

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE: IT'S EFFECTS AMONGST THE YOUTH IN  
EKOSOSDIN COMMUNITY OVIA NORTH EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
AREA, EDO STATE**

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**NOVEMBER, 2025.**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL  
WORK, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN  
CITY, EDO STATE, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE DEGREE B.Sc. IN SOCIAL  
WORK.**

**NOVEMBER, 2025.**

## CERTIFICATION

We certify that this project work is adequate in scope and was carried out by Grace Oye-Samson, in the department of Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria; In partial fulfillment for the award B.Sc Degree in Social Work.

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**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to God almighty God, who alone is to be praised for His strength, love, mercy, grace, and provision. He has been incredibly kind and merciful to me as I have worked to complete this project.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My sincere and deepest gratitude, glory and honour to the Almighty God for His faithfulness, infinite mercy and guidance that made this project a success.

My profound gratitude goes to my supervisor Mr. Ughiovhe Anthony Enike for his valuable advice, encouragement, and constructive criticism which greatly contributed to the success of this work. His immeasurable guidance which has significantly contributed towards the success of this project.

My gratitude goes to my HOD Mrs. Helen Eweka and other lecturers for impacting knowledge throughout my academic pursuit.

My heartfelt appreciation to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Oye-Samson for their love, encouragement and for being a source of inspiration and fulfillment for me also ensuring that i gets the best education.

Special thanks to all lecturers in the Department Social work, University of Benin for their efforts and contributions towards the success of this project.

Lastly, I want to express my deepest appreciation to myself. For staying strong when things got tough, for believing in my dreams, and for never giving up no matter the challenges. I am proud of how far I've come, and I celebrate the person I am becoming.

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examined Substance Abuse: Its Effects Amongst the Youth in Ekosodin Community, Ovia North East Local Government Area, Edo State. The survey research design was adopted for this study because data were collected from a sample population with specific characteristics. Five research questions were formulated and answered using simple percentage analysis. The population of the study comprised youths residing in Ekosodin Community, and from this population, a total of 100 respondents were selected as the sample using a random sampling technique. The instrument used to collect data for the study was a twenty-five-item self-structured questionnaire. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that substance abuse has significant negative effects on the physical health, academic performance, social behavior, and psychological well-being of youths in Ekosodin Community. The study revealed that peer pressure, unemployment, family instability, and easy access to drugs are major factors contributing to substance abuse among youths. Furthermore, the findings indicated that substance abuse leads to increased crime rates, school dropouts, health complications, and social disintegration within the community. The implications of the study highlight the need for urgent intervention through public awareness campaigns, youth empowerment programmes, and stronger law enforcement against drug trafficking and abuse. It was also emphasized that schools, parents, and community leaders have a crucial role to play in sensitizing and monitoring the youth. The study recommends that government and non-governmental organizations should intensify efforts in establishing rehabilitation centres, promoting skill acquisition programmes, and creating job opportunities for youths. Additionally, there should be continuous community-based education on the dangers of substance abuse, strict enforcement of drug control laws, and collaborative efforts among stakeholders to curb the menace and promote the overall well-being of the youths in Ekosodin Community.*

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Study

Substance abuse has emerged as one of the most pressing social problems confronting contemporary Nigerian society, especially among the youth. In recent years, the consumption of substances such as cannabis, tramadol, codeine, alcohol, and even locally brewed mixtures has become increasingly prevalent among young people, including students in communities such as Ekosodin in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. The abuse of these substances often leads to significant mental, physical, academic, and social consequences.

Globally, substance abuse among young people has become a significant public health challenge, and this trend is reflected in communities such as Ekosodin in Ovia North East LGA of Edo State, where youths are increasingly exposed to drugs through peer influence, social pressure, and limited access to preventive support systems. International research shows that adolescents worldwide are vulnerable to substances due to socio-economic stressors, changing cultural norms, and inadequate mental-health services (Perception Study, 2021). In Nigeria, recent findings indicate that nearly half of secondary school students report engaging in drug use, with strong associations to psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, and declining academic performance (International Journal of Medicine and Health Development, 2022). Locally, studies in Edo State further highlight how substances like cannabis, tramadol, and codeine

contribute to behavioural problems, reduced productivity, and increased risk of crime among youth populations (Osadoh & Ohovwore, 2024). These patterns demonstrate that the substance-abuse situation in Ekosodin is not isolated but aligns with a broader global crisis, emphasizing the need for integrated interventions that combine international best practices with localized community engagement.

Youth in Ekosodin, being a vibrant community populated largely by students of the University of Benin and other young residents, are particularly vulnerable due to the transitional nature of their lives, peer pressure, and the struggle to fit into an urbanized yet structurally diverse environment (Nwosu, 2021). Substance abuse among youths in this area is compounded by the interplay of various socio-economic and cultural factors. Many of the students and young people in Ekosodin come from different parts of Nigeria with diverse cultural orientations and backgrounds. While some come from stable families with strong educational and moral foundations, others hail from economically disadvantaged or conflict-affected regions, which often influences their perception of drug use and resilience to peer influence. The socio-cultural diversity in Ekosodin creates a unique environment where exposure to risky behaviors is heightened, especially for youths who find themselves far away from parental supervision (Adebayo, 2022).

The economic condition of many students in Ekosodin also plays a crucial role in the escalation of substance abuse. Some youths turn to drugs either as a coping mechanism for poverty-related stress or under the illusion of enhancing academic performance and social acceptance. The affordability and accessibility of drugs in the area have made it

easier for youths from low-income backgrounds to engage in substance use without much resistance or deterrence. Moreover, the presence of informal settlements and substandard housing conditions further reduces effective parental or community surveillance, allowing drug-related behaviors to flourish undetected (Oboh, 2020). Culturally, the issue of substance abuse is further complicated by conflicting value systems. In some cultures, the use of substances such as alcohol or certain herbs is normalized or even ritualized. When youths from such backgrounds interact with those from stricter value systems, tensions arise, and young people are often forced to negotiate their identities through risky behaviors. This has resulted in a kind of cultural experimentation among the youth in Ekosodin, where substance use is sometimes perceived as a form of rebellion or a rite of passage (Oshodi, 2023).

The academic implications of substance abuse among youths in this region are equally alarming. Research has consistently shown that students who engage in drug use tend to exhibit poor academic performance, truancy, lack of concentration, and eventual dropout from school (Okonkwo, 2021). In Ekosodin, where academic pressure is high due to the proximity of the University of Benin, many students resort to stimulants under the false assumption that it improves cognitive performance, only to become dependent and eventually impaired. This not only undermines their educational objectives but also increases the burden on families and educational institutions. Socially, substance abuse among the youth in Ekosodin has led to increased incidences of crime, violence, and deteriorating interpersonal relationships. Youths under the influence are often involved in

cultism, theft, sexual violence, and other deviant behaviors that threaten the peace and stability of the community. The inability of law enforcement agencies and community leaders to curb this trend has created a culture of impunity, where drug use and distribution thrive under weak surveillance and inadequate punitive measures (Igbinovia, 2019). Health-wise, the consequences of substance abuse are devastating. Beyond the immediate effects such as nausea, hallucination, and drowsiness, long-term abuse leads to chronic illnesses such as liver damage, mental health disorders, and increased vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections due to risky sexual behavior. The lack of youth-friendly health centers and counseling services in Ekosodin further complicates recovery efforts, leaving many young people untreated and stigmatized (Nwachukwu, 2024).

