

# The Striking Effects of Substance Abuse on the Socio-Cultural Life in Darjeeling Hills

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## ABSTRACT

Social and cultural groups utilize alcohol and narcotics, ranging from recreational to spiritual, medicinal to ritual. There are many factors linked with drug addiction, such as family, environment, finances, etc., and social and cultural aspects are also among those factors. However, the substance that individuals consume for the sake of culture may cause addiction, harming a person's health and social life.

The data for this qualitative study was collected using a Case study Guide as a tool and a Case study as a technique, using in-depth interviews to study the social and cultural factors related to drug addiction, such as cultural beliefs, consequences, cultural immigration, etc. Primary and secondary sources were used to gather the data.

The study's primary respondents were ten substance users and 20 non-substance users of different age groups. According to the results, people who use drugs and those who do not share a common social and cultural belief about drugs and addiction. Regular users and those who have never tried it tend to agree that drugs are significantly more dangerous than alcohol. Another factor contributing to youth addictions is a lack of parental supervision and encouragement. There was a generational divide on whether or not immigrants from other countries carry their drug usage patterns with them. While

the older generation did not find any connection between drug use and immigration, the younger generation saw it as a direct result of the widespread availability of drugs.

**Keywords:** social, cultural factors, drug addicts, drug addiction

## INTRODUCTION

Most nations around the globe struggle with addiction; an addiction can take many forms, including sex addiction, gaming addiction, drug addiction, etc. Substance dependence harms the individual, their family, and society. Despite the risks associated with drug use, compulsive drug seeking and usage is the hallmark of drug addiction, relapsing brain disease and chronic as well (Singh & Gupta, 2017).

Alcohol and drug misuse, by their very nature, gives the impression that one is defying social norms and expectations. The young generation, especially, goes through challenging, intricate periods involving questioning, exploring, and taking risks. Adolescent rites of passage often involve drug use (Shukla, 2011). Individually or collectively, young people are drawn to today's chemical culture, which provides quick fixes, instant gratification, social status, and attractive friends. In addition, Youth was pressured to compete in academics, social lives, and jobs. Some teens can handle stress well. However, most

of them couldn't endure this weight, so they turned to pharmaceutical medications to relax their bodies and brains. Some young people use drugs due to peer pressure or curiosity.

Substance misuse manifests in late adolescence or early adulthood in many cultures. Parental ties and experiences affect teenage behavior similarly to acculturation. Parenting style is shaped by parents' cultural inheritance, personal beliefs, and preferences, affecting adolescents' psychological well-being and, subsequently, their risk of substance use (Kamel et al., 2021). Many researchers use the term "Addiction" has now been dropped from the scientific literature because of its derogatory connotation, and instead, the use of "Substance use disorder" is preferred (Singh & Gupta, 2017).

### 1. Global Scenario

Drug addiction is a global concern or crisis. It's a ticking time bomb, and ignorance might be disastrous. According to a (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2022) report, 284 million 15-to-64-year-olds used drugs globally in 2020, a 26% increase from the previous ten years. In Africa and Latin America, many under 35 are in drug rehab. Due to legalization in North America, cannabis use has skyrocketed. In 2020, cocaine production reached 1,982 metric tonnes, up 11% from 2019. In 2020, cocaine seizures reached 1,424 tonnes despite the Covid-19 pandemic. 90% of cocaine seized in 2021 was in containers. Cocaine trafficking reaches Africa, Asia, North America, and Europe. The 2022 World Drug Report says illegal drug marketplaces can harm the municipal, community, and individual contexts (UNODC). Indoor-grown cannabis has 16 to 100 times the carbon footprint of outdoor-grown cannabis, whereas one kilogram of cocaine has 30 times that of cocoa beans. World Drug Report 2022 promotes women's drug sector roles. Criminals make women smuggle, create, and sell drugs. In countries with weak regulations, drug trafficking can

prolong and exacerbate violence. In 2020, Ukraine had 79 clandestine labs, up from 17 in 2019 (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2022).

### 2. Social-Cultural Factors

"Socio-cultural" refers to common traditions, habits, patterns, and beliefs among a demographic group. Culture provides social and economic benefits in addition to its intrinsic value. Culture boosts happiness and health through enhanced learning and health, more tolerance, and opportunities to connect with others. "Social culture is defined as a group's customs, traditions, and beliefs." (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). In many cultures, alcohol and narcotics are utilized recreationally, spiritually, medicinally, and ritually by numerous groups. In weddings, festivals, and other celebrations. Every culture has a traditional alcoholic drink. However, substitutes consumed for culture can induce addiction, harming health and social life.

