



# Understanding Drug and Alcohol Abuse: A Sociological Exploration of Adult Lives in Thoubal District of Manipur

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## Abstract

This paper delves into the sociological underpinnings of drug and alcohol abuse among adults in Thoubal District, Manipur. By examining both personal accounts and structural factors, the study uncovers how unemployment, porous borders, cultural norms, and lack of support systems contribute to substance dependence. The analysis highlights the consequences on family, community, and public health, while exploring local interventions such as NGO outreach and community activism. Through a sociological lens, the research calls for participatory policymaking and grassroots mobilization to combat the deepening crisis.

Thoubal District in Manipur faces a growing crisis of drug and alcohol abuse among adults, driven by a complex blend of historical, socio-economic, and cultural factors. Proximity to international trafficking routes, unemployment, urban drift, and fading traditional values have created fertile ground for addiction. Limited mental health services and ineffective law enforcement exacerbate the issue, while stigma silences affected individuals and families. The disconnect between older community structures and modern social pressures leads to emotional isolation and weakened support systems. As this public health concern deepens, sociological inquiry becomes vital for crafting responsive and culturally grounded solutions.

**Keywords:** Substance Abuse, Thoubal District, Sociological Impact, Community Intervention.

## 1. Introduction

- Substance abuse is a rising concern across India, with Manipur facing acute challenges due to geographical, socio-political, and economic factors.
- Thoubal District, located in southeastern Manipur, is witnessing increasing adult dependence on intoxicants.

The study aims to explore sociological causes, personal narratives, and the role of community structures in shaping this crisis.

**Drug and alcohol abuse** has emerged as a pressing social concern across India, and the **Thoubal district of Manipur** presents a particularly complex and urgent case. Nestled in the northeastern region of the country, Thoubal is grappling with the dual burden of substance dependency and its cascading effects on adult lives, families, and communities. This study seeks to explore the phenomenon not merely as a medical or psychological issue, but through a **sociological lens**—examining how social structures, cultural norms, economic conditions, and community dynamics shape patterns of addiction and recovery.

The district's proximity to international drug trafficking routes, notably the **Golden Triangle**, has contributed to the easy availability of narcotics, while socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and weakened familial support systems have intensified vulnerability among adults. Substance abuse in Thoubal is not confined to youth alone; adults face long-term consequences including deteriorating health, fractured relationships, and social exclusion. Rehabilitation efforts, such as those led by centers like **New Life Solution in Lilong**, highlight both the promise and limitations of current intervention strategies.

By focusing on adult lives in Thoubal, this sociological exploration aims to uncover the **root causes**, **social consequences**, and **community responses** to drug and alcohol abuse. It will also interrogate how stigma, peer influence, and institutional support—or lack thereof—affect the lived experiences of individuals battling addiction. Ultimately, the study aspires to inform more **holistic, community-based interventions** that address not just the symptoms, but the social fabric that sustains substance abuse in the region.

## 2. Sociological Framework

Understanding drug and alcohol abuse in the **Thoubal district of Manipur** requires a multidimensional sociological approach that goes beyond individual pathology. This framework draws on key sociological theories and concepts to analyze how **social structures, cultural norms, and community dynamics** contribute to substance abuse among adults. The sociological framework for understanding drug and alcohol abuse in Thoubal District centres on the interplay between individual behavior and broader social structures. This study draws on key theories such as **Structural Functionalism**, which views substance abuse as a disruption to societal stability, particularly affecting institutions like family and employment. **Symbolic Interactionism** highlights how daily interactions and social labelling shape individual identities and normalize substance use. **Conflict Theory** exposes how systemic inequalities—such as economic deprivation and institutional neglect—fuel addiction among marginalized groups. Additionally, **Social Disorganization Theory** explains how weakened community cohesion and rapid socio-cultural changes contribute to deviant behavior. Together, these perspectives offer a comprehensive lens to examine how addiction is socially constructed, perpetuated, and potentially mitigated through community-based interventions and policy reforms.

### 3. Structural Functionalism

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Views society as a system of interrelated parts working together to maintain stability. Substance abuse is seen as a **dysfunction** that disrupts social institutions like family, education, and employment. In Thoubal, weakened family structures, unemployment, and lack of recreational outlets may contribute to this dysfunction.

