

Increasing Methamphetamine (Yaba) Use among Youth in Cox's Bazar Region: Exploring Its Socio-Economic Impact

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Abstract

This paper explores the current context of Yaba addiction and its overall impact in three sub-districts of Cox's Bazar which are Teknaf, Ukhiya and Cox's Bazar. In recent years, Yaba addiction has become a common trend in Bangladesh that led to various criminal activities all over the country. The primary objective of this study is to understand and identify the specific causes and influencing factors of Yaba addiction and its socio-economic impact. Therefore, the study further explored the gap in existing addiction prevention and rehabilitation mechanisms and identified the need for further comprehensive addiction prevention and rehabilitation strategies. A qualitative research technique consisting of seven key informant interviews and two focus group discussions was used. The findings of the study highlighted some of the difficulties, limitations and intervention strategies for addressing Yaba addiction across the Cox's Bazar districts. It has also explored different themes identifying common causes and influencing factors, based on the geographical diversity and contextual dynamics of Yaba addiction, and the physical, psychological and socio-economic impact of Yaba addiction. The study also came up with recommendations, addiction prevention and rehabilitation policies that could be implemented to address the Yaba addiction and smuggling across Bangladesh, including Cox's Bazar.

Introduction

Drug addiction is very common all over Bangladesh. Methamphetamine known as Yaba in Bangladesh is widely consumed because of a strong addiction towards it (Rezvi, 2019). Yaba is commonly available in colorful tablets. Numerous active syndicates are connected to import to different coastal areas of Bangladesh from Myanmar (Ahmed, 2024a). Currently, a large number of its users are alarmingly high school, college and university students. In recent years, it has become increasingly alarming due to the involvement of people from various strata of society, particularly law enforcement and political figures (Shahjahan & Haque, 2024). In recent days, substance abuse has occurred in Southeast and East Asia, including Bangladesh (F. N. Rahman et al., 2020). Yaba addiction is increasing day by day among the young generation regardless of social and financial hierarchy, which is a big threat to society. There 7 million people in Bangladesh are drug addicts and 5 million of them are Yaba addicts (Rashedul Alam et al., 2021). Yaba, the tablet form of the synthetic drug "methamphetamine" is an addictive mixture of caffeine and methamphetamine in differing proportions. Commonly, people use it as a nasal decongestant and anti-asthmatic (Kabir et al., 2018). The primary reaction of Yaba is that it creates a hallucinogenic effect, which enables the users to stay awake for days. Therefore, it increases the concentration of dopamine in the brain and is thus involved in movement and motivation (Sychareun et al., 2018). So far it was first used by Hitler for his soldiers in World War II to combat fatiguability and increase endurance (Defalque & Wright, 2011). Nowadays the young generation and students are interested in taking Yaba for entertainment, curiosity,



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insisting on friends, and many more reasons (Guerin et al., 2023). Yaba addiction influences the young generation to get involved in anti-social activities and crimes like hijacking, stealing, and even murder. As small crimes encourage to occur big and serious, and thus the addiction is ruining social values, family bonding, and economic strengths of our future generation (Arlappa et al., 2019). While long-term use of the drug may cause organ damage in the population (Guo et al., 2022).

Literature Review

Current Context of Yaba Addiction in Bangladesh

Methamphetamine, commonly known as “Yaba” has become a significant concern in Bangladesh particularly in Cox’s Bazar region among the youth. This synthetic drug is often taken orally or inhaled after being melted (Rezvi, 2019). The immediate effects of Yaba include increased energy, heightened sociability, and enhanced confidence. However, its addictive nature and adverse consequences have raised alarm bells in the region (Cohen, 2014). Earlier it was only used by males but nowadays females are also addicted by Yaba. Day by day the number of Yaba users is increasing in a rapid phase in Bangladesh, and it has become one of the catastrophic issues for the nation (Jamal et al., 2016). In a recent study, the main Yaba users are from 15 to 30 years old male and female, however there are some examples where 12-14 years and more than 30 years old age group people are also addicted to it (Maruf et al., 2021). In the absence of proper implementation of law and order, various social-cultural, psychological, and family factors are generally accused for the Yaba addiction. As a result, Yaba addiction has become the direct or indirect cause of many problems such as school and college dropout, financial crisis, domestic violence, moral and social degradation and more (Ahammed et al., 2019). An estimation of 7.5 million people are addicted to different drugs in the country and among them forty-three percent (43%) are unemployed, forty-eight percent (48%) are educated whereas forty percent (40%) are uneducated, and fifty percent (50%) are involved in various crimes and most of the addicted people are youth (Rabbi, 2019). Approximately 1,60,000 drug dealers are running their illicit drug smuggling and trafficking around the country among them 27,300 are women illicit drug dealers (Rabbi, 2019). The region’s proximity to the border with Myanmar, along the river Naf facilitates the drug’s entry. Notably, the influx of Rohingya refugees into Cox’s Bazar in 2017 created an opportunity for dealers to exploit vulnerable individuals, turning some refugees into mules who smuggle Yaba pills inside their vaginas (Taufiq, 2021).

