

The Myth of A Drug-Free Tamil Nadu: A Critical Analysis of State Drug Control Policies And Ground Reality

Yogadharshini.S¹, Dr. S. Thirumal²

¹School of Excellence in Law

²Assistant Professor, School of Excellence in Law,

^{1,2}The Tamilnadu Dr. Ambedkar Law University, Chennai-600113

Abstract- Drug abuse continues to be a major social and legal concern in Tamil Nadu despite government claims of effective drug control. This study critically examines the gap between the State's drug-free narrative and the actual ground reality. It focuses on the effectiveness of enforcement policies, public awareness programmes, and rehabilitation measures. The research also considers recent drug-related violence involving minors, highlighting the social impact of substance abuse. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire, while secondary data were obtained from journals, government reports and legal provisions. The findings indicate that strict laws alone are insufficient to eliminate drug circulation. The study emphasizes the need for a balanced approach combining enforcement, prevention and rehabilitation to address drug abuse in Tamil Nadu effectively.

Keywords: Drug Abuse, Drug Control, NDPS Act and Youth.

I. INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse is no longer a distant or isolated problem; it has become a lived reality that affects families, communities, and society at large. Across the world, the use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances has led to serious consequences such as health deterioration, breakdown of social relationships, and an increase in criminal behaviour. In India, this issue has gradually moved beyond metropolitan cities and now impacts semi-urban and rural regions as well. What is particularly concerning is the growing involvement of adolescents and young adults, for whom drug use often becomes a gateway to violence, delinquency, and long-term social exclusion.

Tamil Nadu, known for its educational progress and social welfare initiatives, has in recent years taken a strong public stance against drug abuse. The State Government has projected an image of firm control over drug circulation and has repeatedly promoted the vision of a “drug-free Tamil Nadu” through official statements, campaigns, and policy

announcements. These claims have shaped public perception and have been widely circulated through media and political discourse.

By 2026, Tamil Nadu's drug control approach had developed into a comprehensive and multi-pronged strategy. The state combined strict law enforcement, financial investigation, public awareness programmes, educational interventions, and rehabilitation support. On paper, this framework reflects a structured attempt to eliminate drug abuse. However, the real effectiveness of these measures is questioned due to continuing drug-related incidents, especially among minors, and their link to violent crimes.

A major component of the state's strategy is strengthening enforcement mechanisms. Tamil Nadu reorganized its anti-narcotics system by integrating the Narcotic Intelligence Bureau with the Prohibition Enforcement Wing under the Enforcement Bureau CID. This was aimed at improving coordination across districts and ensuring quicker action against drug networks. The government also focused on weakening the financial base of drug syndicates by freezing thousands of bank accounts and seizing properties worth several crores under the NDPS Act between 2021 and 2025.

Technological surveillance has also been adopted as an important tool. Law enforcement agencies use intelligence-based monitoring to identify drug hotspots and trafficking routes. Large quantities of Ganja and other narcotic substances have been seized and destroyed through incineration drives. While such statistics highlight strong administrative action, they also show that drugs continue to circulate in the state, raising doubts about whether drug control has truly been achieved.

In addition to enforcement, the Tamil Nadu Government launched the “Drug-Free Tamil Nadu Mission” in 2024 to ensure a coordinated statewide response. The mission

is managed through a dedicated Mission Management Unit and follows a detailed activity calendar from June 2025 to March 2026. Regular awareness programmes are conducted, especially in schools and colleges, to reach young people before they become vulnerable to substance abuse. This reflects the government's understanding that prevention must begin early and continue consistently.

The formation of Anti-Drug Clubs in schools and colleges is one of the major initiatives under the Drug-Free Tamil Nadu Mission. These clubs encourage students to become active participants in spreading awareness and resisting drug use through peer learning. Various programmes such as competitions, street plays, and campaigns are conducted under the guidance of trained master trainers. While these initiatives appear positive, their real influence on student behaviour and long-term decision-making still requires close examination.

Public participation has also been encouraged through both digital and symbolic measures. The "Drug-Free TN" mobile application allows citizens to anonymously report drug-related information, increasing the reach of enforcement beyond formal policing. Large-scale pledge campaigns, banners, pamphlets, and awareness drives have further strengthened the government's anti-drug message. At the same time, the state has emphasized mental health and welfare-based interventions, conducting awareness sessions in educational institutions and training Self-Help Groups in rural areas to spread knowledge at the community level.