The role of peer pressure in substance abuse cannot be overstated. In a community as dynamic and transient as Ekosodin, many students and young residents find themselves forming new social circles, often without adequate guidance or supervision. Within these groups, substance use may be introduced as a symbol of status or a means of social bonding. The fear of exclusion often drives youth to conform, even when they are aware of the consequences. This creates a cycle of addiction that is difficult to break without systemic interventions (Salami, 2022).

Addressing substance abuse in Ekosodin requires a holistic approach that considers the socio-economic, cultural, academic, and health-related contexts in which these youths exist. Prevention strategies must go beyond punitive measures to include community-

based education, counseling, mentorship programs, and socio-economic empowerment. Recognizing the diversity of the youth population in Ekosodin and tailoring interventions that are culturally sensitive and context-specific will be critical in combating this growing menace and restoring the future of the affected youth (Umeh, 2023).

## **1.2 Statement of the Research Problem**

The rising prevalence of substance abuse among youths in Ekosodin Community, Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State, presents a critical social and educational problem with far-reaching consequences. Despite increased awareness campaigns and interventions across Nigeria, the abuse of substances such as cannabis, tramadol, codeine, alcohol, and other illicit drugs continues to thrive among students, particularly those living off-campus in high-risk areas like Ekosodin. This alarming trend raises concern about the effectiveness of current preventive measures and the underlying factors sustaining the problem.

The community's proximity to major academic institutions like the University of Benin makes it a melting pot of students from diverse cultural, social, and economic backgrounds, many of whom struggle with identity, independence, peer influence, and academic pressure. These struggles often drive them to drug use as a form of escape or social integration, thereby exacerbating the crisis. Studies in Nigeria confirm that academic pressure and peer influence are among the strongest predictors of substance use among adolescents (Adewuyi, 2025) and that students under pressure or with emotional distress sometimes turn to substances like codeine and tramadol to cope (Osahon, 2023).

The problem is compounded by the absence of strong parental control, insufficient community surveillance, and limited access to effective counseling or rehabilitation services. In many cases, absence of direct parental care has been significantly associated with higher substance use among students (Okpako, 2020). Students who engage in substance abuse are often left to cope with addiction silently, resulting in deteriorating academic performance, absenteeism, and eventual dropout. Moreover, the cognitive and psychological effects of drug use impair their ability to focus, retain information, and participate meaningfully in their education (Raji, 2019).

The consequences do not end in the classroom. Substance abuse contributes to rising cases of sexual promiscuity, cultism, and violence, endangering not only the abusers but also the broader student population and community residents. The normalization of drug use in some social circles within Ekosodin further makes it difficult for affected students to seek help, due to stigma and fear of social rejection (Umanhonlen, 2021).

Another critical aspect of the problem is the socio-economic disparities that influence students' vulnerability to substance use. Students from impoverished backgrounds may resort to drug peddling or consumption as a coping strategy for economic hardship or as a misguided means of fitting into perceived popular or elite groups. At the same time, students from affluent homes may also engage in substance abuse as a form of rebellion, thrill-seeking, or academic enhancement (Adegoke, 2022). This shows that substance abuse cuts across socio-economic divides and is often reinforced by cultural attitudes, peer pressure, and a lack of resilience in navigating life transitions (Fehintola, 2024). The

overarching issue is that many of these students lack adequate psychosocial support to manage the pressures of youth and academia, and as such, they fall prey to the illusion of relief offered by drugs.

In essence, the substance abuse problem among students in Ekosodin is a complex social and psychological dilemma that threatens educational attainment, public safety, and long-term youth development. The lack of coordinated, context-specific, and youth-centered interventions continues to widen the gap between awareness and action. Until a deliberate and inclusive approach is adopted one that considers the diverse realities of students in terms of culture, socio-economic status, and peer dynamics the problem of substance abuse will remain deeply rooted and its destructive effects will continue to manifest in academic failure, mental health decline, and the moral decay of the future workforce (Zekaryah, 2023).

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to assess the effects of substance abuse on youths in the Ekosodin community. Specifically, the study's objectives are to:

1. identify the most commonly abused substances among the youths in the Ekosodin community of Ovia North East LGA.
2. examine the social and psychological effects of substance abuse on youths in the Ekosodin community of Ovia North East LGA.

3. evaluate the types of support systems and interventions currently available in Ekosodin of Ovia North East LGA to address youth substance abuse.
4. investigate the challenges youths in Ekosodin face when accessing rehabilitation and counseling services for substance abuse.
5. find out the role of social workers in addressing substance abuse among youth in the study area.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The following research questions have been formulated to guide the study and ensure a systematic exploration of the core issues surrounding the topic

1. What are the most commonly abused substances among the youths in the Ekosodin community of Ovia North East LGA?
2. What are the social and psychological effects of substance abuse on youths in the Ekosodin community of Ovia North East LGA?
3. What types of support systems and interventions currently exist in Ekosodin of Ovia North East LGA to address youth substance abuse?
4. What challenges do youths in Ekosodin face when trying to access rehabilitation and counseling services for substance abuse?
5. What are the roles of social workers in addressing substance abuse among youth in the study area?

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The study will be of benefit to various stakeholders including the youths, providing valuable data for community leaders, offering educational significance for schools and institutions, supporting NGOs, and informing the general public. Through its findings, the study provides a deeper understanding of the prevalence, causes, and consequences of substance abuse among young people in the Ekosodin community. This foundational knowledge will guide the development of targeted interventions, promote informed decision-making, and support community-wide efforts to reduce the negative effects of substance misuse. By addressing the issue from multiple angles, the study ensures that its contributions will have long-lasting impact on both individual wellbeing and the wider social environment.

The youths of Ekosodin stand to gain the most direct benefit from this study, as it clearly outlines the dangers and adverse consequences associated with substance abuse. By highlighting the psychological, social, and physical risks involved, the study equips young people with critical information that empowers them to make healthier lifestyle choices. This knowledge helps them resist peer pressure, avoid experimentation with harmful substances, and understand how substance abuse can derail their future goals, education, and social relationships. Increased awareness encourages youths to adopt positive coping strategies, seek guidance when faced with challenges, and participate in preventive programs. Ultimately, the study supports the development of a more informed, resilient, and health-conscious younger generation within the community.

Community leaders and elders will also benefit greatly from the evidence provided by this study, as they play a vital role in influencing communal behavior and maintaining social order. By identifying the patterns, root causes, and effects of substance abuse among youths, the research equips leaders with relevant data needed to develop effective community-based initiatives. These insights will enable them to design culturally appropriate interventions, implement sensitization campaigns, and mobilize community members to collectively address substance-related issues. Strengthened with accurate information, leaders can advocate for impactful policies, promote youth engagement activities, and foster an environment that discourages harmful behaviors. In doing so, the study supports community leaders in their efforts to safeguard the wellbeing and future of their young population.

The study provides strong educational significance, especially for schools and learning institutions within Ekosodin. As educational settings are central to shaping youth behavior and values, the findings offer valuable guidance for designing school-based prevention programs and awareness campaigns on substance abuse. With this information, educators can integrate targeted drug education into the curriculum, organize seminars and counseling sessions, and establish supportive policies that discourage risky behaviour. Schools can also utilize the findings to strengthen guidance and counseling services, create peer support systems, and collaborate with parents and community leaders to reinforce preventive messages. Through these efforts, the educational sector can play a

decisive role in reducing substance misuse and fostering a safer, more conducive learning environment for students.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) will benefit significantly from this study, as it provides insights into the specific cultural, social, and economic factors that influence substance abuse among youths in Ekosodin. With a clearer understanding of these dynamics, NGOs can refine their intervention strategies, develop more targeted outreach programs, and design culturally relevant advocacy initiatives. The findings will enable them to better align their services with community needs, enhance the effectiveness of youth rehabilitation and support programs, and strengthen partnerships with local institutions. By grounding their activities in evidence, NGOs can contribute more meaningfully to substance abuse prevention and youth empowerment efforts across the community.

