

## A CRITICAL STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF MEDIA EXPOSURE TO TOBACCO, ILLICIT DRUGS AND ALCOHOLS ON YOUTH WITH REFERENCE TO CHENNAI

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### ABSTRACT:

Media exposure plays a significant role in shaping the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours of young individuals. The pervasive presence of tobacco, illicit drugs, and alcohol in various media forms has raised concerns about its potential impact on youth. These substances are often portrayed glamorously in movies, television shows, music videos, and social media, potentially normalising their use and influencing young people's decision-making processes. This study aims to investigate the types and frequency of media consumption among youth, identifying the primary sources of exposure to tobacco, illicit drugs, and alcohol, and to explore how these media representations influence youth perceptions and attitudes towards these substances. The Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003, prohibits advertising of tobacco products and mandates health warnings, while the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985, bans advertisements of narcotics and regulates their control. Additionally, it seeks to analyse the correlation between media exposure and actual substance use behaviours, determine if there are significant differences in impact among different demographic groups, and provide insights for developing targeted interventions and public health campaigns. This research aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on media influence and youth behaviour, offering evidence-based recommendations for stakeholders, including parents, educators, policymakers, and media creators, to enhance prevention efforts and safeguard the well-being of future generations.

**KEY WORDS** : Media, Exposure, Young, Substances use, Parents.

### INTRODUCTION:

The influence of media on youth behaviour has been a subject of considerable academic and public interest for decades. With the advent of digital media, young people are now more exposed to various content forms than ever before. Among the most concerning aspects of this media saturation is the frequent depiction of tobacco, illicit drugs, and alcohol. These depictions often glamorise substance use, presenting it as a desirable and socially acceptable behaviour, which can significantly impact the developing minds of young audiences. India has several statutes aimed at reducing youth exposure to tobacco, illicit

drugs, and alcohol in the media. The Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003, prohibits advertising of tobacco products and mandates health warnings, while the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985, bans advertisements of narcotics and regulates their control. The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995, and the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, prohibit content and advertisements promoting these substances and require age verification online and The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, protects children from substance abuse. Media influence on youth regarding tobacco, illicit

drugs, and alcohol is affected by several factors, including the glamorization and frequency of substance use portrayals, accessibility to digital media, and peer sharing. Socioeconomic and demographic factors like age, gender, and cultural context play roles, as do psychosocial elements such as peer pressure, personal identity, and mental health. The effectiveness of regulatory environments, media literacy education, and family influences, including parental attitudes and communication, also significantly impact how youth are affected by media representations of these substances. Current trends in media influence on youth regarding tobacco, illicit drugs, and alcohol include the pervasive impact of social media influencers and user-generated content glamorising substance use, the normalisation of substance use in binge-watched streaming content, and the frequent depiction of these behaviours in popular music and music videos. Emerging technologies like VR and AR offer new avenues for immersive experiences that include substance use scenarios. Advertising and product placements continue to subtly promote tobacco and alcohol, while public health campaigns and advocacy efforts aim to counteract these influences with educational content and stricter regulatory measures targeting digital platforms. In the USA, media influence on youth is characterised by widespread exposure to substance use in mainstream media, including movies, television shows, and music. Social media influencers and celebrities heavily influence youth behaviours and attitudes towards tobacco, illicit drugs, and alcohol. Stricter regulations govern advertising and content, with robust enforcement and comprehensive public health campaigns targeting both traditional and digital media platforms.

#### OBJECTIVES:

1. To explore how media representations of tobacco, illicit drugs, and alcohol influence youth perceptions and attitudes towards these substances.
2. To analyse the correlation between media exposure and actual substance use behaviours among youth.
3. To determine if there are significant differences in the impact of media exposure on substance use among different demographic groups.
4. To evaluate the effectiveness of current policies and industry practices in mitigating the harmful effects of media exposure on youth.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW:

1. The evidence was strongest for links between media exposure and tobacco use; it was moderate for illicit drug use and alcohol use. Substantial variability in methodological rigour across studies and expanding definitions of media exposure contribute to persistent gaps in the knowledge base. **(M. Nunez-Smith et al., 2010)**
2. The students with higher alcohol and tobacco media exposure were more likely to use alcohol and tobacco and have intentions to drink and smoke, while students with higher media literacy were less likely to use alcohol and have intentions to drink and smoke. **(F. Chang et al., 2016)**
3. Tobacco and alcohol consumption are one of the leading lifestyle-related causes of avoidable mortality worldwide. India is the second-largest consumer of tobacco globally after China. **(Rashmi, 2020)**
4. Exposure to tobacco-related content on social media may foster positive attitudes toward tobacco products and brands, and influence the likelihood of initiating or continuing use of tobacco, especially among adolescents and young adults. **(S. Donaldson, 2022)**
5. This research paper talks about Pro-tobacco marketing and media stimulate

tobacco use among youth. A ban on all tobacco promotions is warranted to protect children. **(R. Wellman, 2006)**