#### a) *Socio-cultural beliefs*

Socio-cultural beliefs influence the way people view and use drugs. Culture influences people's expectations regarding drug-related problems. Many social and cultural groups utilize alcohol and opioids recreationally, spiritually, medicinally, and ritually. However, beliefs changed in periods of fast social change, and excessive substance use might emerge, especially among communities that haven't been exposed to drugs and haven't built protective norms. Habits developed by social and cultural beliefs become societal problems, including family disagreements, relationship problems, peer pressure, etc., which may be adolescents' primary causes of drug addiction.

#### b) *Cultural immigration*

In today's chaotic world, many people immigrate to other places to adapt to a new culture and deal with problems to survive. People sometimes bring new material to a new location while adjusting to a new

culture or trying to sustain it. Substances used in their new place may harm local culture. They may not know the dangers of new substances. Their families, who are unfamiliar with the content, may be unable to stop them. It is first observed by Krupinski et al. In Australia, immigrants and refugees tend to have low rates of substance abuse during the first few years following relocation. Beginning several years following relocation, the rates of substance abuse begin to increase. The types of substances abused and the rates of substance abuse vary by ethnic group (Westermeyer, 1999). Similarly, in the 19th century, opium usage and addiction continued among Chinese immigrants and spread to native communities of Southeast Asia.

The new region's government had sought to restrict and control opium consumption but was unsuccessful (UNITED NATIONS, 1986). However, many people benefit from this socio-cultural to stay sober or abstain. Recent studies indicate that social culture factors help the individual to deal with the addiction and help maintain abstinence. In the article *Impact of Culture Affects Approach to Treatment*, they found that Socio-cultural beliefs might influence one's attitude and behavior toward substance use and misuse. The preconceived notions that people have regarding the possible issues that drug usage may cause them are greatly influenced by culture (Abbott & Chase, 2008). This may protect numerous social groups. Substance addiction is minimal in cultures that value abstinence and integrate it into their communities, at least as long as people stay in the community.

### 3. Objectives Of the Study

The objectives of the present work are to study respondents' socio-cultural backgrounds to understand the social and cultural effects of drugs and drug addiction, as well as to understand the social and cultural factors that lead to drug addiction and to analyze the social and cultural consequences of drug use.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

(Jafari et al., 2009) published a paper on Socio-cultural Factors Associated with the Initiation of Opium Use in Darab, Iran. They found opium-friendly social factors in Darab, Iran. 75% of responders used opium. Boredom and poor self-confidence emerge from a lack of social activities, legislative restrictions on out-of-home hobbies, and the region's agricultural environment. Opium is also used to treat diabetes, hypertension, etc. Communities imitate social learning. This study found opium users are shown how to use it before they start, and male opiate addiction is not stereotyped. Female drug users stated that stigma prohibited them from receiving treatment. As opium usage is a social norm and not addictive, female drug users prefer to disguise their problems. It's part of their everyday routine and shows respect to guests. Opium is traditionally less harmful than Heroin and opium residue.

A study was done by (Feyisa, 2021) on The Association between Socio-cultural Factors and Substance Use among Haramaya University Students. They examine socio-cultural factors influencing university students in substance use by comparing one with another, and they compared cigarette, alcohol, and hashish use with khat use. They revealed that the cultural norms and expectations encourage male students more than female students to use khat. Besides, these factors encourage female students more than male students to use alcohol or cigarettes and hashish compared with khat use, and each substance use was related to customs, traditions, or socialization processes within their communities. The result indicates that students were more influenced in the involvement of khat use than cigarette and hashish use due to stress because khat was easily accessible and available to users. Khat cultivation is one of the sources of income, and parental influences in khat use than alcohol and counts as part of the cultural and social.

(Jones & Rossiter, 2008) published an article on Social and Religious Factors in Adolescents' Drug Use. Using a pre-and-

post-measuring design, they compare Christian and state high school students. They found that Christian school kids used cannabis at far lower rates than state school students, who reported similar percentages nationwide. Based on their open-ended responses, state school students interpreted anti-drug material in typical ways. The Christian school kids' voluntary remarks had nothing to do with the facts but emphasized the preventative roles of social support and religious values. The study shows that attending a school where drugs are morally wrong and highly opposed by peers, family, and religious institutions helps safeguard against substance abuse. According to studies, offering teens a supportive environment will help them make informed drug decisions, which will benefit both the individual and the community.