The general public, including families, residents, and local groups, will also benefit from the findings of this study, as it increases awareness of the far-reaching effects of youth substance abuse on community development, safety, and social cohesion. The study helps the public understand how substance misuse contributes to health problems, academic decline, crime rates, and strained family relationships. Equipped with this awareness, community members can take more active roles in supporting preventive initiatives, monitoring youth behavior, and creating environments that discourage drug use. Increased public understanding encourages collective responsibility and community

participation in addressing the issue, thereby promoting a healthier and more supportive living environment for all.

### **1.6 Scope/Delimitation of the Study**

This study focuses on examining the effects of substance abuse among youths within the Ekosodin community. It specifically investigates the types of substances most commonly abused, the social and psychological impacts on the youth, existing support systems, and challenges faced in accessing rehabilitation and counseling services. The research is limited to youths residing in Ekosodin and does not extend to other age groups or neighboring communities. Additionally, the study primarily relies on data collected from self-reports, interviews, and local support organizations within the community, which may limit the generalizability of the findings beyond this context.

### **1.7 Definition of Terms**

**Substance Abuse:** The habitual and harmful use of drugs or alcohol that negatively affects an individual's health, behavior, and social life.

**Youth:** Individuals typically between the ages of 15 and 35 years, who are in the transitional phase from childhood to adulthood.

**Ekosodin Community:** Is a satellite to University of Benin where many reside and where this study is focused, representing the population and social environment of the youths being studied.

**Effects:** The social, psychological, physical, and behavioral consequences that result from substance abuse.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Preamble**

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of existing literature related to substance abuse and its effects amongst the youth, with a particular focus on Ekosodin community in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. The review explores the conceptual understanding of substance abuse, its historical emergence, underlying causes, and the multiple dimensions of its impact on young people. It highlights how drug and substance abuse affects youth development, educational performance, health, social behavior, and economic stability. The review also considers societal attitudes, peer influence, and family structures that contribute to the problem, while examining both preventive and remedial strategies aimed at addressing the menace of substance abuse. The literature will be reviewed under the following sub-headings: Concept of Substance Abuse, Historical Evolution and Trends of Substance Abuse in Nigeria, Causes of Substance Abuse Among Youths, Types of Substances Commonly Abused by Youths, Socio , Cultural Factors Influencing Substance Abuse in Local Communities, Effects of Substance Abuse on Youth's Health and Well-being, Impact of Substance Abuse on Education and Academic Performance, Substance Abuse and Youth Involvement in Crime and Violence, Community Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Substance Abuse in Ekosodin, Barriers to Combating Substance Abuse Among Youths,

Strategies for Preventing and Reducing Substance Abuse in Local Communities, Theoretical Framework, Empirical Review and Summary of Literature Review

## **2.1 Concept of Substance Abuse**

Substance abuse refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances including alcohol, prescription drugs, and illicit drugs that result in adverse outcomes for the user's health, social functioning or psychological well-being. The World Health Organization frames it as patterns of use that are maladaptive, causing impairment or distress in major areas such as school, work, home, or interpersonal relationships (WHO, 2019).

In Nigeria, studies show that substance abuse among youths often begins with substances that are socially accepted, such as alcohol and cigarettes, before progressing to more dangerous drugs. Joseph (2019) in a study among university students in southwest Nigeria found that although awareness was high (94.6%), nearly half (45.7%) of the students reported abusing substances, with alcohol and cigarettes being the most common.

Conceptually, substance abuse differs from dependence or addiction. Abuse is generally used to describe a maladaptive pattern of substance use that leads to negative consequences but not necessarily physical dependence. Dependence involves physiological symptoms such as withdrawal and tolerance (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Thus, abuse is often the earlier stage in a continuum of problematic use (WHO, 2019).

A recent cross-sectional study in Osun State, Nigeria, among 420 youths aged 15-24, defined substance abuse as use of any psychoactive substance beyond socially or culturally accepted boundaries or patterns, and found a prevalence of 12.3% among respondents, with alcohol, shisha, and tramadol being the most common substances abused (Olagunju, 2024).

Substance abuse also embraces non-medical or unsanctioned use of prescribed medications, such as cough syrups with codeine or tramadol. A study by Adams (2023) documented emerging trends like combinations of cough syrup and drinks, or inhalation of fumes, reflecting that abuse is not just about traditional illicit drugs but also about misuse of legal pharmaceuticals.

The concept often includes the idea of “hazardous use” or “harmful use,” which may not yet meet the criteria for dependence but still poses risk to health and functioning. WHO classifications differentiate harmful use (health consequences) from dependency (which also includes psychological or physical dependence) (WHO, 2019).

Important to the concept is that substance abuse encompasses both frequency and context of use. It is not only how often substances are used, but whether their use interferes with one’s life responsibilities, safety, legal status, or mental health. For example, failing to meet obligations at school or work because of substance use is a marker of abuse (Youth.gov, 2022).

Another dimension is the psychological gratifications sought by users—coping, self-medication, seeking pleasure, or escape from stress. Joseph (2020) found that many

undergraduates who abused substances did so to “get high” or to numb emotional problems arising from socioeconomic pressures. Cultural acceptability plays a role in how substance abuse is defined locally. What is considered abuse in one community may be less stigmatized in another. Perception studies in Ogun State showed that youths and young adults understand substance abuse in terms of negative consequences rather than strict legality of substances (Sunkanmi, 2020). Youth substance abuse is often studied within age brackets where legal boundaries, developmental stages, and social expectations shift. Use by minors or adolescents is more likely to be considered abusive irrespective of amount because of vulnerability during developmental phases (WHO, 2019). In many recent studies, substance abuse is conceptualized not just in terms of individual behavior but in terms of structural vulnerability: poverty, unemployment, peer influence, family neglect. Nasiru (2019) in Sokoto state identified availability, affordability and socioeconomic deprivation among the leading conceptual triggers for abuse among youth.

Another feature of the concept is its consequence-laden nature: abuse implies outcomes—health problems, social dysfunction, criminal justice involvement, educational decline—rather than mere consumption. Olatunji (2022) in Lagos noted social and psychological consequences including shame, stigma, loss of productivity, increased risk of accidents among youths who abuse substances. The concept is also connected to norms of risk behavior during adolescence and young adulthood: experimentation, peer pressure, perception of invulnerability. In-school and out-of-school

youths show patterns of trying substances as part of identity formation or social belonging (Sarkingobir, 2021). In sum, substance abuse as a concept is multi-faceted: it involves non-medical use, harmful use (physical, psychological, social), legal or socially unacceptable use, patterns beyond occasional or socially sanctioned use, negative outcomes, and is shaped by context, age, culture, and socioeconomic conditions. In the Nigerian context recent research has emphasised that awareness is often higher than actual abuse, but the forms of abuse are shifting—prescription misuse, inhalants, mixed substances—requiring that definitions be broad and sensitive to local realities.