6. This chapter reviews existing studies on the exposure of adolescents to media-derived violence, sexual behaviours, and use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs, and the influences that such images have on this population. **(V. Strasburger, 1997)**
7. The author highlights about the Youth in markets with more alcohol advertisements showed increases in drinking levels into their late 20s, but drinking plateaued in the early 20s for youth in markets with fewer advertisements. **(L. Snyder, 2006)**
8. This research paper discusses the Advertising and promotional activities by tobacco companies have been shown to cause the onset and continuation of smoking among adolescents and young adults. **(M. Weitzman, 2020)**
9. The author, through this research, says that the mass media have been shown to affect a broad range of adolescent health-related attitudes and behaviours including violence, eating disorders, and tobacco and alcohol use. **(S. L. Escobar-Chaves, 2005)**
10. The author highlights that the Media for health promotion and health education is proving to have the potential to influence the decisions and lifestyles of the future generations. **(Venmathi Elangovan, 2022)**
11. This research paper talks about anti-smoking mass media campaigns that bring significant long-term benefits in lessening smoking by inducing more initiating intentions among youth to quit smoking. **(A. Chauhan, 2017)**
12. This research paper talks about taxation, public consumption bans, restriction on advertisements, and minimum legal age for consumption are effective measures to reduce the use of tobacco and alcohol. **(R. Jiloha, 2017)**
13. The author highlights about the 19-22-year age group and those staying outside home were more vulnerable to smoking and alcohol consumption. **(H. Shriprasad, 2021)**
14. This research paper talks about Youth alcohol consumption is a major global public health concern. Previous reviews have concluded that exposure to alcohol marketing was associated with earlier drinking initiation and higher alcohol consumption among youth. **(T. Babor, 2017)**
15. The author, through this research, says that Youth are more likely to recall and think about advertising that includes personal testimonials; a surprising narrative; and intense images, sound, and editing. **(Jane Allen, 2015)**
16. This paper reviews the current literature on alcohol portrayals on-screen and the associated gaps and challenges in alcohol media research. **(R. Koordeman, 2012)**
17. The author, through this research, says smoking in youth is associated with watching advertisements particularly in cinema and promotional activities like distribution of free samples, coupons and sales on the price of tobacco products. **(M. Sardana, 2015)**
18. There are multiple negative outcomes like childhood obesity, poor nutrition, and cigarette & alcohol use. Media education has been shown to be effective in mitigating some of the negative. **(Abhay Upadhayay, 2012)**
19. This research paper talks about Tobacco promotion increases the likelihood that adolescents will start smoking. Much of the tobacco industry's promotional budget is spent on point of sale (PoS)

promotion in many jurisdictions. (J. Paynter, 2009)

20. The author highlights that the Exposure to alcohol-related content on the Internet might predispose young people to patterns of alcohol use by promoting alcohol as a natural and vital part of life. (Himanshu Gupta, 2016)