Livelihood Disruption and Socio-Economic Impact

Yaba addiction affects individuals’ ability to maintain stable employment. For instance, those working in the tourism sector may find it challenging to sustain their livelihood due to addictive nature, leading to economic instability (Ahad et al., 2017b). In addition to this, the authority restricted fishing at the Naf River to curb the Yaba trading while 10000 registered fishermen used the river for fishing. As the river was restricted to fishing most of the fishermen got unemployed within a few days (S. Hossain et al., 2008). As per data from the Teknaf Upazial Parishad fishery office, there are 10,683 registered fishermen, with over 3,000 relying exclusively on fishing in the Naf River (CoastAdmin, 2025). On average, one person spends \$1135 each year for drug addiction which a huge economic loss considering the Bangladesh context. Primarily Yaba addiction accumulates in the person’s brain, lung, and liver while chronic use leads the major damage to every system of the body of lung, liver, heart, kidney and brain (Ghosh et al., 2023). The research also said that chronic Yaba users suffer to be more psychologically disturbed like intense paranoia, visual and auditory

hallucinations, confusion, and violent behavior (Morais et al., 2018). Psychotic symptoms can persist for months or years. At the same time there lots of complications could occur as a withdrawal syndrome and that can occur within 24 hours of the last dose of methamphetamine. Additionally, students addicted to Yaba certainly struggle academically, hindering their educational progress and prospects (Ahammed et al., 2019c). The illicit drug dealers have mainly targeted college and university students to sell Yaba because it's safe and more profitable as the college and university students are less monitored and financially solvent. Every year numbers of students fail to step forward to the next class or quit education because of Yaba addiction. Moreover, the academic performance of students who fall prey to Yaba addiction is adversely affected, jeopardizing their prospects (Rezvi, 2019).

Rohingya Refugees and Yaba Trade

The influx of Rohingya refugees into Cox's Bazar has inadvertently contributed to the Yaba trade. Dealers exploit vulnerable refugees, using them as couriers to smuggle Yaba pills. At the same time, some of the Rohingya refugees became the biggest Yaba dealers. Although the refugee left their country, they still have strong communication with the Yaba producers in some parts of Myanmar (Jariah & Sharmin, 2022). Refugees are mainly sheltered in Ukhiya and Teknaf the most southern upazilas of Bangladesh that share its long border with Myanmar. As a result, it exposes the more vulnerable of being involved in Yaba smuggling, trafficking and addiction. The desperate circumstances faced by the refugees made them susceptible to involvement in criminal activities, drug trafficking as one of them (M. A. Hossain et al., 2022).

Global Context of Yaba Addiction

Every international organization (i.e., UN and WHO) is worried about the increasing rate of drug addiction in the world (Rezvi, 2019). Yaba smuggling and addiction is a new emerging crisis for the whole world, particularly in South Asia (A et al., 2018). Yaba became a serious issue for some other countries as well like Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, and India. As research argues that illicit drug smugglers use Bangladesh as a transit for Yaba smuggling, they export to India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Laos, and other countries from Thailand and Bangladesh (Anjum, 2020c). Currently, Singapore also facing the Yaba smuggling issue in recent years. In recent years the use of Yaba has increased significantly in China, Laos, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand, and the Philippines. The reality for Bangladesh is not a difference than others (McKETIN et al., 2008).

Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology intended to analyze the increasing youth methamphetamine (Yaba) addiction leading to violence and criminal activity and socio-economic impact in Cox's Bazar. The methodology includes the research design, data collection methods, sampling techniques, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings.

Research Design

This study used the qualitative approach to provide a comprehensive analysis of the context and socio-economic impact of Yaba addiction in Cox's Bazar. This approach allowed a thorough examination of the multifaceted problems related to Yaba addiction and its impacts. Additionally, the validity has been achieved through methodological triangulation, using both qualitative and quantitative data to corroborate findings. This research

mainly focused in three upazilas/sub-districts of Teknaf, Ukhiya and Cox's Bazar sub-districts which are the mainly dominated by the Yaba dealers and the smugglers. As it is already said that there has no specific statistics and reports of the Yaba addicts and smugglers, however, Md. Zillur Rahman (former SP Cox's Bazar tourist Police) mentioned in his journal in 2023 that "Myanmar Army and Police get a huge amount of money by patronizing illegal drug 'YABA' and 90% of 'YABA' transportation route is the border area of UKHIA and TEKNAF police stations which are connected with Myanmar border" (Z. Rahman, 2023).

Data Collection

Two detailed focus group discussions (FGDs) and six KII were conducted with distinct participant groups to address the research questions. The first FGD with 6 females was held on November 6, 2024, and the participants were included Yaba addicts' family members, relatives and neighbors. This discussion focused on understanding the impact of addiction on families and their perspectives on support mechanisms. The second FGD with 11 males were included Yaba addicts, their friends, Yaba smuggler and students. This session aimed to gather an in-depth insight into their experiences and challenges. In addition to the FGDs, seven Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted from November 4 to November 30, 2024, with people from various profile that included Lecturer, Teacher, Journalist, Local leaders, Government Employee, Social Worker, and Religious Leader.

Ethical Consideration

The interviews and discussions were systematically planned and conducted in person, ensuring a private, safe and secured environment for all participants. Before the commencement of each session, the participants were fully informed about the study's objectives, the intended use and process of storage of the collected information, and people who would have access to it. Because, such transparency is crucial in building trust and ensuring ethical research practices, therefore, the participants had the full autonomy to decide whether they wanted to continue or withdraw from the interview. The participants also informed that they could withdraw from the interview at any point of the interview. They were also informed that they could refrain from answering any questions that would make them uncomfortable. The focus group discussions were continued for around one and a half hours, providing adequate time for participants to share their experiences and insights. All interviews were recorded with the participant's consent, except for one KII where the participants requested not to record the session. This comprehensive and respectful approach ensured that the participants felt valued and empowered throughout the process, contributing to the depth and reliability of the study's findings. What is more, during the study, the reliability was ensured through the consistent application of data collection instruments and procedures. The survey instrument was pre-tested and refined based on feedback. Therefore, all the FGDs and KIIs were conducted in strict terms with the provisions of ethical approvals, and this meant that the discussions were held in a place that was quiet and the participants' privacy and safety were ensured. Additionally, since the topic is sensitive, participants' pen names are only used to ensure their further safety, security and dignity.