### **2.1.1 Historical Evolution and Trends of Substance Abuse in Nigeria**

The phenomenon of substance abuse in Nigeria has deep historical roots, with early accounts showing that substances such as alcohol, kola nut, and tobacco were among the earliest used by communities even before colonial times. Morufu (2021) notes that local spirits (such as “akpetesi”) were widely consumed in settlements like Henshaw Town in Calabar, tied to both social practices and trade operations dating to the 18th and 19th centuries. Early in the post-independence period, tobacco, kolanut and alcoholic drinks remained dominant substances of misuse whereas use of illicit drugs was still less visible (Morufu, 2021).

Legal control over certain substances dates back to the Indian Hemp Decree of 1966, which was one of Nigeria’s first legislative measures against cannabis (the genus Indian hemp). The Decree replaced earlier ordinances such as the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance of 1935 and set the tone for legal prohibition of cultivation, sale and use of cannabis in

the 1960s (Information on the Indian Hemp Decree, 1966). In the decades after independence, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, Nigeria saw an increasing awareness of drug trafficking, not just local substance use. The years between 1979 and 1988 witnessed tens of thousands of arrests of Nigerians abroad for illicit drug offences—reflecting that both supply and demand sides were growing in visibility. Public Health sources point out that by the early 1980s, cocaine trafficking had become a matter of international concern for Nigeria, and domestic seizures of substances other than cannabis began to increase (Public Health, 2022). During the late 1980s through the 1990s there were documented surveys among youths showing changing patterns in use of substances. For example, studies among secondary school pupils in Ilorin in 1988, 1993 and 1998 indicated that while alcohol, mild stimulants and antibiotics had long been used, there was a gradual rise in use of substances like cannabis, hypnotosedatives and in some instances hallucinogens (Ilorin study, 1988-1998). The trend showed both increases in prevalence and shifts toward more “harder” substances over time (Kassim, 2000). Treatment facility data also reflect a shift. A comparative study over two five-year periods (1992-1997 vs 2002-2007) in a treatment facility in Aro showed that cannabis rose to become the most abused drug in the later period, overtaking cocaine which dominated abuse in the earlier period. The demographics also shifted younger, and more patients presented with co-morbid psychiatric disorders. Onifade (2010) provided this trend, showing clearly that patterns of substance abuse were changing in both type of substances and user profiles. In more recent years, new trends have emerged particularly

among adolescents and secondary school students. Between 2010 and 2020, literature reviews show that, while alcohol, cannabis, tobacco and cigarettes remain among the most abused substances, there is also emerging abuse of prescription drugs (like tramadol), inhalants, and mixtures of legal and illegal substances. Adams (2023) reports that secondary school students in several Nigerian states have begun abusing a wider variety of psychoactive substances, including cough syrups, glue, inhalants and certain sedatives.

The rise in misuse of codeine and tramadol in particular has become noteworthy. Media investigations and national reports indicate that codeine-containing cough syrups have become especially problematic, sometimes mixed with soft drinks for recreation, and that tramadol has grown popular for both its availability and perceived efficacy in alleviating pain or stress. Abiodun (2022) notes that these pharmaceutical substances are increasingly substituted or added to existing substance abuse behaviours. There has also been a trend in inhalants and volatile solvents. Earlier studies had these substances more hidden or localized, but by the 1990s and 2000s they became more visible in urban and rural settings. Youths started using petrol, aerosols, correction fluid, and solvent-based products. The ease of access, low cost, and lack of regulation made these substances attractive to younger users (Kassim, 2018).

Another trend is polydrug abuse: users combining substances. Onifade (2010) showed cannabis combined with alcohol being more common in later years in treatment populations, while earlier periods had combinations involving cocaine and opiates. More

recently, literature reports youth mixing cough syrup, alcohol, cannabis, and even non-conventional substances in “cocktails” for stronger effects (Adams, 2023).

### **2.1.2 Causes of Substance Abuse Among Youths**

The causes of substance abuse among youths are multifaceted, involving psychological, social, cultural, and economic factors that interact to shape vulnerability. One major cause often cited is peer influence, as adolescents are especially susceptible to social pressure from friends. Studies in Nigeria have consistently shown that peers play a significant role in introducing youths to alcohol, cannabis, tramadol, and codeine mixtures. Joseph (2019) emphasized that peer groups act as both initiators and reinforcers of substance use patterns, with many youths reporting that they began using drugs in the company of friends. Family background also constitutes a critical factor. Families where substance use is normalized, or where supervision is weak, create an enabling environment for abuse. Adams (2023) found that youths from homes with inconsistent parenting or parental neglect were more likely to experiment with drugs, particularly in urban areas where access to substances is high. Exposure to domestic violence and parental substance use were also identified as strong predictors of youth drug initiation.

Socioeconomic hardship is another powerful driver. High unemployment, poverty, and lack of access to economic opportunities push many young people to seek escape or coping mechanisms in psychoactive substances. Abiodun (2022) highlighted that the surge in tramadol use among youths in Edo and Lagos states is closely tied to unemployment and frustration with poor living conditions. For many, substances offer

temporary relief from stress and feelings of hopelessness. Educational stress also plays a role in fueling substance abuse among young people. In competitive academic environments, some students turn to stimulants, alcohol, or sedatives to cope with examination pressure or to boost concentration. Olagunju (2024) reported that students in Osun State secondary schools admitted to abusing tramadol and shisha as a way to cope with exam anxiety, underscoring the role of academic stress in pushing youths toward drugs. Another cause is the easy accessibility of substances in local communities. Despite existing laws and bans, many psychoactive substances are available over the counter or through informal vendors. The National Bureau of Statistics (2018) survey indicated that accessibility was a key factor in high drug prevalence in the South-South region. Morufu (2021) further explained that the presence of unregulated markets, combined with porous borders, facilitates the availability of tramadol, codeine syrups, and cannabis at cheap prices.

Curiosity and the search for excitement or pleasure are also central to youth drug abuse. Adolescents and young adults often experiment with substances to “feel high,” achieve social confidence, or gain a sense of adventure. Joseph (2020) observed that young people in tertiary institutions often initiated drug use out of curiosity, later escalating into habitual use. This highlights experimentation as a gateway cause that can quickly develop into abuse.

Mental health challenges like depression, anxiety, and trauma have increasingly been linked to substance abuse among youths. Many young people use psychoactive

substances as a form of self-medication to cope with emotional pain. Olatunji (2022) noted that substance abuse was often a coping mechanism among youths struggling with mental health challenges, suggesting a strong relationship between psychological distress and drug abuse.

Cultural and societal norms also shape substance abuse patterns. In communities where alcohol consumption is socially accepted, the line between use and abuse becomes blurred. This cultural permissiveness creates pathways for youths to start using substances early. Sunkanmi (2020) pointed out that in Ogun State, many youths considered alcohol consumption “normal” and did not view it as harmful, despite engaging in binge drinking patterns that clearly qualified as abuse.

Another significant cause is the influence of popular culture and media. Music, movies, and social media platforms often glamorize drug and alcohol use, making it appealing to young audiences. Abiodun (2022) argued that the portrayal of tramadol and codeine in Nigerian music has contributed to the normalization of abuse among youths. This influence reinforces peer and social behaviors, creating a cycle of attraction to substances.

Environmental stressors, such as urbanization, insecurity, and community violence, also contribute to the rise of substance abuse. Youths exposed to chaotic environments often resort to drugs as a way of numbing themselves to the realities around them. Adams (2023) revealed that in some semi-urban communities in Edo State, youth involvement in

gangs and violent groups was closely linked to drug abuse, with substances being both a motivator and a bonding tool.