In addition to prevention, Tamil Nadu has shown increased focus on rehabilitation rather than punishment alone. De-addiction centres in government hospitals and rehabilitation facilities such as the Kalangarai centres provide counselling, recovery support, and vocational training to help individuals reintegrate into society. These efforts are supported by strict laws like the NDPS Act, 1985 and state-specific regulations. However, despite this extensive framework, frequent drug-related incidents involving youth and violence raise doubts about the effectiveness of the government's "drug-free" claims, forming the core concern of the present study.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chauhan P. & Sharma U.S.(2025)- In their study titled "Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances in India: A Socio-Legal Appraisal of Enforcement, Policy and Reform," the authors adopted a doctrinal and analytical research method. The study was based entirely on secondary data collected from statutes, judicial decisions, government

reports, and policy documents related to the NDPS Act, 1985. Through critical legal analysis, the authors examined the effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms and rehabilitation provisions. The study found that strict legal provisions often lead to over-criminalisation of drug users. It also highlighted inconsistencies in enforcement across different states. The authors observed that rehabilitation measures remain under-utilised due to institutional gaps. The study concluded that drug control policies must balance legal enforcement with social and public health approaches.

Gupta. R&Gupta. L conducted a legal-empirical study to assess the effectiveness of the NDPS Act, 1985 in controlling drug abuse and trafficking. The research used secondary data such as crime statistics, seizure records, conviction rates, and judicial case analyses. The authors also examined amendments made to the Act over time. The study revealed that enforcement actions have increased significantly. However, conviction rates and access to rehabilitation services remain limited. Procedural delays and strict penalties were identified as major challenges. The authors concluded that enforcement alone cannot reduce drug abuse without strong prevention and rehabilitation support systems.

Dr. Javed Ahmed Qureshi (2024) conducted a socio-legal study using qualitative analysis based on secondary data from government reports, crime records, and public health research. The study examined the relationship between drug abuse, trafficking, and social harm in India. The findings showed that drug abuse contributes to rising crime, unemployment, and family instability. The author noted that legal enforcement alone fails to address the social roots of substance abuse. The study highlighted the importance of community participation and preventive education. The author concluded that integrated legal, social, and health-based approaches are essential for effective drug control.

RESEARCH GAP:

The existing literature on drug abuse in India and Tamil Nadu predominantly focuses on policy frameworks, enforcement mechanisms, and the socio-psychological causes of drug consumption, often relying on official statistics and government reports. Most studies emphasize the intent and design of state drug control policies rather than critically examining their real-world effectiveness. There is limited empirical research that directly contrasts the Tamil Nadu Government's claim of a "drug-free state" with ground-level social realities and recent criminal incidents involving minors. Furthermore, prior studies inadequately address public perception and lived experiences regarding drug availability and enforcement gaps. The voices of ordinary citizens,

students, and local communities remain underrepresented in existing research. This study fills the gap by critically analysing the disparity between state narratives and societal realities through primary data. Hence, the present research offers a people-centric and evidence-based critique that is largely absent in existing literature.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM:

Despite the Tamil Nadu government's strong claim of creating a "Drug-Free Tamil Nadu" through strict enforcement, awareness campaigns, and rehabilitation programs, drug abuse continues to pose a serious social challenge. Reports of drug availability among youth, rising narcotic-related crimes, and substance abuse incidents raise questions about the effectiveness of existing policies. There is a visible disconnect between official narratives and the lived experiences of communities. The problem lies in understanding whether current drug control measures truly reflect ground reality. This study seeks to critically examine this gap by analysing public perception, enforcement outcomes, and social impact.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To examine the effectiveness of Tamil Nadu's drug control policies and enforcement mechanisms in achieving the goal of a drug-free society.
2. To analyse public awareness and perception regarding drug abuse.
3. To assess the gap between official claims of drug eradication and the actual ground reality experienced by communities.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research relies on both primary and secondary sources of data to ensure a comprehensive and balanced analysis. Primary data is collected through a structured questionnaire using a scaling method, administered via Google Forms. The total sample size consists of 47 respondents who provided insights based on their personal experiences, and observations. The collected data is analysed using percentage analysis and simple statistical tools to identify trends and patterns. Secondary data is gathered from credible sources such as academic journals, research articles, government reports, policy documents, newspapers, and official websites of the Tamil Nadu Government.