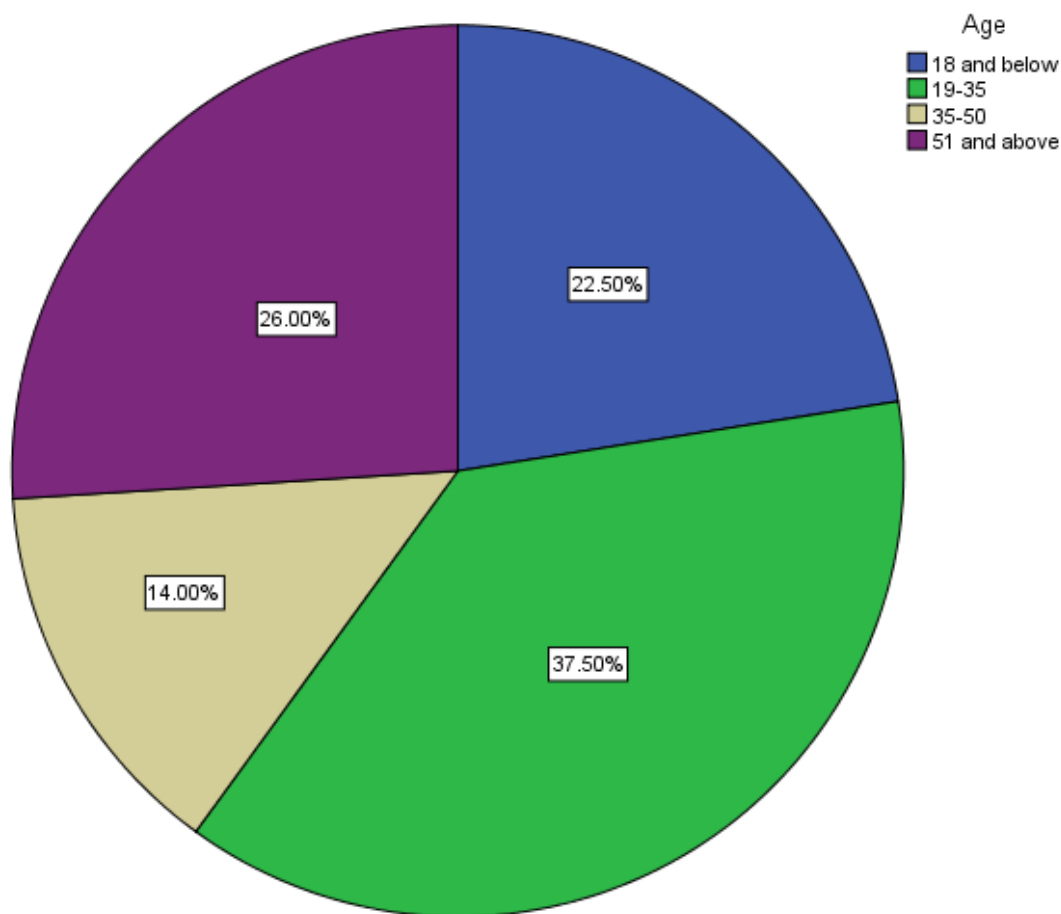
**METHODOLOGY:**

The research method followed here is empirical research. A total of 200 samples here have been taken out of which is taken through convenient sampling .The sampling frame taken by the

researcher is the public areas, in and around Koyambedu bus stand. The independent variable taken here is name, age, gender, occupation and place of residence. The dependent variable taken here is the opinions of respondents on impact of media exposure to substance and alcohol abuse, portrayal of substance use in media glamorises these behaviours for young audiences, Parents can take actions to mitigate the impact of substance-related media exposure on their children. The statistical tool used here is cluster-bar graph, pie chart and Chi square test.

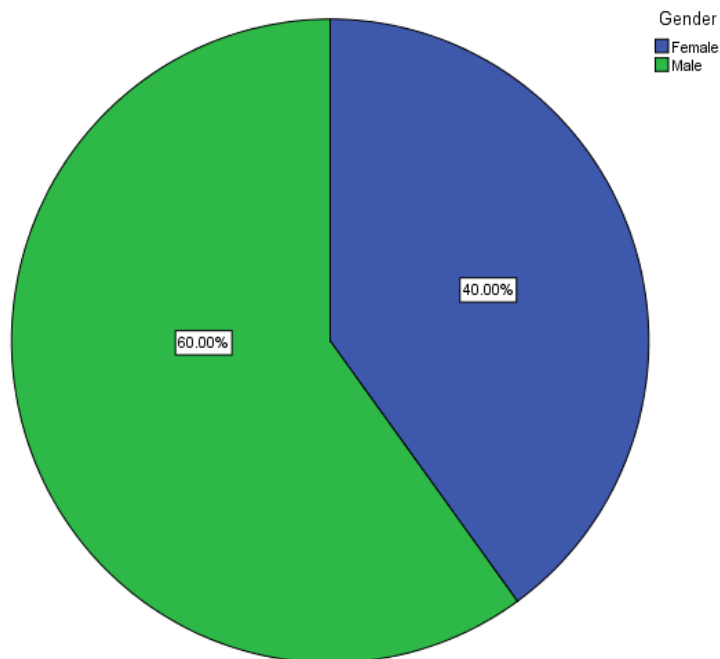
**DATA ANALYSIS :**

**Figure : 1**



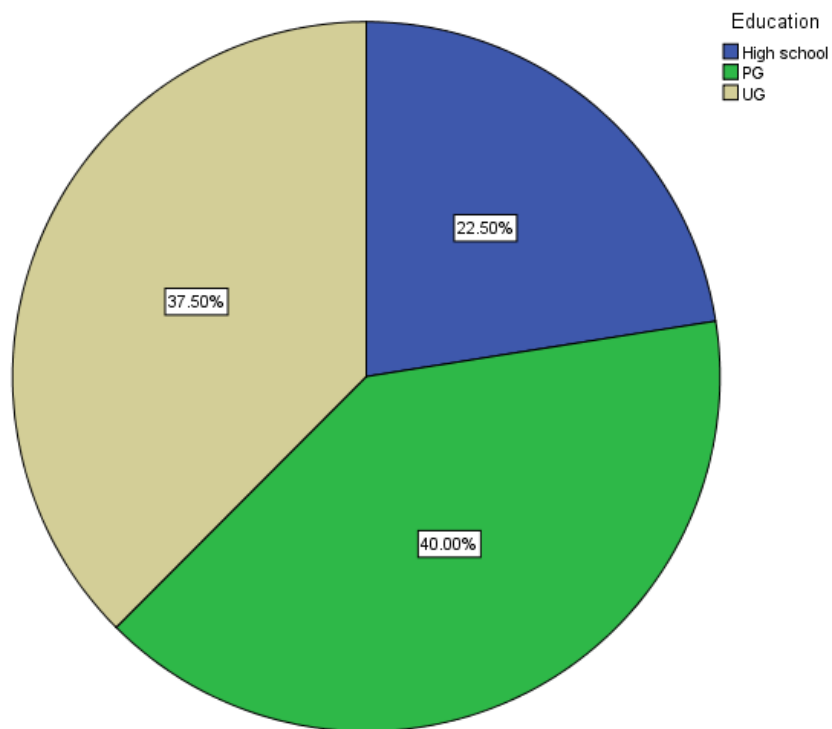
**Legend :** Figure 1 shows the age distribution of the respondents.