(Jiloha, 2009) wrote in "Socio-cultural Aspects of Adolescent Drug Misuse" that several factors contribute to the initiation and persistence of teenage drug abuse. He claims households with lower socioeconomic status have higher smoking rates. This is because adolescent drug use is linked to children from low socioeconomic backgrounds who perform low-level jobs and have an uncertain family income, as well as material disorder, parent divorce, and solo parenting. Local items like "beady," illicitly made local alcohol, and other commodities are easily available to low-income households at reasonable costs and in handy locations. Most drug-abusing youths are street kids, school dropouts, and unskilled laborers. The paper's author concluded that addiction affects all socioeconomic groups.

(Jêdrzejczak, 2005a) published an article in *Military Medicine* titled "Family and Environment Factor Addiction among Young Recruits". 559 recruits who had to pass a medical test to enter the army were a part of the study. The findings show a clear connection between drug addiction and dysfunctional families, with drug addiction often resulting from dysfunctional and pathological households. Household milieu,

family relationships, happiness, and power dynamics determine familial alcoholism. The study shows that 54.4 percent of young individuals are introduced to drugs under their mother's supervision compared to their father (22.6 percent). Recruits believed their father didn't spend enough time with them (55.6%). Only 33% of the recruits under investigation came from families without a narcoma history. The quality of young people's relationships with their families and their emotionality impacts their usage of psychoactive substances. The highest drug usage rates are found in big cities and families with a history of addiction.

(Westermeyer, 1999) investigated the role of cultural and social factors in the cause of addictive disorders. Generations of kids have avoided subsequent drug misuse. Drug and alcohol addiction isn't new, but it's only recently become a public health concern. Because human genetics and biochemistry change slowly, cultural and socioeconomic influences may have contributed to the drug abuse epidemic. Additional history and culture may no longer be barriers to addiction. Families, neighborhoods, churches, and governments can't stop substance misuse. Our social systems' failure doesn't mean we need drugs and therapy. Rebuild weak companies. Institutional drug treatment reforms work. Improve home, classroom, social circle, workplace, church, community, and government.

## **MATERIALS & METHODS**

It is purely qualitative research and has primarily followed an exploratory research design to understand the role of social and cultural factors in drug addiction in a better way. The researcher explored these factors, the consequences of drug use, and socio-cultural backgrounds to understand better the social and cultural effects of drugs and drug addiction. Ten cases have been selected by the researchers who have embraced the case study methodology. A semi-structured interview schedule was adopted for the in-depth interviews. The



respondents are substance users and members of the general public from varied ethnic backgrounds and age groups. Respondents are from various Darjeeling hills, and their names were changed to keep the confidentiality of respondents

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To enhance comprehension of the perspectives of substance users and non-users/community members, the researcher has categorized the findings into a subtheme in this findings and discussion section.

### 1. Outlook on the Social-Cultural Factor among Substance Users

Prior to examining the influence of sociocultural factors on substance addiction, it is essential to ascertain the degree of awareness and understanding that substance users possess regarding these sociocultural elements. To elucidate the manner in which individuals engage in social and cultural activities within their society. The majority of substance users possess a cursory understanding of social and cultural dimensions. Nonetheless, they inhabit the same society and culture; they are misinterpreted by certain social groups or government-registered associations involved in organizing social and cultural activities. The respondent stated that Binay remarked that

*It is a part of the individual life; for me, it is another form of society; they (social group) will be there when there is a need in my family in bad and good times (funerals, marriage functions, etc.).*

Nevertheless, despite their insufficient information, they consider social and cultural aspects as a lifestyle, which appropriately influences the community's perception and treatment of them.

As Tobiyas shared,

*For me, society and culture are where we grow or develop ourselves. We gain respect in our whole life, which we lost because of our addiction. Due to this, they see me as less worthy or useless because my focus was*

*drugging every time, and I was least bothered about society or culture.*

The research revealed that substance users prioritized drugs above all else, exhibiting minimal regard for social and cultural aspects. Subsequently, they participated in social and cultural events solely after completing their daily requirements. as Milan said, that

*My goal was to get drugs when I was addicted. Thus, I was the least concerned about social and cultural issues. I used to participate in various things after using drugs, but I was still high the entire time. In addition, our community members are not as active in organizing youth involvement programs these days. If they did, they would never ask us to participate because we are drug addicts in their eyes.*

This study indicates that individuals residing in the same community as drug users exhibited minimal concern for the future and failed to transmit the social and cultural knowledge, as well as attributes inherited from their ancestors, which promoted a normative approach to learning among the youth. Substance users acknowledged the difficulty of participating in social and cultural activities, as their helpful contributions often go unappreciated due to the stigma associated with drug addiction. Therefore, they engage in these activities shortly after consuming drugs.

