.

5.1 USING PATTERNS: The study found about the change of using patterns among youths how the amount of the substance increases day by day and the study highlights using pattern like consuming the substance without mixing water. The using of the substance and the change in the patterns has been noticed most after relapsing coming out of the rehabilitation. For the kick or getting more high kicks the user get the bodily demand of using it raw.

5.2 EARLY EXPOSURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCE

The study found out that majority of the respondents reported about early exposure to substance use by friends, family, or culture due to various reasons like coping with boredom, emotional breakdown or academic pressure. At the same time the study found out about the huge exposure and influence by the peers, and normalization of substance use in the family function made it more normal for few of the respondents.

5.3 PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL FACTORS

The study found out the psychological and emotional factors like loneliness, boredom and emotional neglect by any of the parents or peers influenced many of them to substance use. Some unresolved issues like familial conflicts, separation of parents and negligence from parents were common factors influencing to substance use, few of them experienced grief, betrayal and relationship failures were the common factors and triggering point for it.

5.4 MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Mental health issues like depression, trauma were the common factors for them during the using and abstinence period. Few respondents were facing issues related to mental health due to boredom and loneliness. Most of them started using substance to cope with their issues related to emotional breakdowns like familial of relationships. Whereas insomnia or disturbance in sleep pattern was one of the major findings among the youth during the using period as well as at the recovery period which was the main triggering point to relapse or reuse.

5.5 RELAPSE PATTERNS AND CHALLENGES

The researcher found out that most of the respondents have been to rehabilitation before but it did not help them out. Most of the cases were about relapsing they relapse due to their internal and external triggers like meeting same friends, exposure to some TV contents, loneliness and boredom that forces to relapse or reuse of their substances. Challenges like withdrawal symptoms like vomiting, fatigue, fever, stomach ache, head ache. They the most found challenges among the respondents to maintain the recovery phase.

5.6 AGE GROUP: The respondents in this study range in age from 20 to 30 years, representing a critical in-between phase of youth and adult where identity, career, and social belonging are often in instability. The majority of respondent group are 20–25 includes students and college dropouts many of whom began substance use due to peer pressure, academic stress. Most reported boredom and evening hours as primary triggers for relapse. The other respondents group (26–30), including professional individuals faced more complex issues such as adult responsibilities. Many of them were functional in their careers until addiction disrupted their stability, often relapsing after success due to a lack of coping mechanisms. Across both age groups, isolation, emotional neglect, and lack of support systems were consistent underlying factors contributing to their struggles with addiction and relapse.

DISCUSSION: This study set out to understand the underlying causes, patterns, and mental health impacts of substance abuse among youth in Moidomia, North Lakhimpur, Assam. Through qualitative data collected from 15 participants, clear themes emerged: peer influence, emotional neglect, cultural normalization, media exposure, mental health distress, and family dysfunction which resonate strongly with the Social Learning Theory (SLT) and existing literature.

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) explains behavior as a result of observational learning, imitation, and reinforcement. In this study, youth frequently cited exposure to substance use by friends, family, or celebrities as their introduction to addictive behaviors. For example, participants reported using substances to "fit in" or imitate peer groups or media figures. This reinforces Bandura's declaration that individuals model behaviors observed in their environment especially when those behaviors seem rewarding or socially acceptable. Moreover, the absence of strong self-regulatory mechanism, as noted by Bandura, also aligns with the findings. Many respondents acknowledged a lack of urge control and emotional coping mechanisms, particularly during periods of loneliness, stress, or boredom triggering frequent relapses for instance, respondents highlighted that success or family expectations acted as psychological pressure, undermining their efforts at abstinence. This supports SLT's emphasis on both external modeling and internal regulation in behavioral development.

This study supports and expands upon previous findings in the literature review. For instance, Fatima (2017) and Nath et al. (2022) both noted peer pressure and school environments as primary contributors to early substance use. Similar dynamics emerged in this study most respondents began using between ages 15–18 due to peer influence and social agreement. In addition, the Mogan et al. (2019) study emphasized the role of familial substance use and poor supervision, both of which were echoed by participants

who were introduced to substance use within their own families or communities. Furthermore, Nasirzadeh et al. (2020) found significance between substance use and mental health disorders, particularly anxiety and depression patterns in this study. Almost all respondents reported struggling with insomnia, depressive thoughts, emotional numbness, at some point during their substance use journey. This psychological aspect often acted both as a cause and a consequence of addiction, creating a cycle of self-medication and emotional dependency. The influence of media and digital content, discussed by Hsiung et al. (2022) and Amate et al. (2022), also prominently appeared in this study. Substance using behaviors portrayed in films and series, normalizing them as symbols of freedom, confidence, or rebellion. This reveals how social learning can occur not only through physical closeness but also via digital environments widening the scope of SLT in contemporary contexts.

While existing literature identifies peer pressure, trauma, and mental illness as risk factors, this study adds depth by situating these variables within the lived experiences of rural and semi-urban youth. In Moidomia, cultural traditions, family issues and limited access to mental health services intensify the vulnerability of youth. Emotional suppression due to societal stigma around mental illness and poor coping mechanisms mean that many youth, turn to substances not just to "get high" but to silence internal emotional chaos. Additionally, relapse factors such as environmental triggers, media exposure, and lack of post-rehabilitation support offer crucial insight. Respondents expressed how their surroundings both social and digital acted as constant reminders or reinforces of past behaviors. These insights extend SLT's scope to recovery, not just initiation, indicating that social modeling continues even during rehabilitation and must be addressed holistically.