IV. RESULTS AND DECLARATION

Table 1: Personal information of the respondents

Si. No	Particulars	Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Age	18-24	35	74.5
		25-40	08	17
		41-50	03	6.4
		Above 50	01	2.1
		Total	47	100
2.	Gender	Male	27	57
		Female	20	43
		Total	47	100
3.	Occupation	Student	31	66
		Employed	09	19
		Unemployed	07	15
		Total	47	100
4.	Educational Qualification	Illiterate	-	-
		Undergraduate	37	78.7
		Postgraduate	06	12.8
		Professional	04	8.5
		Total	47	100
5.	Locality	Rural	06	12.8
		Urban	28	59.6
		Semi- Urban	13	27.7
		Total	47	100
6.	Marital Status	Unmarried	39	83
		Married	08	17
		Total	47	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: Table 1 presents the demographic details of the respondents. A majority (74.5%) belong to the age group of 18–24 years, showing that the study mainly reflects youth opinion. Respondents aged 25–40 years form 17%, while very few are above 40 years. Gender participation is fairly balanced, with 57% males and 43% females. Most respondents are students (66%), followed by employed (19%) and unemployed (15%). In terms of education, 78.7% are undergraduates, while postgraduates and professionals form a smaller share. Most respondents are from urban areas (59.6%), followed by semi-urban and rural areas. A large majority (83%) are unmarried, which matches the younger age group. Overall, the data shows that the study represents mainly young, educated, urban respondents.

Table 2: Awareness and Perception of Drug Presence in Tamil Nadu

Statement	Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
Awareness about the issue of drug consumption in TN	Very aware	17	36.2
	Aware	18	38.3
	Neutral	10	21.3
	Slightly aware	02	4.3
	Not aware at all	-	-
	Total	47	100
Prevalent of drug consumption in Tamil Nadu today?	Very High	20	42.6
	High	23	48.9
	Moderate	03	6.4
	Low	01	2.1
	Very Low	-	-
	Total	47	100
Across of news related to drug abuse or drug-related crimes in Tamil Nadu frequently	Very frequently	19	40.4
	Frequently	21	44.7
	Occasionally	05	10.6
	Rarely	02	4.3
	Never	-	-
	Total	47	100
	Seriousness of drug problem among minors and youth in Tamil Nadu	Extremely serious	26
Very serious		14	29.8
Moderately serious		06	12.8
Slightly serious		01	2.1
Not serious		-	-
Total		47	100

Sources: Primary Data

Interpretation: The table reflects respondents' awareness and perception of drug consumption in Tamil Nadu. Most respondents are either aware or very aware of the issue, showing that drug abuse is widely recognized. A large majority believe drug consumption is high or very high in the state, indicating that the problem is seen as widespread. Respondents also reported frequently coming across news related to drug abuse and drug-related crimes, suggesting regular media coverage. Further, most participants considered the drug problem among minors and youth to be extremely or very serious. Very few respondents viewed the issue as moderate or low. Overall, the findings show strong public

awareness and serious concern about drug abuse, especially its growing impact on young people in Tamil Nadu.

Table 3: Government Claims and Public Trust:

Statement	Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
Agreement with the Tamil Nadu Government's claim that drug circulation has been controlled or abolished	Strongly agree	-	-
	Agree	05	10.6
	Neutral	13	27.7
	Disagree	10	21.3
	Strongly disagree	19	40.4
	Total	47	100
Trust in the Tamil Nadu Government's statements regarding drug control	Very high trust	02	4.3
	High Trust	04	8.5
	Moderate Trust	13	27.7
	Low Trust	14	29.8
	No Trust	14	29.8
	Total	47	100
Thought upon the government whether in reporting drug-related incidents transparently	Very transparent	05	10.6
	Transparent	07	14.9
	Moderately transparent	16	34
	Slightly transparent	08	17
	Not transparent at all	11	23.4
	Total	47	100
Government claims about drug control are consistent with real-life incidents.	Highly consistent	02	4.3
	Mostly consistent	13	27.7
	Neutral	18	38.3
	Mostly inconsistent	12	25.5
	Highly inconsistent	02	4.3
	Total	47	100

Sources: Primary Data

Interpretation: The table shows respondents’ views on the Tamil Nadu Government’s claims regarding drug control. Most respondents disagreed with the government’s claim that drug circulation has been controlled or abolished, with a high percentage strongly disagreeing. Only a small portion agreed, indicating public scepticism. Trust in government statements was also low, as many respondents reported low or no trust. Regarding transparency, most felt the government is only moderately transparent in reporting drug-related incidents, while several believed it is not transparent. Opinions on consistency of reporting were mixed, with many respondents remaining neutral and others finding it inconsistent. Overall, the results indicate a clear gap between government claims and public perception, showing limited confidence in the “drug-free Tamil Nadu” narrative.