Figure : 2



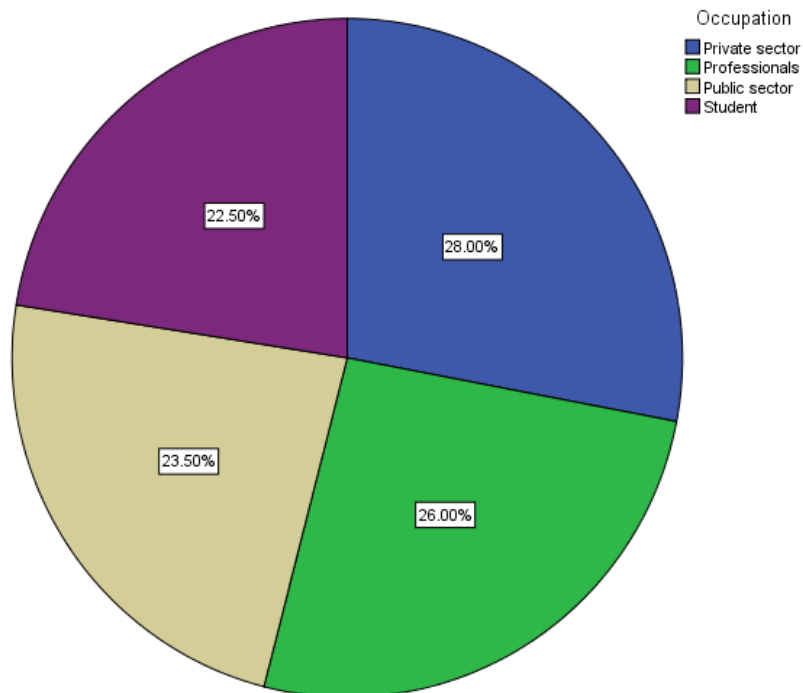
**Legend :** Figure 2 shows the gender distribution of the respondents.

Figure : 3



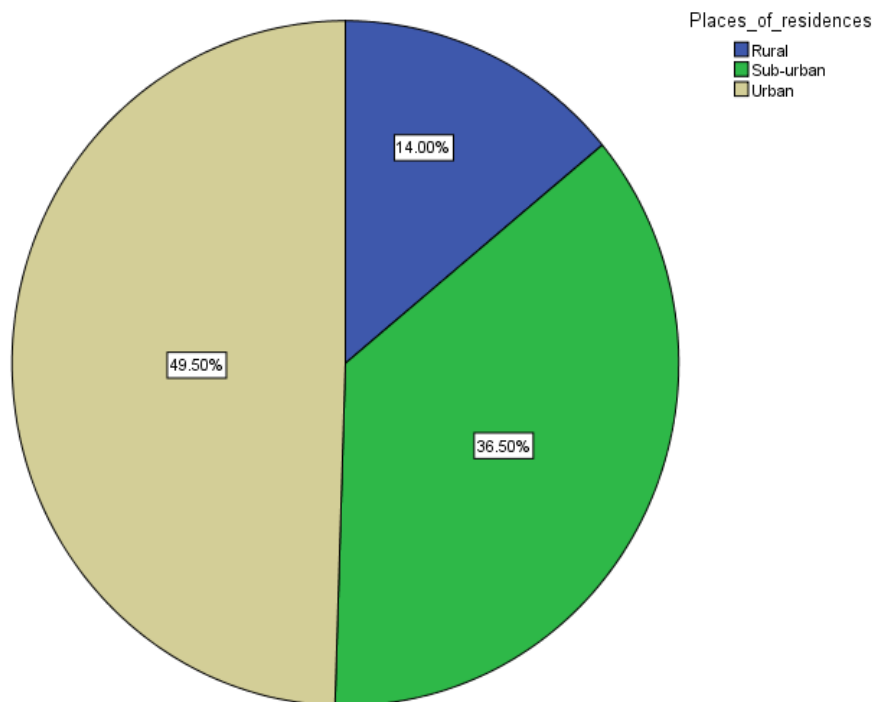
**Legend :** Figure 3 shows the education distribution of the respondents.