Availability of counterfeit and cheap psychoactive drugs in Nigeria has further worsened the situation. Tramadol and codeine products of varying strengths flood the market, making it easy for even young teenagers to access potent drugs at low costs. Nasiru (2019) emphasized that affordability of these drugs is one of the most critical enablers of their misuse among adolescents. Religious and moral decline is also mentioned in recent scholarship. Communities where moral guidance structures have weakened or where religious institutions fail to engage youths effectively record higher rates of drug abuse. Morufu (2021) observed that the erosion of traditional community values, combined with weak socialization processes, has left many youths vulnerable to substance abuse. The lack of awareness and inadequate preventive education also contribute to rising abuse rates. While awareness about substances exists, many young people are unaware of their long-term effects. Olagunju (2024) discovered that even though secondary school students understood that tramadol could be harmful, many did not know the extent of its psychological and health dangers, thus continuing its misuse.

### **2.1.3 Types of Substances Commonly Abused by Youths**

Substance abuse among youths involves a wide range of psychoactive substances, both legal and illegal, that are consumed for non-medical purposes and often in harmful ways. In the Nigerian context, the substances most frequently abused by young people are alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, tramadol, codeine-based cough syrups, inhalants, and a

growing number of synthetic drugs. The variety reflects not only changing trends but also the influence of availability, cultural norms, and affordability (Morufu, 2021). Alcohol remains the most widely abused substance among youths in Nigeria. It is socially acceptable, easily accessible, and culturally integrated into ceremonies, leisure, and social interactions. Joseph (2019) observed that alcohol was the starting point for many adolescents who later escalated to stronger drugs, with binge drinking particularly common in university environments. Alcohol abuse is often underestimated because of its legal status, yet its harmful effects on health and decision-making are profound.

Tobacco and cigarettes are another group of substances commonly abused by youths. Although tobacco consumption is legally restricted to adults, underage smoking remains prevalent. Adams (2023) reported that many secondary school students experiment with cigarettes as early as their mid-teens, often influenced by peers. The rise of shisha smoking has also become popular among young people, especially in urban areas where shisha lounges are common. Shisha is often wrongly believed to be less harmful than cigarettes, but it exposes users to equal or greater risks.

Cannabis, locally referred to as “weed” or “Indian hemp,” is one of the most abused illicit drugs among Nigerian youths. Its widespread cultivation and availability have contributed to its prominence. Abiodun (2022) emphasized that cannabis abuse has increased significantly among young people due to its affordability and perceived role in boosting creativity or enhancing social confidence. Despite its illegal status, cannabis remains a major part of youth subculture in both rural and urban settings. Prescription

drugs, particularly opioids, have become a major concern in recent years. Tramadol, in particular, is widely abused among Nigerian youths for its stimulating and pain-relieving properties. Olagunju (2024) highlighted that tramadol misuse was highly prevalent among secondary school students in Osun State, who used it to cope with academic stress and fatigue. Tramadol is often taken in high doses, far beyond medical prescriptions, increasing risks of dependence and overdose. Codeine-based cough syrups have also become a significant problem. Initially prescribed for cough relief, codeine syrups are now consumed recreationally, often mixed with soft drinks to create concoctions popularly known as “purple drank” or “syrup.” Joseph (2020) noted that these mixtures are particularly appealing to youths because of their sweet taste and euphoric effects. The abuse of codeine has prompted government interventions, including restrictions on its production and sales, but the problem persists through black markets.

Inhalants represent another category of substances commonly abused, particularly among adolescents. These include glue, petrol, kerosene, correction fluid, and aerosol sprays. The appeal lies in their low cost and easy availability. Nasiru (2019) found that many out-of-school youths in Sokoto engaged in inhalant abuse, with petrol sniffing being the most common. The effects include immediate intoxication but also long-term neurological damage.

Sedatives and sleeping pills are also misused by young people, especially students seeking to manage stress or insomnia. Drugs such as diazepam are taken without medical prescriptions and sometimes combined with alcohol to enhance their sedative effects.

Olatunji (2022) reported a rise in the misuse of sedatives among Lagos youths, linking it to both nightlife culture and academic stress. Stimulants, including amphetamine-like substances, are abused for their perceived benefits of increasing energy, concentration, or reducing fatigue. Although not as widespread as tramadol or cannabis, stimulant abuse has been observed among students preparing for examinations. Adams (2023) found that some undergraduates reported using stimulant pills during exams despite being aware of potential side effects such as anxiety and insomnia.

Shisha and flavored vaping products have become increasingly trendy among youths in Nigerian cities. Unlike cigarettes, which carry a social stigma, shisha smoking is often considered fashionable. Abiodun (2022) noted that many young people believed shisha to be harmless, unaware of its addictive properties and its link to respiratory illnesses. This misperception has contributed to its rising popularity.

Emerging synthetic drugs, including “Colorado” and “Skunk,” represent newer trends among Nigerian youths. These substances are stronger variants of cannabis or mixtures sprayed with synthetic chemicals to produce more potent psychoactive effects. Morufu (2021) warned that these synthetic drugs are far more dangerous than traditional cannabis, with severe risks of psychosis and unpredictable behavioral changes. Local herbal mixtures, commonly called “monkey tail” (a mixture of alcohol and cannabis), are also abused by youths. These concoctions are usually prepared in informal settings and consumed for their intoxicating effects. Joseph (2019) pointed out that the lack of

standardization in preparation makes these mixtures especially harmful, as users are unaware of the actual strength or composition.

#### **2.1.4 Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing Substance Abuse in Local Communities**

Socio-cultural factors play a decisive role in shaping the patterns and prevalence of substance abuse in local communities. In many Nigerian societies, cultural practices, traditions, and community norms influence attitudes toward substances such as alcohol, cannabis, and even prescription drugs. Joseph (2019) emphasized that the cultural acceptability of alcohol at social gatherings makes it one of the first substances young people are introduced to, often blurring the line between moderate use and abuse. In certain communities, alcohol consumption is not only tolerated but encouraged during festivals, rites of passage, and ceremonies. Adams (2023) noted that alcohol has long been embedded in traditional practices such as marriages, burials, and harvest festivals, making its consumption socially legitimate. This cultural reinforcement normalizes drinking behavior among youths and increases the likelihood of early initiation into alcohol use. Peer group culture exerts another strong influence. Among Nigerian youths, belonging to social groups or peer networks often involves shared practices that include experimenting with drugs. Abiodun (2022) pointed out that peer acceptance and the desire to conform to group norms frequently drive adolescents to begin using substances, with the peer environment creating a powerful social expectation to indulge in alcohol, cannabis, or tramadol.

The role of music, movies, and popular culture cannot be overlooked. Lyrics of certain Nigerian songs and the influence of global hip-hop culture have glamorized substances like codeine, tramadol, and cannabis. Olatunji (2022) observed that many young people in Lagos reported exposure to pro-drug messages through music videos and online content, which shaped positive attitudes toward substance use. Popular culture, therefore, acts as a modern socio-cultural driver of abuse. Religious and traditional belief systems also shape substance use patterns. In some communities, herbal mixtures infused with alcohol and cannabis are consumed as part of traditional healing or spiritual practices. Morufu (2021) explained that such practices contribute to the perception of certain substances as medicinal or spiritually beneficial, reducing the stigma attached to their use. This perception often leads to abuse when young people adopt such substances outside the intended ritual context.