Sampling Method and Data Analysis

In this study, the number of participants was determined by applying both random and purposive sampling techniques from various strata of the society that included teachers, journalists, social workers, community leaders, religious leaders, government

officers, housewives, day laborers, fishermen, Yaba peddler, students and unemployed. The purpose of this was to get a diverse understanding of experiences and perspectives on Yaba addiction in Cox's Bazar. The findings from the KIIs and FGDs have been systematically analyzed through transcription, translation, and theme to address the research questions and objectives that were proposed for this study. A total of twelve questions were designed and used to get detailed insights from the participants and the demographic details of the interviewees have been presented below. In conclusion, the study used a rigorous methodology based on qualitative insights to increase knowledge and understanding of the complex dynamics of Yaba addiction in three sub-districts of Cox's Bazar. The result will inform evidence-based rehabilitation recommendations and policy recommendations as well as community-led activities aimed at addressing Yaba addiction in its entirety and promoting sustainable development in the region. Through partnerships with local actors and community stakeholders, the study is designed to help inform and contribute to efforts that aim to alleviate the detrimental impacts of Yaba addiction and build resilience in Cox's Bazar and elsewhere in the world where this is an issue.

Data Analysis and Findings

Profile of the Informants:

The findings from the KIIs and FGDs have been systematically analyzed to address the research questions and objectives that were proposed for this study. A total of twelve questions were designed and used to get detailed insights from the participants and the demographic details of the interviewees have been presented below.

Participant Number	Pen Name of the Participants	Age	Sex	Profession	Address(Sub district)
KII1	TTT	47	Male	Lecturer	Teknaf
KII2	SSS	44	Male	Social Worker	Ukhiya
KII3	JJJ	57	Male	Journalist	Teknaf
KII4	RRL	35	Male	Religious leader	Ukhiya
KII5	NOCB	34	Male	Government Employee	Cox's Bazar
KII6	LLCXB	57	Male	Local Leader	Cox's Bazar
KII7	TTH	45	Male	High School Teacher	Teknaf

Table 1: The demographic profile of the Key Informant Interview

Pen Name	Age	Profession	Sex	Address	Total participants 5
ZZZ	42	Trainer (Tailoring)	Female	Cox's Bazar	
BLL	38	Housewife	Female	Leda	
KBJ	42	Trainer (Tailoring)	Female	Mochoni	
BBB	38	Tailor	Female	Hnila	
RRR	22	Entrepreneurs (online)	Female	Whykong	

Table 2: The demographic profile of the FGD 1

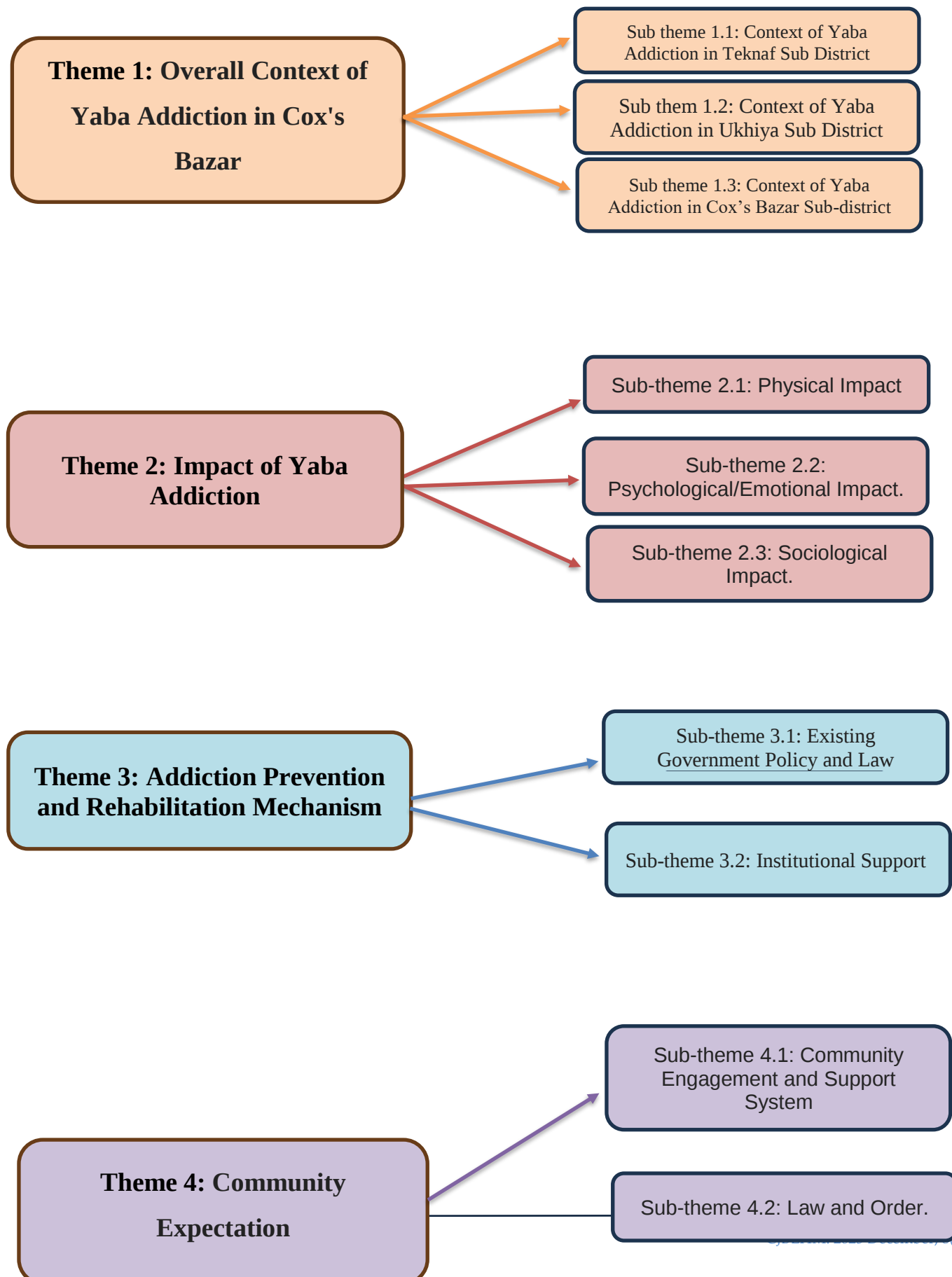
Pen Name	Age	Profession	Sex	Sub district	Total participants 10
AZZ	34	Businessman	Male	Teknaf	
FMS	20	Shopkeeper	Male	Teknaf	
MTS	18	Student	Male	Teknaf	
HHF	30	Fisherman	Male	Teknaf	
SAF	30	Daily Labor	Male	Ukhiya	
AAF	20	Unemployed	Male	Ukhiya	
MFF	20	Unemployed	Male	Ukhiya	
FAJ	30	Daily Labor	Male	Cox's Bazar	
FKM	18	Student	Male	Cox's Bazar	
MJF	18	Student	Male	Cox's Bazar	
MOF	30	Daily Labor	Male	Teknaf	