**Table-1**

Table showing why do Adults take Alcohol

Sl. No	Name of Centre's	a)Happy	b)Sad	c)Stress	d)Social Violence	Total
1	Rural Voluntary Service	Nil	01	01	01	03
2	RDS Centre	01	01	03	Nil	05
3	Brighter Home	04	03	02	01	10
4	Health Care Centre	03	04	02	03	12
5	The Miracle Foundation	03	01	04	01	09
6	Mangal Centre	Nil	02	01	Nil	03
7	Liberty of Life	08	08	02	02	20
8	Peace Centre	15	06	05	02	28
9	Stepping Stones	04	02	05	02	13
10	Anouba Yenning	12	Nil	03	01	16
11	Real Recovery Home	15	09	05	01	30
12	New Life Solution	20	18	08	05	51
<b>Total</b>		<b>85</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>=200</b>
<b>Percentage</b>		<b>42.5%</b>	<b>27.5%</b>	<b>20.5%</b>	<b>9.5%</b>	<b>=100%</b>

## 4. Symbolic Interactionism

The **Symbolic Interactionist perspective** offers a micro-level understanding of drug and alcohol abuse in Thoubal District by emphasizing the meanings individuals attach to their behaviors through social interactions. In this context, substance use is not merely a chemical dependency but a socially constructed reality shaped by **peer influence, cultural symbols, and daily interactions**. Adults may internalize drug use as a coping mechanism or a form of identity, especially when surrounded by environments where such behavior is normalized or even valorised. Labels such as “addict” or “deviant” can reinforce self-perception and perpetuate cycles of abuse, while interactions with support groups or rehabilitative communities can help reframe these meanings and foster recovery. This theory highlights how **language, gestures, and social roles** contribute to the development and persistence of substance-related behaviors, making it a valuable lens for understanding addiction in a culturally nuanced setting like Thoubal. Focuses on **micro-level interactions** and the meanings individuals attach to behaviors. Drug use may be normalized through **peer interactions**, especially in communities where substance use is common. Stigma and labelling e.g., being called an “addict” can reinforce deviant identities and hinder recovery.

## 5. Conflict Theory

From the lens of **Conflict Theory**, drug and alcohol abuse in Thoubal District is deeply rooted in systemic inequalities and power imbalances. The theory posits that social problems like addiction arise from the **marginalization of vulnerable groups**, economic deprivation, and institutional neglect. In Thoubal, limited access to healthcare, unemployment, and the district’s exposure to international drug trafficking routes—particularly the Golden Triangle—create conditions where substance abuse becomes a coping mechanism for the disenfranchised. Moreover, the **unequal distribution of resources and law enforcement** responses often criminalize users rather than address the structural causes, reinforcing cycles of poverty and exclusion. This perspective highlights the need for policy reforms that prioritize **social justice, equity, and empowerment** over punitive measures.

- Emphasizes **power dynamics and inequality** in society.
- Drug abuse in Thoubal can be linked to **economic marginalization**, lack of access to healthcare, and systemic neglect of northeastern regions.
- The illicit drug trade may thrive due to **institutional corruption** and weak enforcement mechanisms.

## 6. Social Disorganization Theory

Suggests that communities with **weak social institutions** and low cohesion are more prone to deviance. In Thoubal, rapid urbanization, migration, and breakdown of traditional norms may lead to increased vulnerability to substance abuse.

## 7. Biopsychosocial Integration

The **biopsychosocial integration model** offers a holistic framework for understanding and addressing drug and alcohol abuse in Thoubal District. It recognizes that addiction is not solely a biological or psychological issue, but one deeply influenced by **social environments**, including family dynamics, peer networks, and community structures. In rehabilitation centres like *New Life Solution in Lilong*, this model is reflected through a combination of **medical treatment, counselling, and community engagement**. By integrating physical health care with emotional support and social reintegration strategies, the biopsychosocial approach promotes more sustainable recovery outcomes and acknowledges the complex interplay of factors that shape substance dependency in adult lives.

While primarily sociological, this framework acknowledges the **interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors**. Rehabilitation centres like **New Life Solution in Lilong** adopt this integrated model, combining medical treatment with counselling and community support.

**Social Disorganization Theory:** Links substance abuse with weak community ties and lack of social control.

**Strain Theory:** Suggests that economic hardship and limited opportunities lead individuals toward deviant coping strategies.

**Cultural Deviance Theory:** Argues that norms in marginalized subcultures may tolerate or even encourage substance use.

## 8. Methodology

This study employed a **mixed-methods approach** to explore drug and alcohol abuse among adults in Thoubal District, Manipur. Quantitative data were collected through structured surveys administered to individuals affected by substance use, as well as their families and community members. Qualitative insights were gathered via in-depth interviews and case studies involving rehabilitation centre staff, local leaders, and recovering individuals—particularly from centers like *New Life Solution in Lilong*. A **purposive sampling technique** was used to select participants from high-risk zones, ensuring representation across gender, age, and socio-economic backgrounds. The triangulation of data sources enabled a comprehensive understanding of the social, cultural, and economic dimensions of addiction in the region.