The majority of people who abuse substances got their start through a combination of social factors, including exposure to drug use by older members of the community, drinking within the family as a cultural norm, and peer pressure.

As Binay said, that

*I started learning about drugs from school friends, seniors, and my local friends because many of them were using drugs at that time. I did not have that knowledge about addiction at that time.*

Supporting the Binay statement, Nimga stated that,

*When I was young, in my home, my mother used to brew alcohol and sell it to others. gradually, I started learning from elders*

*who used to come for a drink and started consuming alcohol.*

Social and cultural factors significantly impact individual lives, as understanding culture is crucial for well-being and the cultivation of normative behavior in diverse situations. The study revealed that, despite their upbringing in a rich culture and society, most substance users possess limited social and cultural understanding. This indicates that the society in which this individual resides has less care for educating the younger generation about their culture and society, as well as a lack of acceptance towards the population affected by drug addiction. The socio-cultural theorist regards social interaction as a fundamental component in the development of cognition through engagement with others and its subsequent incorporation into the individual's cognitive framework. Adults' limited relationships with youth result in a lack of awareness of their issues, leading young individuals to observe and emulate them, perhaps harming their well-being. In an article by (Westermeyer, 1999), "The Role of Cultural and Social Factors in the Cause of Addictive Disorders," the author discusses the inadequacy of traditional community methods employed to prevent and safeguard individuals, particularly children, from addiction. He proposed enhancing the gaps with contemporary knowledge instead of exclusively depending on pharmacological solutions, as this can facilitate the advancement of social institutions, families, and communities while also contributing to the reduction of addiction.

## **2. Substance user's Perspective on Drugs (substances) and Addiction**

Society holds the belief that only illicit substances can result in addiction; yet, individuals can also develop dependencies on medications prescribed for therapeutic purposes. Nevertheless, an illegal substance is significantly more prevalent among the youth, necessitating an understanding of the timing, methods, and motivations behind

their usage. It is necessary to understand their definition of drugs, as they serve various purposes in society, including those specified in official pharmacopeias or formularies, as well as for the diagnosis, healing, mitigation, treatment, or prevention of sickness, and for illicit substances. The study reveals that the majority of respondents reported their initial encounters with illicit drugs during adolescence, a period when they lacked exposure to drugs and possessed limited understanding. They are introduced to drugs by schools peers and adults who consume them inside the community.

According to respondent Tapas

*I think of illegal, dangerous drugs when I hear the word "drugs." Drug addiction is a long-term reliance on illicit substances. In high school, I started using drugs without knowing the risks. I often heard people talking about drug addicts in my area. Many of my peers (younger and older) and people I knew were already using drugs, so I did the same. Before treatment, I didn't know much about addiction, but now I know it's a disease.*

They carry a limited understanding of drugs or addiction, gathered via societal or cultural perspectives. The respondent indicated that numerous elderly individuals within their culture and community assert that drugs are hazardous to health and society, recommending for a cautious distance from both drugs and their users. According to one respondent, Saran,

*Before consuming, I know that drug leads to death, but I also know that it helps remove all personal problems.*

In the version of Nikesh said

*Drug addiction is the worst thing in society, so he must keep his distance from drugs and those who consume them.*

Again, Rajesh said that

*Drugs are the worst or bad thing people do not want to do in their society, leading to death.*