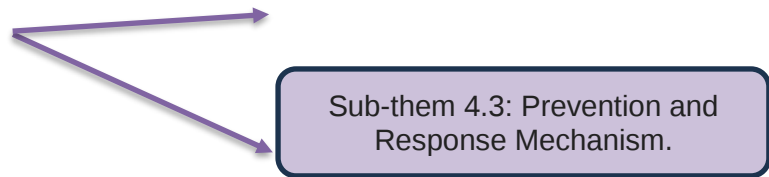
Table 3: The demographic profile of the FGD 2

Thematic Analysis of the findings:

Based on the objective and information gathered from the Focused Group Discussions (FDGs) and Key Informant Interviews, we have divided this study into 4 themes for

better understanding. Established themes and sub-themes are listed in the following section in a structural presentation.





Theme 1: Overall Context of Yaba Addiction in Cox's Bazar Districts

The findings of the study revealed that Yaba addiction has a major impact on all sub-districts, and the cause of the increase in Yaba addiction is nearly identical across all districts. For example, in the key informant interview and the focus group discussion, most of the participants stated almost the same reasons for increasing Yaba addiction, such as cheap, easy access, lack of proper border protection, lack of rehabilitation and community awareness, lack of proper punishment and implementation of law, and involvement of political figures. Participants also mentioned that the majority of the users are from lower income profiles, and the overall effects are also the same in all the sub-districts. Subsequently, participants also provided similar motivations for using Yaba across all the sub-districts, such as curiosity, peer influence, a lack of parental supervision, and the desire for amusement and luxury. Participant AZZ said, "Initially I started to take Yaba from my curiosity, but now it turned into a daily addiction for me." He also said that he consumes 3 to 5 pieces of Yaba every day and would inhale more if he could afford. This demonstrates how initial experimentation can quickly develop into a severe addiction. Participant SAF said, "I first took Yaba on an invitation by one of my friends. Over time, I became a regular user so far." He also emphasized that not everyone starts using Yaba due to peer influence; for some reasons, it has become a trend among the youth. Many young people use Yaba to establish their wealth and for recreational purposes. MFF stated, "Although I do not use Yaba, I have been aware many of my friends who use it, and these friends are not also regular users, but I have seen them taking Yaba during parties and social gatherings because they get them free." He also said that these individuals often come from wealthy families, receive substantial allowances, and lack proper parental supervision. Such lack of oversight allows them the freedom to spend nights away from home, during which they might use Yaba. Despite having the same reasons and influencing factors for Yaba addiction, addiction rehabilitation and prevention mechanisms, the severity, and the socio-economic contexts vary across the sub-districts. For instance, data from both KIIs and FGDs highlighted that Cox's Bazar hosts two private rehabilitation and recovery centers for individuals with addiction. In stark contrast, the sub-districts of Ukhiya and Teknaf lack any rehabilitation facilities or support mechanisms for those affected by Yaba addiction. This disparity underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions and resources in Ukhiya and Teknaf to address the growing addiction crisis. According to the findings of the study, the Teknaf sub-district is the main area where the large numbers of people are involved in Yaba smuggling, leading them to Yaba addiction, and most of them are local inhabitants while in Cox's Bazar most Yaba users come from other districts as tourists. Besides, Ukhiya has fewer Yaba addicts than Teknaf and Cox's Bazar due to a higher education rate compared to Cox's Bazar and Teknaf Sub-districts.

Sub Theme - 1.1 Context of Yaba Addiction in Teknaf sub-district

In this study, many participants stated that the number of individuals addicted to Yaba has significantly increased in Teknaf. However, compared to the past situation, the rate