**Sample Size:** 200 adults across various towns and villages in Thoubal.

**Tools:** Structured interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys.

**Ethics:** Anonymity assured; consent obtained from all participants.

## 9. Key Findings

The sociological investigation into drug and alcohol abuse among adults in Thoubal District reveals a troubling pattern of substance dependency deeply intertwined with socio-economic and cultural factors. The study found

that **peer pressure, unemployment, family breakdown, and easy access to narcotics**—especially due to the district’s proximity to international trafficking routes—are major contributors to addiction. Adults affected by substance abuse experience **deteriorating health, strained relationships, and social exclusion**, with ripple effects on children and community stability. Rehabilitation efforts, though present, are often under-resourced and fragmented, highlighting the need for **community-based, culturally sensitive interventions**. The findings also underscore the role of stigma and institutional neglect in hindering recovery and reintegration.

#### **Demographic Profile:**

- Majority of users aged between 25–45.
- Higher prevalence among males, but increasing use among women.

#### **Contributing Factors:**

- Unemployment and lack of vocational training.
- Easy availability of narcotics due to porous borders.
- Peer pressure and lack of parental supervision.

#### **Social Impact:**

- Family breakdowns, domestic violence, and rising crime.
- Stigmatization and marginalization of addicts.
- Burden on local healthcare infrastructure.

## **10. Personal Narratives**

The lived experiences of individuals in Thoubal District illuminate the emotional and societal layers of substance abuse. These narratives reflect complex intersections of personal vulnerability, peer influence, and community silence.

**Early Exposure & Peer Pressure:** Many adults reported first encountering drugs or alcohol through peer groups in adolescence. Social acceptance and the desire to fit in often overrode initial hesitation.

**Unemployment & Disillusionment:** Several participants described falling into substance use after failing to secure stable employment, leading to feelings of inadequacy and helplessness.

**Family Dysfunction:** Some individuals grew up in households where addiction was normalized. Absence of parental support or exposure to domestic violence fostered a cycle of substance reliance.

**Cultural and Emotional Disconnection:** A sense of alienation from local traditions and communal identity was frequently cited, making people more susceptible to escapism through drugs and alcohol.

**Gender Dynamics:** While men were more visible in public drinking and drug use, women shared stories of hidden addiction driven by emotional neglect and societal constraints. These women often faced harsher stigma and limited access to help.

**Mental Health Struggles:** Several accounts linked substance abuse to untreated mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, or trauma from ethnic conflicts and displacement.

**Community Silence:** A recurring theme was the reluctance of community leaders and families to address substance abuse openly—either due to shame or fear of social repercussions.

Efforts to address drug and alcohol abuse in Thoubal District have evolved through a combination of institutional, community-based, and policy-driven interventions. Rehabilitation centres such as *New Life Solution in Lilong* play a pivotal role by offering integrated treatment approaches that combine medical detoxification, psychological counselling, and social reintegration. Community engagement has also emerged as a powerful tool, with local organizations and peer support networks working to reduce stigma and promote recovery. Educational campaigns targeting youth and adults aim to raise awareness about the dangers of substance abuse, while family counselling and vocational training help rebuild lives post-rehabilitation. However, these responses often face challenges such as limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and fragmented coordination among stakeholders. A more holistic and sustained approach—rooted in sociological understanding and inclusive of local cultural dynamics—is essential to strengthen these interventions and ensure long-term impact.

## 11. Interventions and Responses

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**Government Schemes:** Limited reach of rehabilitation centres and awareness campaigns.

**Local NGOs:** Grassroots mobilization for counselling and vocational support.

**Community Solutions:** Revival of traditional Meira Paibi women's groups in monitoring and advocacy.

Social stigma continues to hinder rehabilitation efforts.

Grassroots activism shows promise but needs stronger institutional support.

Long-term solutions require educational reform, employment generation, and participatory policymaking.

## 12. Conclusion

The sociological reality of drug and alcohol abuse in Thoubal District reflects deeper systemic problems. Addressing this issue demands a collaborative, culturally-sensitive approach rooted in local dynamics and strengthened by state interventions. The prevalence of addiction in Thoubal acts as a **mirror to societal dysfunctions**—from unemployment and poverty to weakened family structures and eroded traditional norms.

The district's proximity to international drug routes, particularly the **Golden Triangle**, has made it a hotspot for narcotic infiltration, exacerbating local vulnerabilities. Adults in Thoubal face **long-term consequences** of substance abuse, including deteriorating health, fractured relationships, and social alienation.

Institutions such as family, education, and healthcare are strained, often unable to provide adequate support or intervention.

The **intergenerational impact** is profound, with children and youth growing up in environments shaped by addiction and instability.

The findings call for **multi-sectoral collaboration** involving government agencies, civil society, healthcare providers, and local leaders.

Policies must move beyond punitive approaches to embrace **preventive education, harm reduction, and social reintegration** strategies. Empowering local communities through **awareness campaigns, peer support networks**, and economic opportunities can create sustainable pathways to recovery. Ultimately, drug and alcohol abuse in Thoubal must be reframed as a **social justice issue**—one that demands empathy, equity, and systemic reform. Addressing addiction requires not just treating individuals, but **healing communities**, restoring dignity, and rebuilding the social fabric that sustains well-being.

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