The research indicated that substance users' perceptions of drugs or addiction are influenced by the beliefs transmitted

through their society and culture. Consequently, they possess only a restricted understanding of drugs and addiction, and they have not embraced a normative perspective about these substances. Moreover, conservative social and cultural perspectives are relevant in this context. Due to infrequent interactions with youth, societal members are unable to offer counsel or attributes that promote abstinence from harmful substances and fail to understand the challenges these children encounter. Individuals acquire specific behaviors through observational learning, whether beneficial or negative, from familial influences or societal contexts. The social setting of the families and the significance derived from their interactions influence their lived lives. Begin through observing and emulating family members who partake in detrimental or substance-related activities. The modeling effects transition to the social reinforcement of drug or substance use and the anticipation of positive outcomes. Society and culture are crucial in positively influencing the youth, imparting superior knowledge, and fostering new beliefs from an early age. (Jones & Rossiter, 2008) conducted a study comparing students from a non-denominational Christian high school with those from a state government high school. The research revealed that the pupils in public schools engaged with the anti-drug materials through traditional methods. Conversely, individuals at the Christian schools offered unprompted remarks unrelated to the facts provided, highlighting the crucial preventive functions of social support and religious values. The study's findings indicate that attending a school where drug use is regarded as unethical and is strongly condemned by peers, family, and religious organizations may aid in preventing substance abuse. Research indicates that assisting adolescents in locating a secure and inclusive setting enhances their drug-related decision-making, yielding advantages for both themselves and their communities.

### **3. Substance users' outlook on the role of social and cultural factors in drug addiction**

Darjeeling, characterized by a predominantly Nepali (Gorkha) speaking population, possesses a rich and varied cultural and religious landscape. Consequently, society and culture significantly influence every facet of individual existence in this locale. Understanding the influence of this social and cultural element on drug addiction is crucial, as substance abuse has emerged as a major issue in this region. Research indicates that the inhabitants of the Darjeeling region partake in alcohol as a cultural practice, a tradition inherited from their ancestors at significant rites and festivities. While some disproportionate actions can be prevented by taking safety precautions, others may be fostered by cultural customs. As per family system theory, interactions among family members enable us to perceive the system holistically rather than as a mere aggregation of discrete components. The family is the cornerstone of all cultures, and cultural traditions originate in the family unit. Familial relationships foster connections among relatives, while other aspects of cultural society incentivize individuals to adopt ethical conduct to reduce harmful habits such as substance abuse. The results indicate that families play a vital role in shaping culturally appropriate behavior in individuals. Despite its prevalence, certain Nepali (Gorkha) families produce alcohol as a cultural custom or to enhance their income. A significant number of respondents first encountered alcoholic beverages within their families, as they were raised in households where alcohol was produced out of mere curiosity. Due to their detachment from the drug trade, members of this subculture regard illegal substances with dislike and stigma. As Rajesh asserted that

*When I was a kid in my family, my grandmother used to make alcohol, so my school was little far away from my home, I*

*had to walk 3 to 4 km per day. After walking that distance, I used to be so exhausted, and I used to steal some alcohol and drink, which relieved me from tiredness.*

Similarly, in the article by (Jafari et al., 2009) on Socio-cultural Factors Associated with the Initiation of Opium Use in Darab, Iran, They discovered that in Darab society, opium consumption is not stigmatized nor acknowledged as a potential source of addiction. Rather, it is profoundly embedded in their culture and serves as a significant means of expressing gratitude to guests and friends. Opium consumption is perceived as a lesser issue compared to heroin use due of its extensive historical context. A study by (Feyisa, 2021) entitled The Association between Socio-cultural Factors and Substance Use among Haramaya University Students, revealed that khat is readily accessible in the study area due to its cultivation and commercial trade. Researchers discovered that parental effect on their children's Khat consumption was significantly greater than that of alcohol. The survey indicates that numerous respondents mentioned familial issues as reasons for drug use, such as having an aggressive father with a history of excessive drinking or a lack of emotional closeness with their parents, preventing open communication about their feelings. A study also identified additional factors contributing to drug use, including familial background, single parenthood, parental relocation for employment, insufficient parent-child relationship, and harsh parenting. Lukas conveyed that

*My mother married my stepfather after my father died while I was little. After that, I stayed with my grandfather. Later, my girlfriend died in a car accident, which was a trauma for me. It's hard to share things with my family because they were never close to me, even my mother, so I started using drugs to sleep better peacefully.*

Similarly, Nigma has also shared that *I used to have very low self-esteem, and my father also used to drink a lot and sometimes beat my mother, which made me angry, which*