Figure : 4



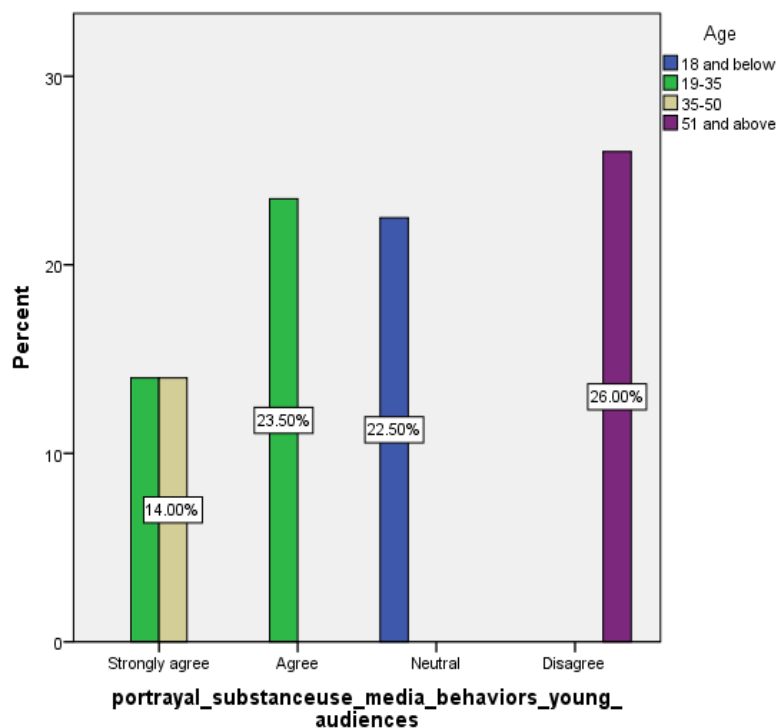
**Legend :** Figure 4 shows the occupational distribution of the respondents .

Figure : 5



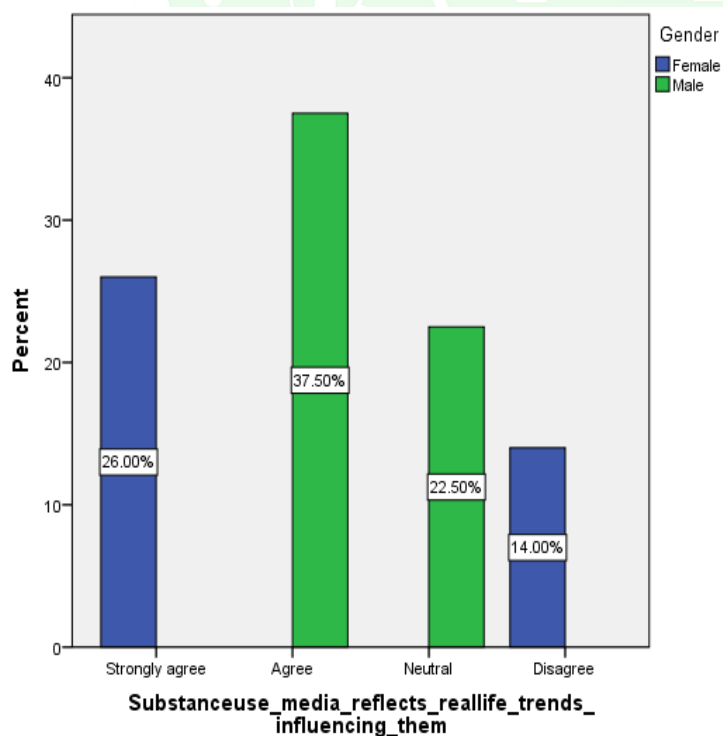
**Legend :** Figure 5 shows the places of residences of the respondents

Figure : 6



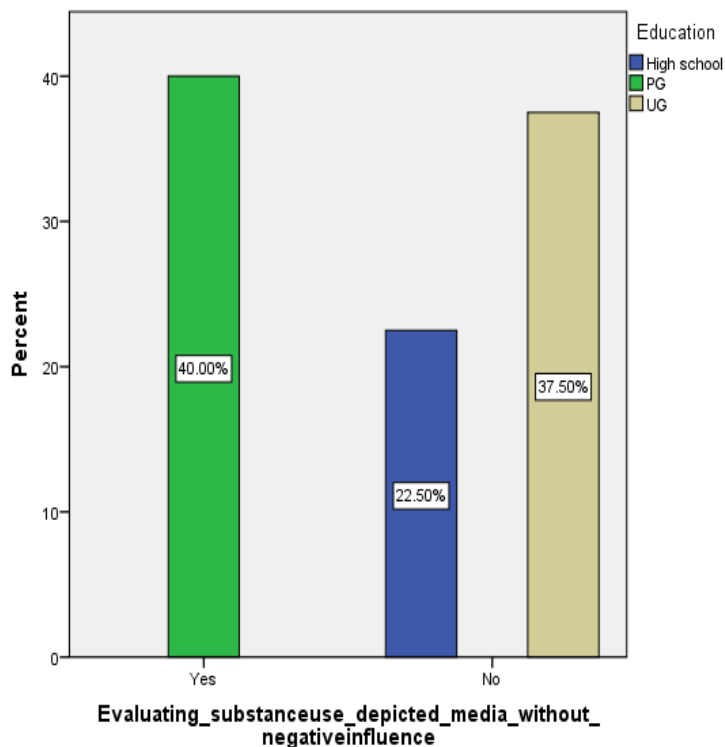
**Legend :** Figure 6 Graph represents the age of the respondents and percentage and their opinion towards the portrayal of substance use in media glamorises these behaviours for young audiences.