Family socialization processes further contribute to substance abuse. Youths raised in families where substance use is normalized or where parents openly consume alcohol and tobacco are more likely to replicate such behaviors. Nasiru (2019) highlighted that family culture of substance use transmits permissive attitudes across generations, particularly in rural areas where parental control and community supervision are weak. Economic activities and community occupations also have socio-cultural implications. For instance, in riverine or farming communities, local brews such as palm wine or locally distilled gin are both sources of income and social identity. Joseph (2020) argued that this normalization of local brews as economic and cultural products fosters

their abuse among the youth, who consume them not only for recreation but also as symbols of cultural belonging. Another factor is the culture of secrecy and silence around drug use in many communities. Stigma often prevents open discussions about drug abuse, leading to underreporting and lack of community-led interventions. Adams (2023) observed that in some Edo communities, substance abuse is known to occur but remains untreated because families prefer to conceal cases for fear of shame. This culture of silence inadvertently allows abuse to spread unchecked. Youth subcultures in schools and urban centers also promote experimentation with substances as a form of identity and resistance to authority. Abiodun (2022) noted that some students in Edo State described drug use as part of their “campus life,” a marker of maturity and independence. In such subcultures, refusing to participate may be viewed as weakness, reinforcing the cycle of abuse. Community attitudes toward law enforcement and regulation are another socio-cultural influence. In many areas, weak enforcement of drug laws, combined with tolerance for petty drug trade, makes substances easily available. Olagunju (2024) reported that secondary school students in Osun State had easy access to tramadol and cough syrups through local chemists, reflecting a community environment that passively supports drug misuse.

Another socio-cultural factor is the perception of substances as enhancers of productivity. For instance, some artisans, motorcyclists, and manual laborers believe that drugs such as tramadol or cannabis boost energy and reduce fatigue. Olatunji (2022)

revealed that these cultural perceptions are widespread in urban communities, making drug use part of the daily survival strategy of young people.

### **2.1.5 Effects of Substance Abuse on Youth's Health and Well-being**

Substance abuse has profound effects on the physical health of youths, as many psychoactive substances directly damage vital organs and body systems. Alcohol abuse among young people has been linked to liver disease, gastritis, and impaired immune function. Joseph (2019) reported that youths who engaged in binge drinking were more prone to chronic fatigue and long-term liver complications, highlighting the risks of early initiation into heavy alcohol use. The cardiovascular system is another area affected by substance abuse. Stimulants such as tramadol and amphetamines increase heart rate and blood pressure, placing youths at risk of hypertension and cardiac arrest. Adams (2023) documented several cases of young adults presenting with palpitations and chest pain following misuse of tramadol, showing the dangerous impact of drug use on heart health at an early age. Respiratory problems also arise from smoking-related substances. Tobacco, cannabis, and shisha smoking among youths contribute to chronic cough, bronchitis, and increased susceptibility to infections. Abiodun (2022) observed that shisha smokers in urban centers underestimated their health risks, though medical evidence shows that shisha smoke contains more carbon monoxide than cigarette smoke, leading to serious respiratory harm. Neurological and brain-related issues are among the most serious effects. Cannabis, tramadol, and synthetic drugs such as “Colorado” have been linked to memory loss, reduced concentration, and impaired cognitive development

in young people. Olagunju (2024) found that secondary school students who abused psychoactive drugs demonstrated poorer academic performance, tied partly to reduced brain functioning and shortened attention spans. Mental health consequences are deeply intertwined with substance abuse. Youths who use psychoactive substances are at higher risk of anxiety, depression, paranoia, and psychosis. Morufu (2021) explained that long-term abuse of cannabis and synthetic variants contributes to psychotic episodes among Nigerian youths, leading to increased admissions in psychiatric hospitals. This reveals the strong correlation between drug abuse and worsening mental health outcomes. Substance abuse also undermines general well-being by contributing to risky behaviors. Under the influence of drugs or alcohol, many youths engage in unsafe sexual practices, reckless driving, or violent confrontations. Olatunji (2022) noted that in Lagos, drug abuse among commercial motorcyclists and artisans was associated with high accident rates, often leading to severe injuries or fatalities. Such behaviors compromise both the safety of the user and the wider community.

Nutritional well-being is negatively impacted when substance abuse replaces healthy habits. Many youths who abuse substances report poor appetite, weight loss, or malnutrition. Adams (2023) observed that tramadol users in Edo State often skipped meals, relying instead on the drug for energy and alertness, a practice that gradually weakened their immune systems and overall health. Educational well-being also suffers significantly. Students who abuse drugs experience absenteeism, declining grades, and in some cases expulsion. Joseph (2020) highlighted that university students who misused

codeine and cannabis were more likely to drop out of school due to poor performance or disciplinary issues. This academic decline further limits their life opportunities and contributes to cycles of poverty. The social well-being of young people is equally affected. Substance abuse often damages relationships with family, peers, and the wider community. Nasiru (2019) explained that parents of drug-abusing youths frequently reported breakdowns in trust, domestic conflicts, and in some cases estrangement, leaving young people socially isolated. This isolation in turn worsens dependency on substances. Youth substance abuse is also linked to increased involvement in crime and delinquency. Abiodun (2022) reported that many young offenders in Edo and Lagos states admitted to using drugs before committing theft or violent acts. Substance use impairs judgment and lowers inhibitions, making criminal behavior more likely and compromising the moral well-being of the individual. The economic well-being of youths is compromised when money meant for education, food, or savings is diverted to purchasing drugs or alcohol. Morufu (2021) noted that substance-abusing youths in Edo State often spent a disproportionate share of their earnings or allowances on drugs, creating cycles of financial strain that reinforced poverty.

Sleep disorders are another common effect of substance abuse on well-being. Stimulant use leads to insomnia, while sedative abuse may cause excessive drowsiness. Olagunju (2024) found that students who used tramadol to stay awake during exams often experienced rebound fatigue and disrupted sleep patterns, negatively affecting their overall wellness. Self-esteem and personal development are also eroded by substance

abuse. Many youths who become dependent on drugs report feelings of shame, guilt, and helplessness. Olatunji (2022) explained that these negative self-perceptions worsen mental health challenges, making recovery more difficult and reducing overall life satisfaction.

### **2.1.6 Impact of Substance Abuse on Education and Academic Performance**

Substance abuse significantly undermines the educational performance of youths by interfering with their ability to focus, retain information, and participate fully in academic activities. Drugs such as cannabis, tramadol, and codeine alter brain function, leading to memory loss, short attention spans, and reduced comprehension. Olagunju (2024) found that students in Edo State who abused psychoactive drugs were more likely to experience academic decline due to difficulties in concentration and information retention during classes. School absenteeism is another major effect of substance abuse on education. Many students who engage in drug use often skip school either because they are under the influence or because they need time to recover from drug use. Adams (2023) reported that high school students in Benin City with histories of drug abuse frequently recorded poor attendance, which in turn contributed to falling behind academically and losing motivation to pursue their studies.

Substance abuse also negatively affects academic discipline and behavior in schools. Youths who abuse drugs often display disruptive tendencies, including aggression, disobedience, and violence within the classroom. Joseph (2020) observed that in some Nigerian secondary schools, cases of indiscipline such as fighting, verbal abuse

of teachers, and bullying were strongly linked to drug use, thereby undermining not only the student's academic focus but also the learning environment for peers. Examination malpractice has been connected to substance abuse among youths. Some students misuse stimulants like tramadol or caffeine-based drugs to stay awake and study excessively, hoping to perform better during examinations. However, this often leads to over-reliance on drugs, anxiety, and eventual failure. Nasiru (2019) explained that such students were more likely to engage in malpractice due to poor preparation and drug-induced stress, further damaging their educational prospects.