of addiction has slowed. A prominent social worker SSS said “I am from Rupganj, Narayanganj and have been working here in Teknaf and Ukhiya since 2018 for different NGOs and INGOs. At the beginning when I first came to Teknaf, I observed the addiction was spreading at an alarming rate but later it became slow. It does not mean that new people are not getting Yaba addicted, and the numbers are not much high as what I observed at the beginning.” He also emphasized that compared to 2018, the importation of Yaba into Teknaf has surged though many of them being trafficked to various parts of Bangladesh, including his village Rupganj, Narayanganj. He pointed out that the number of Yaba addicts in his village is even higher than in Teknaf. The study also found that in recent days, women and girls also started taking Yaba, particularly in Teknaf. This new development poses a significant risk to future generations. Since women and girls are the main caregivers of the children and elderly people of the family, so their addiction hampers the overall wellbeing of the society. A lecturer of Teknaf Govt. Degree College shared, “In Teknaf, the majority of Yaba users are local inhabitants. Alarming, in recent days I heard that women and girls have also using Yaba, and this is enough to destroy our upcoming generation.” He further stated that at least 15% to 20% of the populations of Teknaf are now Yaba addicted where the majority of them are male and aged between 18 and 35. In Teknaf sub-districts another biggest challenge is a large number of inhabitants are also involved with Yaba racket and addiction due to its geographical advantages. A high school teacher TTT said, “If I am not wrong, more than 50% of inhabitants of Teknaf including people who are from outside and have living here somehow involved with the Yaba racket, this could be addiction, trafficking, supplier, or custodian for few days in exchange of money.” He also said that the most pathetic thing is the law enforcement agencies members are also involved in the Yaba business in some contexts. Many participants shared that in Teknaf this is so tough to quit Yaba addiction because of its environment. Many people struggle to quit this, but they could not, because the Yaba dealers used to give them Yaba for free of cost in order to test the quality. What is more, many people in Teknaf often arrange different types of occasions and offer drugs including Alcohol, Cannabis, and Yaba to friends. BBB stated, “My husband several times attempted to quit Yaba addiction, but he could not quit it because we live in a place which can be addressed as the capital of Yaba.” “Therefore, there are no specific services that could help people who want to quit the Yaba addiction.” added BBB.

Sub-Theme 1.2: Context of Yaba addiction in Ukhiya Sub-district

This study found that the Ukhiya Sub-district is also affected by Yaba addiction and its negative impact. However, Ukhiya has the least number of Yaba users among the three sub-districts. Behind this difference, some noticeable reasons worked. It has comparatively higher education rate than other sub-districts and has geographical advantage which a very tiny border is shared with Myanmar, a reason of less Yaba importation. SSS said, “I believe that Ukhiya has comparatively fewer Yaba users due to its geographical context.” He also stated that Ukhiya’s people are mostly educated and even there are a good number of people who completed graduation which is less in Teknaf. A religious leader and Madrasah lecturer RRL said, “Previously the numbers of Yaba addiction were limited but after the Rohingya influx it increased dramatically. Also, I heard now that it is available in remote areas while earlier it was only available in town.” He added that at least 5% to 7% of the Ukhiya population is now addicted to Yaba, particularly those aged 18 to 40. He also said that as a religious leader and Lecturer I have learned that people from every stratum, including students, political leaders, daily laborers, rickshaw polar, educated, and uneducated, are now suffering due to Yaba addiction. A prominent journalist JJJ said, “I would say Ukhiya is less affected compared to Teknaf because I observed very few people were involved in Yaba addiction in Ukhiya

when used to live there in 2019.” He further emphasized that if effective measures are not initiated to reduce Yaba importation, the entire country will suffer. “This is true that Ukhiya has fewer users than Teknaf, but the number of addicts has grown in recent years.” added SSS.

Sub-Theme 1.3: Context of Yaba Addiction in Cox’s Bazar Sub-district

This study discovered that the Cox’s Bazar sub-district has a distinct feature than other two sub-districts of Teknaf and Ukhiya. The majority Yaba users are among from tourists. However, this does not imply that locals do not consume Yaba but the numbers are lower in comparison to tourists. A former municipality counselor LLCXB and an employee of the narcotics control office NOCB stated, “In the last few years, Yaba became easier to access in Cox’s Bazar and it has become a hub for Yaba because of being a popular tourist destination. Many people from different regions visit Cox’s Bazar daily, making it a more desirable place for the Yaba smugglers.” He also noted that in the last few years due to addiction towards Yaba, some other illegal activities including sex work, snatching, theft, and begging have significantly increased in Cox’s Bazar. One of the biggest advantages of Cox’s Bazar Sub-districts is it has two private rehabilitation and recovery centers that are lacking in the other two sub-districts. The rehabilitation and recovery centers are run by two different organizations, including Nongar and Future Life. These rehabilitation and recovery centers are monitored by the Department of Narcotic Control (DNC) Cox’s Bazar Office and they collect time-to-time reports from them. Many people received support from these centers. However, many of them get again involved in Yaba addiction two/three months after taking rehabilitation.

Theme 2: Impact of Yaba Addiction:

Sub Theme 2.1: Physical Impact

In the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), participant FMS said, “I have witnessed many incidents in my village where the addicted men abused family members when they were forbidden or unable to take Yaba.” He further shared, “I have also noticed that when the addicts cannot take Yaba on time, they tend to aggressive with others and exhibit abnormal movements of their body parts such as mouth and head, they itch their body abnormally while they have no skin disease or allergy.” The study also found that everyone has some unique experience with Yaba addiction at the post-consumption stage. However, most of the users initially experience extreme energy and hyperactivity immediately after taking Yaba. However, these side effects frequently coexist with appetite which further leads the malnutrition, weakness, and severe weight loss. During this phase, the addicts become isolated and remain silent. JJJ mentioned, “Sometimes I return home late at night due to work. At that time, I observed that some of my neighbors were just standing aside on the road like an owl later I knew they consumed Yaba. They looked drowsy, freak, and fatigued. I also heard that after consuming Yaba they remain awake the full night.” Prolonged use can also cause hair loss, repeatedly reduced eyesight, abnormal movement of body parts, and significant damage to the brain that could lead to further chronic diseases such as hepatitis B, liver disease, and vital organ failure. Also, inhaling Yaba can cause respiratory issues, including chronic bronchitis, because people make a lot of effort to inhale Yaba. Significant brain damage that may result additional chronic illnesses liver disease, diabetes, and key organs failure can also be brought on by prolonged use. AZZ said, “One of my friends has been taking Yaba for the past seven years, and he has become physically and mentally unstable.” He left his house, stopped her schooling, lost his livelihood, and is now walking about all day and night, forcefully gathering 10/20 taka from known individuals, and then taking Yaba with it are now his business. He was previously one of the most gorgeous and

healthy guys around, but he is now underweight, sickly, and mentally ill. People now refer him as psychologically unstable. "My brother-in-law used to be a Yaba dealer and user as well and it developed severe weight loss. I heard that he is still involved in Yaba smuggling but he cannot consume it due high level of diabetes and some other disease." said ZZZ.