Figure : 7



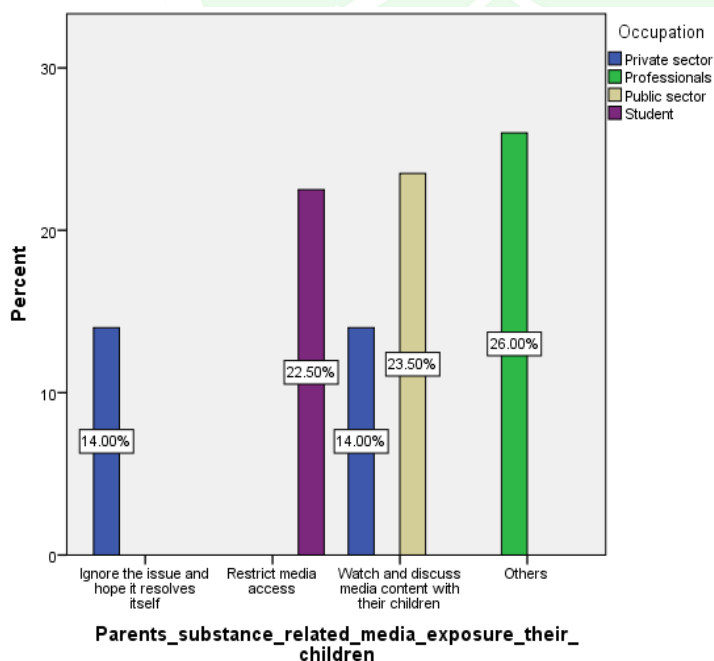
**Legend :** Figure 7 Graph represents the gender of the respondents and percentage and their opinion towards Substance use in media reflects real-life trends rather than influencing them.

Figure : 8



**Legend :** Figure 8 Graph represents the education qualification of the respondents and percentage and their opinion towards Youth are capable of understanding and critically evaluating substance use depicted in media without negative influence.

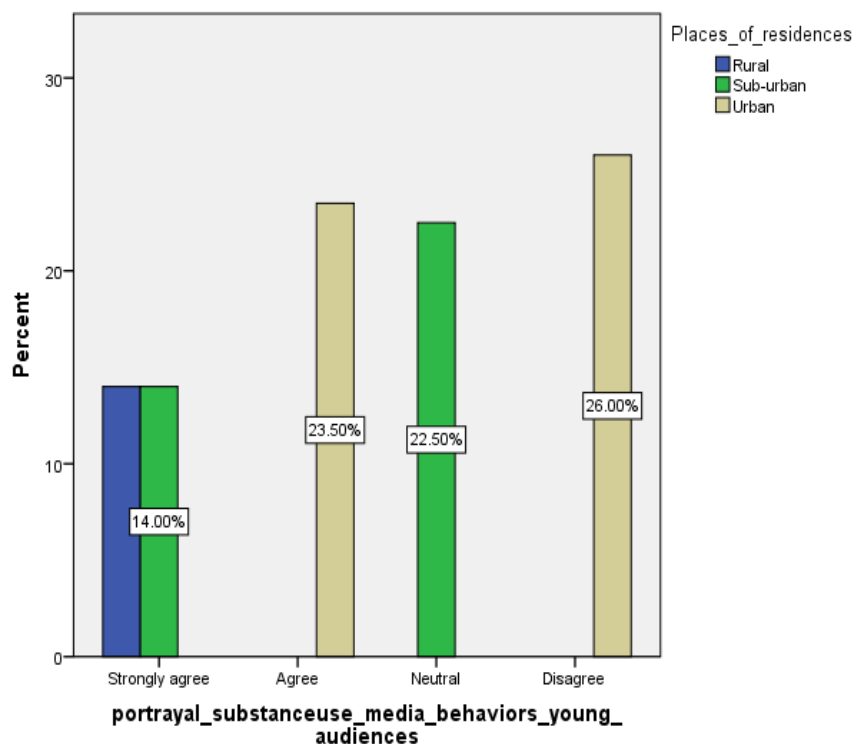
Figure : 9



**Legend :** Figure 9 Graph represents the occupation of the respondents and percentage and their opinion towards Parents can take actions to mitigate the impact of substance-related media exposure on their children.