Table-4: Drug Control Measures and Enforcement

Statement	Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
Thought about current drug control policies are in Tamil Nadu effectively	Highly effective	05	10.6
	Effective	12	25.5
	Moderately effective	14	29.8
	Slightly effective	07	14.9
	Not effective at all	09	19.1
	Total	47	100
Rate of effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in preventing drug circulation	Excellent	02	4.3
	Good	11	23.4
	Average	21	44.7
	Poor	08	17
	Very poor	05	10.6
	Total	47	100
Drug laws are enforced in locality strictly	Very strictly	03	6.4
	Strictly	07	14.9
	Moderately	19	40.4
	Slightly	08	17
	Not enforced	10	21.3
	Total	47	100
Are rehabilitation and de-addiction facilities provided by the government	Very adequate	06	12.8
	Adequate	11	23.4
	Moderately adequate	18	38.3
	Inadequate	11	23.4

adequately	Highly inadequate	01	2.1
	Total	47	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: The table highlights respondents’ opinions on drug control policies, law enforcement, and rehabilitation facilities in Tamil Nadu. Most respondents felt that current drug control policies are only moderately effective, while some believed they are effective and a few considered them highly effective. However, a notable number felt the policies are not effective at all, showing dissatisfaction. Regarding law enforcement, most respondents rated their performance as average, with only a small percentage considering it excellent. Many respondents also believed that drug laws are enforced only moderately or slightly in their locality, and some felt they are not enforced at all. This reflects weak confidence in local enforcement mechanisms. In terms of rehabilitation and de-addiction facilities, most respondents felt they are moderately adequate, while others considered them adequate or inadequate. Overall, the findings suggest that drug control measures require stronger enforcement and improved rehabilitation support.

Table 5: Drugs, Crime and Social Impact

Statement	Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
To what extent drug consumption contributes to violent crimes	To a very great extent	22	46.8
	To a great extent	17	36.2
	To a moderate extent	08	17
	To a small extent	-	-
	Not at all	-	-
	Total	47	100
How likely is drug abuse to influence criminal behaviour among minors	Extremely likely	24	51.1
	Very likely	12	25.5
	Moderately likely	07	14.9
	Slightly likely	02	4.3
	Not likely	02	4.3
	Total	47	100
How responsible do you think the government is	Fully responsible	14	29.8
	Largely responsible	18	38.3

for failing to prevent drug-related crimes	Moderately responsible	10	21.3
	Slightly responsible	02	4.3
	Not responsible	03	6.4
	Total	47	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: Table 5 shows respondents’ opinions on the link between drug consumption, violent crime, and government responsibility. A majority strongly believed that drug consumption contributes to violent crimes to a very great or great extent, showing a clear public perception of a strong connection. None of the respondents felt that drugs have little or no impact on violent crimes. Most respondents also believed that drug abuse is extremely or very likely to influence criminal behaviour among minors, reflecting serious concern about youth involvement. Regarding government responsibility, many respondents felt the government is largely or fully responsible for failing to prevent drug-related crimes. Only a small percentage believed the government is slightly or not responsible. Overall, the table highlights strong public concern that drug abuse fuels violence and youth crime, and that government action is insufficient.

Table 6: Media, Society, and Policy Reform

Statement	Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
Media’s reflect on the reality of drug issues in Tamil Nadu accurately	Very accurately	03	6.4
	Accurately	11	23.4
	Moderately accurately	20	42.6
	Inaccurately	11	23.4
	Very inaccurately	02	4.3
	Total	47	100
Is public awareness regarding the dangers of drug abuse in Tamil Nadu effectively	Very effective	05	10.6
	Effective	16	34
	Moderately effective	19	40.4
	Slightly effective	05	10.6
	Not effective at all	02	4.3
	Total	47	100
To what extent drug control	Urgent reform required	16	34

policies need reform in Tamil Nadu	Major reform required	20	42.6
	Moderate reform required	09	19.1
	Minor reform required	01	2.1
	No reform required	01	2.1
	Total	47	100
Importance of community participation in controlling drug abuse	Extremely important	19	40.4
	Very important	16	34
	Moderately important	10	21.3
	Slightly important	01	2.1
	Not important	01	2.1
Total	47	100	
Successful of Tamil Nadu has been in achieving a drug-free society	Very successful	04	8.5
	Successful	07	14.9
	Moderately successful	15	31.9
	Slightly successful	06	12.8
	Not successful at all	15	31.9
	Total	47	100