Sub-Theme 2.2: Psychological or Mental Impact

This study also found numerous psychological impacts of Yaba addiction including. Many participants shared that many people take Yaba for mental peace and happiness. After taking Yaba the addicts initially feel a surge of energy that makes them mentally energetic, this is why they do not feel physical weakness even though they are physically weak. People also explained that some people inhale Yaba to be awake at night. There are several reasons why people awake at night; it could be for work, gambling, or entertainment. Like the physical impact of Yaba addiction, it has various layers of mental or psychological effects, such as the pre or anticipation stage, post stage, and prolonged effect of Yaba addiction. The anticipation stage, referred to as the pre stage, is the more severe psychological effect of Yaba addiction, during which time users lose consciousness because their sole focus is on the best time and method to inhale Yaba. People can be involved in any type of activity in this stage, and anybody can exploit them. During this stage, the addict often looks aggressive, depressed, violent, nervous, and acts strangely. At this point, the addicts typically lie with their family, friends, and relatives. If someone offers them money or Yaba, they demonstrate the utmost level of loyalty, sincerity, and honesty until they receive the money or Yaba. Furthermore, if they somehow refuse to give the promised things, the addicts can be life-threatening to others regardless of the relationship or partnership. FAJ stated, "The majority of addicts use Yaba due to addiction. However, initially, they take it due to curiosity and entertainment. The dangerous issue is if the addicts unable to take Yaba on time, they become aggressive and violent. Even they can work hour after hour for a penny." He also stated that people can easily use them for any purpose if the addicts anticipate taking Yaba but do not have the funds or resources to manage it. The post-stage or just after taking Yaba is the most pleasant and calm stage for addicts. After taking Yaba, people usually become quiet and peaceful. Initially, people feel energized. At this stage, the addicts are less likely to harm or annoy others, unless someone purposely disturbs them. After addiction, the addicted mostly suffer from insomnia, hallucinations irrational fears, and mistrust of others. BBB said, "When my Husband used to take Yaba, he often mistrusted me. Sometimes at midnight he woke me up and told that I had taken a man to my house and the man fled from the window hole while my husband and I had been sleeping in the same room on the same for the last 5 hours." "Most of the night, he merely lies down on the bed or wanders around, but during the day, he sleeps for hours on end, possibly because the hangover has subsided." said KBJ. BLL shared, "One of my neighbor's sons is suffering from mental health issues. He abandoned his family and left his business, wandering here and there the whole day and night because of Yaba addiction. Earlier he had a nice family but now he even doesn't come to his home." She also said his parents and siblings several times attempted to send him to rehabilitation and jail, but they could not as he attacked them. Consequently, now he has become a problem for the whole community.

Sub-theme 2.3: Socio-Economic Impact

Yaba addiction has various devastating socioeconomic consequences. The study found that several types of antisocial activities have increased in the Cox's Bazar area as Yaba addiction has grown. This anti-social behavior includes a loss of social decorum, deviant social practices and trends, an increase in criminal activity, a breakdown in law and

order, an increase in school and college dropouts, and gender-based violence. AZZ shared, “In my village, students dropped out of school due to Yaba smuggling and addiction. Also, I knew many of my neighbors whose family lives were destroyed because of Yaba addiction, and their children were unable to continue their education since their parents had divorced and they needed to work to support the family.” TTT stated, “The Yaba smuggler has unlimited money. If they get arrested, they can easily secure their release within one to two months, sometimes even less than one month. They build luxury houses and spend their accessibly which normalizes the abnormal practice.” He also shared that I see a significant number of students use expensive motorbikes in Teknaf. They practice a luxurious life because their families earn a large amount of money by doing Yaba smuggling. The majority of Yaba-addicted female family members endure physical, mental, and occasionally sexual aggression from their male partner or family member. This study collected data from five females whose husbands, relatives, and family members are or were Yaba addicts, and they recounted their experiences of being physically and emotionally abused by their male partner on numerous occasions. They also shared that they always lack financial consistency because their husband spent all their income on Yaba addiction. Two of them said their children could not continue their studies due to financial constrain as they have had to work to manage family expense even though they were minor. BBB stated, “My elder son is very talented; he received a high CGPA in JSC, but he was unable to continue his studies because his father is addicted and does not provide us with any maintenance; instead, he obtained loans from different persons. As a result, the creditor used to come to us and verbally abuse us for my husband's debt. We felt guilty and went to Chittagong for a few years, where my kid and I worked hard to repay my husband's debt. Because of this migration, another son dropped out, and he now drives TomTom (Electric Three-wheeler). My children's future has been destroyed by their father.” BBB sobbed in her statement.

Theme 3: Addiction Prevention and Rehabilitation Mechanism

One of the primary goals of this research is to determine the current processes of addiction prevention and rehabilitation. According to secondary and official sources, three laws and policies such as the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC), the National Drug Policy of 2016, and the Narcotics Control Act of 2018 (Madok Drobbbo Niontron Ain 2018) primarily address addiction in Bangladesh. However, the majority of participants stressed that, except for the Bangladesh Narcotics Control Act of 2018 (Madokdrobbbo Niontron Ain 2018), they have no idea about any other addiction prevention and rehabilitation mechanisms even if exist.