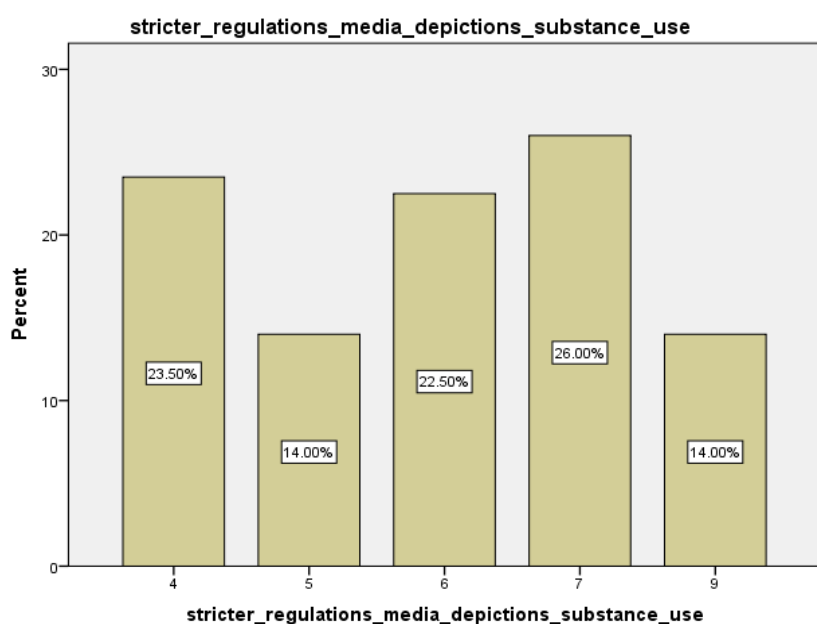


Figure : 10



**Legend :** Figure 10 Graph represents the place of residences of the respondents and percentage and their opinion towards portrayal of substance use in media glamorises these behaviours for young audiences.

Figure : 11



**Legend :** Figure 11 Graph represents the opinion towards whether the stricter regulations on media depictions of substance use would reduce youth substance experimentation.on the scale of 1 to 10.

TABLE 1:

Chi-Square Tests

|                    | Value                | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
|--------------------|----------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 200.000 <sup>a</sup> | 3  | .000                              |
| Likelihood Ratio   | 269.205              | 3  | .000                              |
| N of Valid Cases   | 200                  |    |                                   |

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11.20.

Symmetric Measures

|                        | Value | Approximate Significance |
|------------------------|-------|--------------------------|
| Nominal by Nominal Phi | 1.000 | .000                     |
| Cramer's V             | 1.000 | .000                     |
| N of Valid Cases       | 200   |                          |

RESULTS:

Out of 200 respondents, 22.5% of them were below the age of 20, 37.5% of them were between the age of 19 to 35, 14% of them were between the age of 36 to 50 and 26% of them were above the age of 51. **(Fig 1)** Out of 200 respondents, 60% Of them are males and 40% of them are females. **(Fig 2)** Out of 200 respondents, 22.5% of them are high school pass out, 40% of them are postgraduates and 37.5% of them are undergraduates. **(Fig 3)** Out of 200 respondents, 22.5% of them are students, 26% of them are professionals, 23.5% of them are working in the public sector and 28% of them are working in the private sector. **(Fig 4)** Out of 200 respondents, 14% of them are from the rural areas, 36.5% of them are from the sub-urban areas and 49.5% of them are from the urban areas. **(Fig 5)** Out of 200 respondents, 37.5% of them between the age of 19-35 and 14% of them between the age of 35-50 have agreed on whether the portrayal of substance use in media glamorises these behaviours for young audiences. 22.5% of them below the age of 18 have stayed neutral. 26% of them above the age of 50 have disagreed. **(Fig 6)** Out of 200 respondents, 26% of females and 37.5% of the males have agreed on whether the substance use in media reflects real-life trends rather than

influencing them. 22.5% of the males have stayed neutral and 14% of the females have disagreed. **(Fig 7)** Out of 200 respondents, 40% of the PGs have responded 'yes' on whether the youth are capable of understanding and critically evaluating substance use depicted in media without negative influence. 22.5% of the high school students and 37.5% of the UGs have responded 'no'. **(Fig 8)** Out of 200 respondents, 14% of them from the private sector have responded 'ignore the issue and hope it resolves itself' on whether Parents can take actions to mitigate the impact of substance-related media exposure on their children. 22.5% of the students have responded 'restrict media access', 14% of them from the private sector and 23.5% from the public sector have responded 'watch and discuss media content with their children'. 26% of the professionals have responded 'others'. **(Fig 9)** Out of 200 respondents, 14% of them both from the sub-urban and rural areas and 23.5% of them from the urban areas have agreed on whether the portrayal of substance use in media glamorises these behaviours for young audiences. 22.5% of them from the sub-urban areas have stayed neutral. 26% of them from the urban areas have disagreed. **(Fig 10)** Out of 200 respondents, 23.5% of them have rated 4 out of 10 on whether

the stricter regulations on media depictions of substance use would reduce youth substance experimentation. 14% of them have rated 5 out of 10, 22.5% of them have rated 6 out of 10, 26% of them have rated 7 out of 10 and 14% of them have rated 8 out of 10. **(Fig 11)**