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: The table highlights respondents’ views on media reporting, public awareness, policy reform, community participation, and the overall success of Tamil Nadu in becoming drug-free. Most respondents felt that media reporting on drug issues is only moderately accurate, suggesting that the media provides only a partial picture of the problem. Public awareness programmes were also viewed as moderately effective, indicating that awareness exists but is not strong enough to prevent drug abuse completely. A large majority of respondents supported urgent or major reforms in drug control policies, showing strong demand for improvement. Respondents also believed that community participation plays an extremely important role in controlling drug abuse. Regarding Tamil Nadu’s success in achieving a drug-free society, opinions were divided, with many stating it is only moderately successful or not successful at all. Overall, the findings show that people acknowledge some efforts but feel stronger reforms, awareness measures, and community involvement are necessary.

V. FINDINGS

1. Most respondents believe that Tamil Nadu's current drug control policies are only moderately effective and not sufficient to control the drug problem completely.
2. Many feel that drug laws are not strictly or uniformly enforced, especially at the local level.
3. Respondents rated law enforcement performance as average, indicating the need for stronger action to prevent drug circulation.
4. Government rehabilitation and de-addiction centres are considered moderately helpful, but their availability and support are limited.
5. Overall, respondents strongly suggest that improved rehabilitation facilities, better follow-up care, and stronger enforcement are necessary to achieve effective drug control.

VI. LIMITATION

This study is limited to primary data collected only from the Chennai area so the findings may not represent the whole of Tamil Nadu. The number of respondents was small which affects wider application of the results. Since the topic is sensitive some respondents may not have shared their views openly. The study also depended on limited time and available information which restricted detailed field analysis.

VII. SUGGESTION

The government should ensure strict and consistent implementation of drug control policies. Law enforcement agencies must be strengthened with proper training and resources. Awareness programmes, especially for youth, should be conducted regularly. Rehabilitation and de-addiction centres should be increased and improved for better recovery support. Community participation through educational institutions, NGOs, and local bodies must be encouraged. Regular monitoring and review of laws are also necessary to identify gaps and improve effectiveness.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Tamil Nadu Government has recently stated that the circulation of drugs in the state has been abolished and that strict measures have been taken to control drug abuse. However, the findings of this study and public perception suggest that the ground reality does not fully support this claim. Drug consumption and related crimes continue to be a serious concern among people, especially involving youth and minors. Recent incidents, such as the

violent attack in the Tiruvallur district where minors under the influence of drugs stabbed a man named Suraj, clearly show the harmful impact of substance abuse on society. Such incidents raise serious questions about the effectiveness of existing drug control measures. While policies, enforcement actions, and awareness programs are in place, their implementation appears to be inconsistent. Rehabilitation and de-addiction support also remain limited in reach and effectiveness. The gap between official statements and real-life incidents highlights the need for stronger action. Therefore, achieving a truly drug-free Tamil Nadu requires not only strict laws but also consistent enforcement, community participation, and long-term support for prevention and rehabilitation.

REFERENCES

- [1] Chauhan P. & Sharma U. S. (2025). Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances in India: A Socio-Legal Appraisal of Enforcement, Policy and Reform. *Journal of Social and Legal Research Studies*, Vol. 12, Issue 1, pg. 45–60.
- [2] Gupta R. & Gupta L. (2025). Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985: A Legal and Empirical Analysis of Its Effectiveness. *International Journal of Law and Legal Research*, Vol. 4, Issue 2, pg. 112–128.
- [3] Tripathi N. M. & Yadav J. (2025). Challenges under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, Vol. 12, Issue 1, pg. 233–245.
- [4] Dr. Javed Ahmed Qureshi (2024). A Socio-Legal Analysis of Drug Abuse and Drug Trafficking in India. *Research Inspiration Journal of Law and Social Studies*, Vol. 6, Issue 3, pg. 89–104.
- [5] Parmar et al, (2023). National Drug Laws, Policies and Programmes in India: A Narrative Review. *Journal of Public Policy and Governance*, Vol. 8, Issue 2, pg. 56–71.
- [6] Ambekaret al. (2022). Medicolegal Issues in the Management and Rehabilitation of Substance Use Disorders in India. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 64, pg.250–258.