*made me use drugs, and helped me also gain confidence and forget all my anger.*

A comparable study conducted by (Jędrzejczak, 2005a) in "Family and Environmental Factors in Addiction Among Young Recruits" established a correlation between familial dysfunction and drug addiction, indicating that drug addiction often originates from dysfunctional and pathological family environments. 54.4 percent of young adolescents are exposed to drugs under their mother's care, compared to 22.6 percent under their father's supervision. 55.6% of recruits reported that their father did not allocate sufficient time to them. Familial relationships and emotional states influence the consumption of psychoactive substances among adolescents. Substance abuse is most prevalent in metropolitan areas and among households with addiction issues. The study indicates that societal factors significantly impact the learning process, as respondents learned knowledge about drug usage from their families, peers, and community elders, which stimulated the interest of the younger generation, prompting them to experiment with drugs. (Jafari et al., 2009) discovered that among 76 respondents, 75 commenced drug use with opium. Prior to initiating substance use, the majority of participants had encountered drug paraphernalia and had acquired diverse techniques from their elders and societal influences. A multitude of individuals recounted their experiences, as Lukas indicated that *I started learning about drugs from the society and culture where I live because I used to hang around with an addicted friend and witness my elders using drugs or alcohol in my community. Slowly, we learn from them, how to use them, how to consume, etc* similarly, Nikesh said that *My elder brother was a drug addict, and since childhood, I have been influenced by my brother because my brother is my role model. After my brother's death, I also started taking drugs, and in my family, most of them are social drinkers; this also encourages me a lot.*



Supporting the statement by Lukas, Omkar said that

*From my school days only, I liked to spend time with my older brother at my school, so they used to smoke cannabis and consume different types of drugs. Growing up, I got curious, so I started with them and slowly increased my dose.*

Similarly, Rajesh shared

*I used to play football with my friend and my elder brothers from my village. Our elder brothers used to consume drugs at the time, and slowly, my friends started consuming drugs; later on, I also began using substances, and in my village, alcohol is kind of normal thing to them.*

#### **4. Cultural immigration and drug addiction**

In today's globalized world, people from every country migrate to others, usually seeking better job opportunities. Immigration is nothing new in a city like Darjeeling. Many natives have left the country and state, searching for jobs, while many outsiders have arrived from outside. For this reason, it is important to investigate whether or not immigration plays a role in the emergence of drug addiction in the local population.

Substance abusers generally don't think drug addiction is influenced by cultural immigration, as they assume it is already there in their community and culture and that drug dealers wouldn't be making money if it weren't. Despite this, research shows that drug sellers (both local and from other cultures) actively encourage drug use. As Binay said, that

*I believe in 50–50 because if locals don't use drugs, they won't sell them, and also, since they come from afar and need to make money, I think that's why they choose this path.*

Similarly, Milan said

*Not only cultural immigration but also some locals had helped and promoted drug addiction because when I used to consume drugs, it was challenging to purchase drugs, but nowadays, you will find them easily.*

According to the research, immigrants who come to these regions for work also developed a habit of using drugs. Many respondents pointed out that many young people watch videos on social media and try to adopt other cultures, foods, etc., adding to the data that social media effects have been a key factor. Similarly, many young individuals who experiment with drugs do so after seeing depictions of them on screen and feeling pressure to fit in with their peers. Because of this, they eventually become dependent on substances.

According to Tobiyas

*In terms of cultural immigration, I cannot say how the contribution of this immigration promotes drug addiction. Drug addiction has developed as a major crisis in our place, and people who come to our place to earn their livelihood are also engaged in consuming drugs.*

The study discovered that drugs and addiction do not differ by culture or religion; it depends on how society and culture work together to end this crisis because many immigrants are also involved in drug consumption. However, immigration indirectly impacts drug promotion, such as selling drugs in areas that make narcotics easily available. Not only that, but locals are learning how to trade these narcotics. Furthermore, research has demonstrated that social media, especially among young people, has been a major factor in the acquisition of culture and habits from television shows, movies, and other media. It's also evident that the majority of illegal drug traffickers do this to support their families financially.

#### **5. Social And Cultural Repercussions of Drug Addiction**

In a place like Darjeeling, the effects of social culture are far-reaching. Alcohol is utilized in every celebration, festival, and even religious rites, but it can be difficult for people from different cultures to predict how it would affect them. Every group or culture restricts the observance of such customs and has its own rules to keep them

from becoming habitual. The results of this survey suggest that many of the respondents produce and sell their home-brewed alcoholic beverages. Although this is their livelihood, they have paid little mind to the lessons their children may pick up from the drunks that visit them.