Sub-theme 3.1: Existing Government Policy and Law

National drug policy is the only policy that exists to address addiction including methamphetamine known as Yaba. Despite having the National Drug Policy 2016 which contains a strong and all-encompassing goals, features, regulations, and methods to address Yaba addiction, smuggling and trafficking, most participants admitted that they were unaware of it. JJJ said, “In Bangladesh, we have some policies and laws that address the Yaba addiction and Yaba trafficking, but the sad thing is that the community has no idea about this because the efficiency and efficacy of the policy is qualitative. Therefore, in this area (Teknaf) majority of the people are uneducated and negligent to know about the policies in action unless they are in trouble.” He also said the authorities are not cooperative and accessible for the community. In this study, only 4 participants shared that they are aware of the Bangladesh Narcotics Control Act of 2018 which covered the Yaba addiction and smuggling as well. However, there are several doubts regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of this act because its lengthy trial and investigation

procedure makes it ineffective. TTT stated that unless the law is implemented properly, the Yaba addiction will never end as members of various law enforcement agencies are now involved in Yaba smuggling. Similarly, the judicial and law enforcement systems are also tainted. For example, police typically display fewer numbers than the actual numbers of the sized Yaba because they keep a lot to them and then sell them to the local Yaba smugglers. Additionally, even if a smuggler is arrested with many Yaba, s/he can secure their release on bail within a month or two of his arrest." JJJ stated in his interview, "Local politicians are now involved in Yaba smuggling, and they have sheltered many Yaba addicts to keep the Yaba racket running smoothly." AZZ said, "If you have money, you can be released on bail within one to two months, and you can even be released at the moment of arrest if you give the authorities a large sum of money."

Sub-theme 3.2: Institutional Support

According to the study, two private rehabilitation and recovery centers are currently functional in the whole Cox's Bazar districts which are Nongar and Future Life Addiction Treatment Center and both of them are regularly monitored and assisted by the Drugs and Narcotics Control Office (DNC). Drug and Narcotics Control is the only government institutions existing in Bangladesh to address the Yaba addiction and it has one office in Cox's and another office in Teknaf. Despite having two functional offices, the community is not aware of the Drug and Narcotics Control office and their activities. Additionally, the community is skeptical of the quality of the services of rehabilitation centers that are situated in Cox's Sub Districts. The study also identified that the services are too expensive which make it difficult for those with lower incomes to receive addiction treatment. BLL stated, "My brother-in-law was admitted for seven months to one of the treatment centers in Cox's Bazar for Yaba addiction, but it did not help. I heard that they do nothing except capture the addicts in their center and give Yaba less than the addicts need, it is just wastage of money." RRR said, "I heard that Nongar Rehab Center works for rehabilitation, but I have not seen anyone heal after receiving treatment from them, and they charge a lot of money."

Theme 4: Community Expectations

According to the study, community engagement is crucial to address the Yaba addiction. Many participants shared that it's impossible to address Yaba addiction without community engagement. The participant also shared that to ensure community engagement the governments and organizations can do awareness sessions and include curriculum in the education system. The participants also noted that there is a significant lack of knowledge and instruction regarding Yaba addiction that multiplies Yaba addiction. Understanding the underlying causes of Yaba addiction, its harmful physical, socioeconomic, and psychological effects, and the services, laws, and policies available would assist in reducing Yaba addiction and enhance access to addiction prevention and rehabilitation services. NOCB said, "The family, friends, and the community must be careful because, without their support and appropriate action, it is impossible to stop Yaba addiction and smuggling." He also discussed that the community could reduce more the 50% of Yaba addiction and trafficking, in some contexts it could be more than 80%. Simultaneously, the majority of the participants acknowledged the need for a thorough, comprehensive, practical, and action-oriented policy in order to handle drug addiction prevention rehabilitation, and smuggling. The community also suggested improving the accountability and monitoring of law enforcement, the legal system, and surveillance of border areas. While the government officer emphasized the existing laws and policies are enough to address the Yaba addiction, he emphasized providing more

effort in community engagement to increase community awareness and responsibility. "The only way to stop Yaba addiction is the deployment of a joint force to secure Myanmar Bangladesh Border in Teknaf because the Border guards are corrupted" TTT added in this regard. Also, the study found that the existing prevention and response mechanisms are not effective, accessible, and realistic for the community because of inferior quality and expensive. The involvement of NGOs and INGOs that work in the arena of drug addiction is also necessary to increase awareness against Yaba addiction. RRL, SSS, and TTH stated, "It would be compassionate for the residents of Teknaf if there has a complete rehabilitation center here in Teknaf that will be both affordable and easily accessible. This will probably help a large number of youth to recover from addiction."

Summary of Findings of the Research

Following the findings, common causes of Yaba addiction include curiosity, peer influence, a lack of parental supervision, and a desire for entertainment and luxury, while common influencing factors include cheap and easy availability, a lack of awareness, poor law and order, unemployment, anxiety, depression, and insufficient rehabilitation support. Although the effects of Yaba addiction are complex and vary by stage, the most dangerous effects are seen in the initial stages when the desire to take Yaba arises and in the prolonged stage when the user becomes violent, aggressive, and depressed. This stage also leads to the user engaging in anti-social behaviors like stealing, snatching, robbery, burglary, pickpocketing, and begging. According to many participants, Yaba addiction causes chronic illnesses including hepatitis B, liver disease, psychosis, and others, as well as symptoms like hunger, weakness, insomnia, and hyperactivity. The participants also discovered that most of the addicts' families have fallen into financial ruin. The addicts squander an excessive amount of their earnings and savings on their addiction and even sell their property to get money for Yaba's addiction. Furthermore, the majority of users belong to the lower income category, and the new dynamics in recent days are women and students started Yaba addiction. The community expressed their concerns that the political officials and the members of different law enforcement agencies involved in Yaba smuggling pose the greatest risk and harm to the community and the country. Additionally, the number of addicts is increasing dramatically all over the country. Notwithstanding the numerous drawbacks, the good sign is that the community has become more vigilant and aware of Yaba addiction, which leads to a decrease in the number of new users and a slower rate of addiction in this area than it was five years ago.