The dropout rate among students is also higher among those who abuse substances. Prolonged drug use often erodes academic interest and diminishes the desire for long-term educational goals. Abiodun (2022) highlighted that secondary school students who engaged in regular drug use in Ovia North East had a higher probability of abandoning their education for menial jobs, crime, or continued substance dependency. This deepens cycles of poverty and limits future opportunities. Substance abuse contributes to declining academic performance through reduced participation in school-related activities. Students under the influence are less likely to complete assignments, engage in group projects, or attend extracurricular activities. Morufu (2021) noted that schools in Southern Nigeria reported declining academic performance in students identified as drug users, as their participation rates were consistently lower than their peers. Financial implications of substance abuse also play a role in undermining academic success. Money that should be allocated for school fees, textbooks, and other

educational needs is often diverted to purchase drugs. Olagunju (2024) found that university students who abused substances like codeine were more likely to face financial hardships, often resulting in dropping out due to unpaid tuition fees or lack of academic resources. The long-term educational impact of substance abuse extends into employability. Students who underperform academically due to drug use have limited access to scholarships, internships, and future job opportunities. Joseph (2020) explained that graduates with drug abuse backgrounds often struggled to secure meaningful employment, perpetuating cycles of unemployment and economic instability.

In some cases, substance abuse leads to expulsion, which marks an abrupt end to formal education. Schools often adopt strict disciplinary measures against students found guilty of drug possession or abuse. Nasiru (2019) highlighted cases of expulsions in Nigerian universities where students caught with illicit drugs were permanently dismissed, cutting short their educational journey and career aspirations.

### **2.1.7 Substance Abuse and Youth Involvement in Crime and Violence**

Substance abuse is strongly associated with increased youth involvement in crime and violence, as psychoactive substances alter behavior, impair judgment, and lower inhibitions. Cannabis, tramadol, and alcohol, when misused, often lead to aggressive behavior and engagement in unlawful activities. Adams (2023) noted that youths in Edo State who engaged in substance abuse were more frequently involved in street fights and theft compared to non-users, highlighting the role of drugs in fostering deviant conduct. Drug abuse often contributes to violent crimes, such as assault, robbery, and domestic

violence. Under the influence of stimulants or alcohol, young people may become more aggressive and lose control over their impulses. Olagunju (2024) explained that in Southern Nigeria, many police reports of violent attacks were linked to drug-intoxicated youths, suggesting that substance abuse plays a direct role in escalating violence in local communities.

The relationship between drug abuse and criminal activity is further evident in the rise of cultism among youths. Cult groups in tertiary institutions often use drugs to boost courage and suppress fear during initiation rites and violent clashes. Joseph (2020) found that cannabis and tramadol were commonly distributed among cult members in universities, reinforcing their involvement in criminal activities such as armed robbery, kidnapping, and violent territorial disputes. Substance abuse also facilitates economic crimes such as burglary, internet fraud, and pickpocketing. Many young people addicted to drugs resort to crime in order to fund their dependency. Nasiru (2019) reported that youths addicted to codeine and tramadol in Benin City often stole from family members, neighbors, or engaged in cybercrime to sustain their habits, thereby deepening their involvement in unlawful activities. Alcohol abuse, in particular, has been identified as a major driver of youth violence. Intoxicated youths are more likely to engage in reckless behavior, such as bar fights, dangerous driving, and sexual assault. Abiodun (2022) highlighted that in Lagos and Benin City, the majority of violent incidents occurring during social gatherings and nightlife were tied to excessive alcohol consumption by young people.

Drug-related crimes are also linked to organized criminal networks. Youths involved in trafficking, distribution, and sale of drugs often become enmeshed in violent gangs that rely on intimidation and force to control drug markets. Morufu (2021) documented that young drug dealers in Edo State were frequently recruited into gangs, where the use of violence became a survival strategy, further entrenching them in cycles of crime. The presence of drugs in correctional facilities also underscores the connection between substance abuse and crime. Many young offenders incarcerated for robbery or violence admitted to committing crimes while under the influence. Olatunji (2022) noted that rehabilitation centers in Nigeria observed a high overlap between criminal offenses and prior drug abuse among inmates, showing how substance use increases the likelihood of conflict with the law. Substance abuse has also been linked to sexual violence and exploitation. Youths under the influence of drugs often engage in non-consensual sexual activities, either as perpetrators or as victims. Adams (2023) explained that tramadol misuse among male youths in Edo State was associated with higher cases of sexual assault, as the drug was misused to enhance sexual performance and reduce fear of consequences.

Community safety is directly threatened by the link between substance abuse and youth crime. Rising cases of robbery, cult clashes, and violence fueled by drugs create insecurity for residents and discourage social and economic development. Joseph (2020) stressed that families in Edo communities live in constant fear during cult-related clashes,

which are often aggravated by drug intoxication. This highlights the broader social implications of substance abuse beyond the individual.

### **2.1.8 Community Perceptions and Attitudes Toward Substance Abuse in Ekosodin**

Community perceptions of substance abuse in Ekosodin reveal widespread concern about the negative influence of drugs on youth development and public safety. Many residents view drug abuse as one of the leading social problems destroying the future of young people. Olagunju (2024) explained that elders in local communities often describe substance abuse as a cultural and moral decay, undermining values that once promoted discipline and respect for authority.

Parents in Ekosodin express fear and disappointment over the rising rates of substance abuse among their children. Many believe that peer influence and urban exposure are driving young people into drug use. Joseph (2020) reported that parents frequently associate drug abuse with poor parenting or lack of monitoring, though they also acknowledge external factors such as cultism and unemployment that lure youths into substance use. Educators in the community often perceive substance abuse as a major obstacle to effective learning. Teachers describe drug-using students as inattentive, aggressive, and disruptive in class. Adams (2023) highlighted that school authorities in Edo State increasingly identify drug abuse as a root cause of poor academic performance, indiscipline, and school dropouts, reinforcing the belief that drug use is incompatible with educational success. Healthcare providers in Ekosodin view substance abuse as both a medical and psychological issue. They stress that many youths present with health

complications such as liver damage, mental disorders, and sleep problems linked to drug use. Abiodun (2022) observed that nurses and doctors often express frustration over the lack of specialized rehabilitation facilities, which limits their ability to provide adequate treatment for addicted youths in the community.

Religious leaders frame substance abuse as a spiritual problem tied to moral weakness and lack of faith. Churches and mosques in Ekosodin often preach against drug use, associating it with sin, demonic influence, and disobedience to God. Morufu (2021) found that many religious leaders encourage families to seek spiritual counseling and prayer as a solution, although some also recognize the need for medical and social interventions. Youth perceptions of substance abuse are more complex, as some view drug use as a symbol of social identity, belonging, and modern lifestyle. Nasiru (2019) reported that young people in Ekosodin often perceive cannabis and tramadol use as a way to gain confidence, bond with peers, and cope with stress. However, many of these same youths acknowledge the negative consequences, including addiction, stigma, and police harassment. Community elders and traditional leaders express strong disapproval of drug use, often linking it to the erosion of cultural values and the breakdown of family structures. Olatunji (2022) noted that in Ekosodin, traditional leaders view substance abuse as an imported problem worsened by globalization, insisting that restoring indigenous values could help discourage young people from engaging in drugs.