Rajesh stated that,

*When I was a kid in my family, my grandmother used to make alcohol, so when I was in school, I had to walk 3 to 4 km per day. After walking that distance, I used to be so exhausted, and I used to steal some alcohol and drink after that, which gave me relief from tiredness.*

Saran has also shared a similar line, saying that

*In my mother's family, most of the family members used to drink alcohol; I blame my family because they never support me, and I am not able to share my emotions with them because they were never close with me; because of that, I left my school and consuming higher doses drugs.*

Our world is constantly evolving, as are our society and culture, to the point where children now want extra attention from their parents to confide in them about the challenges they are encountering and guide how to overcome them best. Many respondents feel emotionally disconnected from their families since they were never taught to open up to them.

As said by Lukas

*When my girlfriend died in a tragic accident, it was tough for me to endure the pain. At that time, there was no one with whom I shared my pain because my family was not that close to me. So I started using drugs to sleep properly.*

The study reflects that they lacked a relationship with their parents and came from single-parent homes or unstable households, as suggested by the study done by (Jędrzejczak, 2005b) found similar results; many young individuals are introduced to drugs while being supervised by their mothers, compared to their fathers. Recruits believe their father has given them less time. The quality of young people's

relationships with their families and their emotionality impacts their usage of psychoactive substances. The highest drug usage rates are found in big cities and families with a history of addiction.

## **6. Society's perspectives on the social and cultural factors concerning substance and substance addiction**

Darjeeling is a mountainous area with a profound cultural heritage and proximity to several national and international borders, emphasizing the importance for grasping local perspectives on drug misuse and its cultural implications. We employed a case study methodology for data gathering, conducting semi-structured interviews to obtain comprehensive insights. Responses are provided by individuals aged 18 to 66. The majority of young individuals, particularly females, perceive social and cultural significance as a framework for understanding how to lead a fulfilling life. A female respondent, Nima, aged 27, said that *For me, it is a kind of way of living where we learn how to live a good life.*

On the other hand, individuals in their forties and fifties indicated that a social and cultural framework, such as a legally recognized community organization or neighborhood association, serves as a source of support during crises. Conversely, being culturally bound signifies adhering to a custom inherited from one's forebears. Rakesh, a male participant, stated that *Social and cultural means where we live as a member of a certain society (registered organization, which the members of the village create to help the families in time of need, such as a funeral, marriage etc.) and culture means things which are inherited by our forefather such as rituals, language, traditional dress etc.*

A multitude of respondents asserted that they acquired knowledge about drugs from the schools they attended, school peers, individuals who are older, social media, films, and other sources. The majority of respondents characterized drugs as illegal substances, as they are utilized by youth for

intoxication. Riya, a 28-year-old female respondent, stated that

*We don't know much about drugs, but we have seen the elders from our society who died because of drugs, and slowly we get to learn from friends, movies etc.*

Nonetheless, the study reveals that non-user respondents across all age categories possess minimal to no knowledge regarding drugs or addiction, and to date, they have not encountered any sort of drugs. The study revealed that participants see drugs as more violent or hazardous than alcohol due to the belief that drug use leads to mortality across all age groups. The study indicates that comprehending the behavior of substance users is far more challenging for the average person than understanding that of an alcoholic. Rajkumar, a 55-year-old male respondent, stated that

*Because it is so simple to recognize the behaviours and odor of alcohol emanating from an alcoholic's body, do not view drinking as a particularly serious problem. As a result, they can change their behavior.*

Rupa a 60-year-old female respondent, supported this version that,

*It is tough to understand drug-consuming individuals because it is complicated to read their drug behavior and fail to get any smell like alcohol. For alcoholics, at least, we can figure out the behavior and reek of alcohol from an individual's body.*

Similarly, a 27-year-old female named Disha shared,

*I feel alcohol is not harmful because our ancestors have used it in our culture for many decades. On the other hand, drug or drug addiction is very complex and hard to understand.*

The research demonstrates that across all age groups, a commonality exists: individuals do not perceive social culture as the sole factor contributing to alcohol or drug addiction; rather, other factors also play a significant role in substance dependence. The majority of the youth indicated that it depends upon the individual, their familial background, their environment, and the manner in which

parents offer direction or care to their offspring. Rabi, a 26-year-old male respondent, stated that

*I feel that youngsters are on drugs because of a lack of parental guidance. I observed that nowadays, most youngsters do not go outside to play or hang around with their similar age groups. They only go to school and learn this from school friends.*