#### DISCUSSION:

The demographic distribution shows a diverse age range among respondents, with a significant portion (37.5%) falling between 19 to 35 years old, indicating a predominant young adult cohort. This age group is particularly susceptible to media influences due to their active engagement with various forms of media. **(Fig-1)**; Gender distribution among respondents shows a slight majority of males (60%) compared to females (40%). This disparity can influence how different genders perceive and are influenced by media portrayals of substance use, potentially affecting their attitudes and behaviours. **(Fig-2)**; Educational attainment levels indicate a notable proportion of postgraduates (40%), suggesting a higher level of education among respondents. Higher education levels may correlate with greater critical thinking skills, potentially influencing how media portrayals are interpreted regarding substance use. **(Fig-3)**; Occupational distribution reveals a varied employment status among respondents, with a significant representation from the private sector (28%) and professionals (26%). Different occupational backgrounds can influence perspectives on media influence and responses to substance-related portrayals in media. **(Fig-4)**; Geographic distribution indicates a predominant urban representation (49.5%), followed by suburban (36.5%) and rural (14%) areas. Urban dwellers, being more exposed to media and diverse influences, may have different perceptions regarding media's impact on substance use behaviors compared to suburban and rural residents. **(Fig-5)**; Attitudes towards media portrayals of substance use vary across age groups, with younger respondents (19-35 years old) more likely to agree that media glamorizes substance use,

while older respondents (above 50 years old) tend to disagree. This reflects differing generational perspectives on media influence. **(Fig-6)**; Gender differences in perception indicate that males are more likely to believe that media reflects real-life trends rather than influencing them, whereas females show a more neutral or sceptical stance. This suggests varying degrees of susceptibility to media influence based on gender. **(Fig-7)**; Educational differences reveal that postgraduates are more confident in youth's ability to critically evaluate media depictions of substance use without negative influence, whereas high school students and undergraduates express more scepticism. Education level appears to correlate with perceptions of media literacy among youth. **(Fig-8)**; Parental responses indicate diverse approaches to mitigating the impact of substance-related media exposure on children. While some advocate for restricting media access or discussing content with children, others from the private sector tend to adopt a more passive stance of ignoring the issue, reflecting varied parental strategies based on occupation and educational background. **(Fig-9)**; Urban and suburban respondents show similar trends in perceiving media glamorization of substance use, while rural respondents tend to agree less with glamorization. This geographic difference suggests varying cultural contexts and media influences on attitudes towards substance use portrayal. **(Fig 10)**; Ratings on the effectiveness of stricter media regulations to reduce youth substance experimentation reveal mixed opinions, with a notable proportion rating moderately (5-7 out of 10). This indicates cautious optimism about the potential impact of regulatory measures on mitigating media influences on youth behaviour. **(Fig 11)**

#### LIMITATION:

One of the major limitations of the study is the sample frame. There is a major constraint in the convenient sampling method, the survey was conducted through questionnaires by

google forms to collect responses from the people. Another limitation is the sample size of 200 which cannot be used to assume the thinking of the entire in a particular country, state or city. Most of the people faced improper network issues.

#### CONCLUSION:

This study has explored the profound influence of media exposure on youth perceptions and behaviours concerning tobacco, illicit drugs, and alcohol. Media, through its pervasive portrayal in movies, television, music videos, and social media, often glamorises or normalises substance use, thereby shaping youth attitudes and behaviours. The objective was to examine how these portrayals impact young individuals, leading to increased curiosity, experimentation, and sometimes regular use of these substances. Findings consistently demonstrate that higher levels of media exposure correlate with more favourable attitudes towards substance use among youth, contributing to their perception of it as socially acceptable or desirable. The implications are significant, suggesting a need for comprehensive media literacy programs in schools and communities to equip youth with critical thinking skills and resilience against media influences. Moreover, advocating for stricter regulations on media content that depict substance use can help minimise glamorization and promote responsible portrayals. Parents and educators also play a crucial role in mitigating these effects by engaging in open discussions about media influence and the consequences of substance use. By understanding and addressing these dynamics, stakeholders can effectively intervene to promote healthier behaviours among young people, ensuring they are better equipped to navigate the complexities of media influence and make informed choices in their lives.

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