The findings support the Social Learning Theory and existing research while offering limited to a small area. Youth in Moidomia do not engage in substance use in isolation they do so in socially modeled environments with emotional neglect, digital

glamorization, and weak institutional support. These patterns emphasize the need for community-driven mental health initiatives, culturally contextualized awareness campaigns, and post-rehabilitation reintegration strategies that address emotional resilience, media literacy, and peer dynamics.

This discussion underline that effective intervention must not only educate but also model alternative, healthier behaviors mirroring the same principles of SLT that currently perpetuate addiction.

5.3 SUGGESTION:

Based on the findings and theoretical interpretation of this study, the following suggestions are proposed:

5.3.1. Community-Based Mental Health Interventions

Local NGOs and government health departments should implement accessible community mental health centers. These centers must be culturally sensitive and supply specifically to youth, offering both preventive and therapeutic services.

5.3.2. Peer Education and Role Modeling

Consistent with SLT, interventions should influence positive peer role models who have successfully recovered. These individuals can help change the social description around substance use by modeling healthier coping strategies and promoting mental wellness.

5.3.3. School-Based Awareness Programs

Educational institutions should integrate substance abuse education and emotional literacy into their curriculum. Peer pressure resistance skills, emotional regulation techniques, and digital media influence must be emphasized.

5.3.4. Strengthening Family-Based Approaches

Programs aimed at improving family communication and support can help reduce emotional neglect and strengthen the emotional safety net for young people. Parenting counseling services and family therapy should be made widely available.

5.3.5. Media and Policy Advocacy

Public awareness campaigns should challenge the glamorization of drug use in media. Collaboration with content creators and influencers can help reshape youth perceptions. Local policies must also regulate portrayal of substance use in entertainment targeted at younger audiences.

5.4 CONCLUSION: The present study explored the rise of substance abuse among youth in Moidomia, North Lakhimpur, with a specific emphasis on the psychological, emotional, and environmental influences impacting their mental health. The findings clearly show that substance abuse among the youth in this area is not a result of a single cause, but rather a complex interaction of factors including early exposure, peer influence, media portrayal, familial neglect, emotional trauma, and the absence of coping mechanisms.

The application of Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) proved especially relevant. As the theory suggests, behaviors are learned through observation and imitation this was repeatedly confirmed in the narratives of the participants, who were heavily influenced by their peers, family members, or popular media figures engaging in substance use. The behaviors were normalized within their environments, leading to initial experimentation and later addiction. The theory also emphasizes the role of self-control and belief systems. Respondents with low self-esteem, unresolved emotional issues, or poor support systems were more likely to relapse even after rehabilitation, aligning with SLT's assertion that internal beliefs affect behavioral outcomes.

The literature reviewed also supports these conclusions. Studies by Fatima (2017), Nasirzadeh et al. (2021), and Richert et al. (2020) all echo the relationship between emotional distress, peer norms, and substance dependency. Your study builds on this body of work by adding a localized, qualitative understanding of how these dynamics operate specifically in the socio-cultural context of Moidomia.

Importantly, the study emphasizes that substance abuse is not just a behavioral issue, but one deeply rooted in emotional withdrawal, societal neglect, and psychological vulnerability. The prevalence of mental health concerns such as depression, insomnia, anxiety, and trauma among respondents illustrates the urgent need to integrate mental health care with substance use interventions.

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INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

I Snigdha Dutta a student of social work department, Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya, Guwahati unit, I certify that this interview schedule will only be utilized for my dissertation, "A study on The Rising Issue of Substance Abuse Among Youth and its impact on mental health". I guarantee that your response will remain private and be utilized exclusively for instructional objectives. As a result, I respectfully ask that you provide your insightful opinions in answering the following questions.

1. Name:

2. Age:

3. Gender:

4. Address:

5. Educational qualification:

- **To understand the patterns of drug use among youth**

1. What was your first experience with drugs
2. What factors participated in your drug usage?
3. What was your pattern of using it?
4. What substance do you use frequently, and why do prefer them?
5. How has your substance use changed over time? If yes how?
6. Explain about your feelings before and after consumption of drugs
7. How often do you relapse and why?
8. What were your most triggering factors, that forced you to relapse?

- **To assess the impact on mental health among youth due to excess use of Drugs**

1. How has drug affected your mental?
2. Have you experienced any kind of mental health issue during your recovery period?
3. What changes have you noticed in your thoughts and behavior since you started?
4. How has substance use brought changes in your ability to concentrate or decision making capacity?
5. How has drug use affected your sleep pattern and overall your energy level?
6. Have you ever had thoughts of self harm?
7. Can you explain any anxiety, depression or emotional distress you have experienced?
8. Why according to you mental health is an important aspect related to substance use? What strategies can be adopted to improve mental health?

To explore the causes of increase number of youth engaged in Substance use

1. What do you think are the main factors influencing youth to experiment or regular use of substance?
2. What do you think is the role of economic factors such as poverty or lack of opportunities increasing substance use among youth?
3. How do you think mental health issue such as depression, anxiety contributes to young people turning to substance for coping?
4. Have you ever experienced any kind of trauma in your life? If yes how?
5. How does peer pressure influence youth to substance use?
6. How do you think young people feel pressured to use substance in order to fit in with their friends?

7. How do you think social media or influence of western culture plays role in youths life to use substance?
8. In what ways does the developmental factors contributes in the rise of substance abuse, explain.