Older participants in the study indicated that the issue lies not inside society or culture but rather in the lack of engagement in cultural activities among young people compared to their parents. They assert that previously, locally brewed alcohol was utilized in rituals, but this practice has been discontinued in favor of imported liquor. They argue that because there aren't many job options, locals sell alcohol to make ends meet and support their families. A 66-year-old male participant, Hari, stated

*To blame culture is just an excuse because they drink alcohol for enjoyment. Like in the earlier days, nowadays nobody brewed alcohol in their home, mostly foreign alcohol is used everywhere, and people also sell because people don't have better job opportunities.*

similarly, Krishna a 59-year-old female respondent, said that,

*Why blame other cultures who come to work in our area because drug and drug addiction exists in our society*

However, they claimed that they have little knowledge about drugs, despite the fact that they accepted that alcohol is a problem in their society and that something could be done to prevent it. Investigations into the influence of cultural immigration on drug promotion produced incongruous findings. The majority of older individuals believe that immigration does not contribute to drug addiction, as it is already prevalent in society. Nonetheless, youthful individuals possess another viewpoint, arguing that cultural immigration does not entirely facilitate drug marketing, yet it plays a substantial role, particularly among the youth demographic. It has been believed that outsiders introduce drugs to the region

and facilitate their widespread availability, while students from adjacent states also contribute to the proliferation of these behaviors. According to Riya

*When I was in my adolescence at that time, we only knew some illegal tablets as a drug, and most of these drug addicts used to go to other places to purchase them. But today, most drugs are easily available in nearby areas, and most importantly, they are using more dangerous substances like brown sugar.*

similarly, Rabi also shared that

*Most students who come from nearby foreign countries and other states for educational purposes bought habits like consuming drugs; our youngster learns these habits.*

Research finds that drugs and other substances have historically not been integral to cultural or communal practices, resulting in widespread suspicion and ignorance among individuals of all ages. While most respondents have not engaged in the use of illegal substances, they have acquired knowledge about drug addiction through societal and cultural influences. Individuals across all age groups share a same viewpoint on alcohol, linked to the cultural belief that one may mitigate its adverse effects. A significant number of adults feel that youngsters are acquiring drug use behaviors influenced by their exposure to social media content.

## CONCLUSION

Addictions are taboo in small towns and big cities. Despite government or NGO efforts, most people are getting into drug use. This study analyses social and cultural links to drug addiction. Social-cultural variables impact the community residing in this area positively and badly. Any civilization that doesn't prohibit substance use can destroy future generations. If a group is responsible enough to retain its culture while regulating narcotics, it can develop a healthy society. The study's findings indicate that social and cultural factors substantially affect the emergence of substance use behaviors and

addiction in the Darjeeling Hills. The cultural acceptance of alcohol and its utilization in social and ceremonial settings fosters the normalization of substance use, but insufficient parental supervision and peer pressure intensify drug abuse, particularly among adolescents. Cultural views and traditions influence individuals' attitudes toward substance use, with alcohol being more accepted, while drug use is stigmatized yet increasingly prevalent among younger generations.

However, these towns have taken very limited measures to stop the crisis. In the past, drug addiction studies focused only on societal implications. This research indicates that addicts and regular individuals share the same belief (imaginary knowledge) passed down from their ancestors. Lack of knowledge and confidence cause problems for growing children. The study emphasizes the necessity of community involvement and education to mitigate cultural norms that inadvertently foster substance abuse. Enhancing familial connections and fostering parent-child ties are crucial for addressing this issue, as familial support and guidance have demonstrated efficacy in mitigating substance usage risks. The study highlights the influence of socio-cultural elements in facilitating and inhibiting addiction, emphasizing the necessity for culturally attuned therapeutic programs that take these factors into account. To reduce the increase in addiction, it is recommended that local authorities and social workers execute focused preventive and intervention initiatives that utilize the community's social framework and enhance knowledge of the dangers linked to substance use. This method can cultivate a supportive atmosphere that motivates individuals to seek assistance and engender a cultural transformation towards healthier lifestyle choices. This study will help future researchers understand social and cultural influences on drug addiction.



### Declaration by Authors

**Confidentiality:** The research was carried out voluntarily, and no one was forced to provide information. The researcher would respect the participant's perspective. The researcher would guarantee the confidentiality of any information provided by the responder and would not permit its disclosure or abuse. While gathering the data, the researcher did not engage in bias or discrimination based on factors such as caste, class, religion, sex, etc.

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