Answer to the Research Questions and Objectives

This study covered the informant's demographic profiles, interview data processing, steps of data analysis, and thematic analysis. A total of 21 participants were interviewed, and their perceptions formed the basis for the analysis. The thematic analysis resulted in four main themes and 13 sub-themes. Themes one and two answered the research questions. These themes also fulfilled the research objectives. For instance, the third theme covered the existing addiction prevention and rehabilitation while the fourth theme provided an overview of community expectations and gaps, and helped to identify a sustainable mechanism to combat the Yaba addiction that fulfills the research objective 3. Among all the sub-themes, the scenario of the current context of Yaba addiction particularly three sub-districts of Cox's Bazar, and the response mechanisms to address the Yaba addiction are analyzed. Also, concerning cultural perspective and its challenges are addressed, and the suggestions covered the mechanism to address the Yaba addiction.

Recommendation

Geographically Cox's Bazar is a crucial route for YABA addiction and it requires a comprehensive approach based on the theories of addiction and public health to combat this addiction. According to Bandura in Social Learning Theory, the use of the substance is an outcome of social pressure and economic strains, which is evident in the research area. In order to do this, there are many public health models, such as the "Harm Reduction Approach" which emphasizes teaching, prevention and treatment rather than punishment. As highlighted in the book "Drugs, Society, and Human Behavior" by Hart and Ksir, the community has a significant role to play in the fight against drug abuse. Therefore, it is also crucial to tighten border surveillance and the professionalism of the authority in line with their regular duty protocol, which will eventually minimize the possibility of offense of drug trafficking. The following are some of the measures that can be taken to ensure that there is effective rehabilitation: Rehabilitation centers should provide comprehensive treatment that includes meeting the psychological, social, as well as economic needs of the persons in recovery to reduce the psychological, social, and economic deficits. Local leaders, religious organizations, and international NGOs should join hands in order to bring about sustainable change. Thus, applying the measures based on the scientific approach along with the cultural and community-oriented measures, Cox's Bazar will be able to deal with Yaba addiction and become a stronger society.

Policy implications

This study provides a context-based analysis and border review of the context of Yaba addiction in Cox's Bazar. A context-based dialogue on Yaba addiction issues facilitates an open discussion to understand the sociological impact and context of Yaba addiction in Cox's Bazar. Therefore, this context-based analysis would encourage more researchers and stakeholders towards an effective solution to address the Yaba addiction and smuggling across Cox's Bazar. Major interventions to this end should include strengthening border security to prevent drug trafficking, launching community awareness programs about the dangers of addiction, and establishing rehabilitation centers with medical and vocational support accessible to victims. Youth engagement programs in sports or arts would serve as alternatives to drug use. Law enforcement should be trained to understand trafficking networks and the socio-economic factors that lead individuals to addiction, particularly through community policing. Government-NGOs research partnerships would thus be effective towards formulating evidence-based policies and continuous research directed to appropriate interventions along the needs of the region.

Limitations and Future Suggestions

First, the data on Yaba addiction in Cox's Bazar is sparse. Although many people do not open up about it, it was difficult to acquire accurate data on Yaba addiction concerns in Cox's Bazar and its impact rates due to fear of further risk. There are very few study publications and reports on Yaba addiction and its socioeconomic consequences in Bangladesh, particularly in Cox's Bazar, making it difficult to gather enough evidence to support the arguments. Second, the case study had a modest sample size, which was required to fully portray the area's diverse cultural perspectives. This research report was a qualitative study that included in-depth interviews. However, in the future, a more thorough strategy involving mixed modes can be employed to develop specific arguments. Finally, because the study was done in three distinct sub-districts of Cox's Bazar, it may not have adequately represented the spectrum of cultural factors on the impact of Yaba addiction across the districts, limiting the data's applicability to other

cultural contexts. Despite its limitations, the study provides valuable insights and lays the groundwork for future research on Yaba addiction and its socioeconomic impact. Additionally, since this study mainly focused on the qualitative study, a further quantitative analysis could be conducted in order to know the exact population that was involved and affected due to Yaba addiction and smuggling.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlighted a variable insight into the current context of Yaba addiction and its overall impact in three crucial sub-districts of Cox's Bazar such as Teknaf, Ukhiya, and Cox's Bazar. The literature review explored the overall scenario of Yaba addiction, smuggling, and its vicarious impact in Bangladesh. It also provides an idea of the numerous reasons and cultural influences on Yaba addiction. In the thematic analysis of the focus group discussion data, this paper analyzed all the findings of common influencing factors and causes of Yaba addiction, existing rehabilitation and treatment mechanisms, and the overall impact of this trend on people's health. It also emphasized the need for social and institutional responsibility regarding Yaba addiction and its policy implications. It also highlighted contextual differences across three sub-districts. It is essential to encourage activities like awareness campaigns, formal and informal education, and comprehensive policy dialogue to understand the context of Yaba addiction and its impact. This study acknowledged that currently, Yaba addiction become a national crisis, particularly in Teknaf and Cox's Bazar sub-districts; thus, emphasizes the importance of proper prevention mechanism strategy including policy development, community engagement, and qualitative rehabilitation or addiction prevention and rehabilitation mechanism.

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