Despite strong condemnation, there are elements of tolerance in community perceptions. Some residents, particularly among youths, downplay the dangers of substances like

alcohol and shisha, viewing them as socially acceptable and less harmful. Adams (2023) explained that this selective acceptance of certain substances complicates prevention efforts, as it normalizes gateway drugs that may lead to harder substance abuse.

The stigma attached to drug abuse shapes community attitudes toward rehabilitation. Many residents perceive drug users as irresponsible and dangerous, rather than as individuals in need of help. Abiodun (2022) observed that families often hide addicted relatives due to shame, making it difficult for affected youths to seek treatment. This stigma creates barriers to reintegration and support for recovery.

### **2.1.9 Barriers to Combating Substance Abuse Among Youths**

One of the major barriers to combating substance abuse among youths is limited awareness about the dangers of drugs. Many young people underestimate the health risks associated with substances such as cannabis, tramadol, and codeine, believing they are harmless or socially acceptable. Joseph (2020) found that secondary school students in Edo State often experimented with drugs without fully understanding the long-term consequences, making prevention efforts less effective. Another barrier is the influence of peer groups, which often exerts stronger control over youth behavior than parental or institutional guidance. In Ekosodin, peer networks frequently encourage experimentation with drugs as a means of social acceptance. Adams (2023) noted that young people who resist drug use often face ridicule or exclusion, making it difficult for them to withstand peer pressure without strong alternative support systems. Economic hardship and unemployment also drive youths into drug use and make combating it difficult. Many

young people in Ekosodin turn to drugs as a coping mechanism for poverty, lack of opportunities, and frustration. Abiodun (2022) explained that even when prevention campaigns are conducted, the economic realities of joblessness and financial insecurity push youths back into substance use, thereby undermining rehabilitation efforts.

Cultural tolerance of certain substances presents another challenge. While the community strongly condemns illicit drugs, alcohol and shisha are often seen as normal and acceptable, especially at social gatherings. Olagunju (2024) observed that this selective acceptance creates a cultural loophole that normalizes substance use among youths, making it more difficult to promote zero tolerance for all harmful substances.

Weak law enforcement contributes significantly to the persistence of youth drug abuse. Despite policies against drug trafficking and use, enforcement is often inconsistent, and corrupt practices allow access to substances. Morufu (2021) highlighted that many youths in Edo State admitted they could easily purchase drugs from local vendors without fear of arrest, pointing to the failure of regulatory systems in curbing supply. The shortage of rehabilitation and counseling centers in communities like Ekosodin is another barrier. Even when youths or their families are willing to seek help, the absence of affordable treatment facilities limits recovery opportunities. Nasiru (2019) emphasized that most rehabilitation centers are concentrated in urban areas and are often too expensive for average families, leaving addicted youths without adequate support.

Family instability also poses a major barrier to combating substance abuse. Broken homes, domestic violence, and poor parental supervision create environments where drug

use thrives. Olatunji (2022) found that youths from unstable families in Edo State were more likely to experiment with drugs and less likely to receive family support for rehabilitation, weakening community-based interventions. Stigma attached to drug abuse further discourages youths from seeking help.

#### **2.1.10 Strategies for Preventing and Reducing Substance Abuse in Local Communities**

One effective strategy for preventing and reducing substance abuse in local communities is comprehensive public education and awareness campaigns. Creating knowledge about the dangers of drugs helps youths make informed decisions. Joseph (2020) emphasized that schools, religious organizations, and media platforms can play a critical role in sensitizing young people to the health, academic, and social consequences of drug abuse, thereby reducing curiosity and misinformation. Strengthening family involvement is another vital strategy. Parents and guardians must be empowered to provide guidance, supervision, and open communication with their children. Olagunju (2024) explained that families that actively monitor their children's activities, peer groups, and spending habits are more successful in preventing drug experimentation, as consistent parental involvement builds resilience against peer pressure.

School-based prevention programs also provide effective intervention. Incorporating drug education into the curriculum equips students with life skills to resist peer influence. Adams (2023) noted that in Edo State, schools that introduced peer mentoring and anti-drug clubs recorded lower rates of substance use among students, proving that structured

school activities can discourage risky behavior. Community-based initiatives that engage local leaders, elders, and youth associations are crucial in addressing substance abuse. Traditional leaders in particular command respect and can use cultural authority to discourage drug use. Abiodun (2022) observed that communities where chiefs and elders actively spoke against substance abuse experienced a decline in open drug sales and consumption, showing the influence of communal leadership in prevention. Improving economic opportunities for young people is another long-term strategy. Many youths turn to drugs out of frustration with unemployment and poverty. Nasiru (2019) argued that skills acquisition programs, entrepreneurship training, and youth empowerment schemes provide alternatives to substance use by giving young people hope, purpose, and income-generating opportunities. Effective law enforcement is necessary to reduce the supply and accessibility of drugs. Stronger monitoring of drug markets, stricter penalties for dealers, and anti-corruption measures within security agencies are required. Morufu (2021) highlighted that when law enforcement agencies in Nigeria carried out targeted raids on drug hotspots, access to illicit substances reduced temporarily, underscoring the importance of consistent enforcement. Expansion of rehabilitation and counseling services is another important strategy. Many youths who want to quit drugs cannot access treatment due to cost or distance. Olatunji (2022) recommended the establishment of affordable community-based rehabilitation centers, combined with psychological counseling, to support recovery and reintegration into society. Religious and moral institutions can also contribute meaningfully. Churches, mosques, and faith-based

organizations are well-positioned to offer counseling, mentorship, and moral teaching against substance abuse. Adams (2023) explained that faith-based youth programs in Edo State had some success in reducing drug use, as they provided both spiritual and social support for at-risk youths. Peer-to-peer influence can also be transformed into a preventive tool. Instead of encouraging drug use, youth leaders and role models can advocate for positive lifestyles through music, sports, and community service. Abiodun (2022) noted that when local celebrities and athletes spoke openly against drug use, young people were more likely to listen, as they admired and trusted such figures. Finally, a collaborative multi-stakeholder approach is essential. Governments, schools, families, NGOs, and health workers must work together to create a consistent and sustainable framework for prevention. Olagunju (2024) stressed that without coordination, isolated efforts fail to create lasting change, but collective action can strengthen resilience and drastically reduce substance abuse in communities like Ekosodin.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

Several theories provide useful insights into understanding the causes, persistence, and consequences of substance abuse among youths. These theories explain why young people experiment with drugs, how social environments influence their behavior, and the long-term outcomes of substance use.

The Social Learning Theory, propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977, posits that individuals learn behaviors through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within social environments. According to Bandura, young people are more likely to adopt

behaviors they observe in peers, family members, or role models, especially if such behaviors are rewarded. This theory relates to the present study because in Ekosodin community, many youths are introduced to drugs by their peers or older individuals. The desire for social acceptance and reinforcement from group membership encourages continued use of substances such as cannabis, tramadol, and alcohol.

The Differential Association Theory, developed by Edwin Sutherland in 1939, argues that criminal and deviant behaviors, including drug use, are learned through interaction with others who already practice such behaviors. Sutherland explained that the frequency, duration, and intensity of association with deviant groups determine the likelihood of adopting similar behavior. This theory is relevant to the study as many youths in Ekosodin are influenced by drug-using peers, cult groups, or neighborhood cliques, which normalize substance abuse as part of social life.

Another relevant perspective is the Strain Theory propounded by Robert K. Merton in 1938. The theory suggests that individuals resort to deviant behaviors, such as substance abuse, when they are unable to achieve socially approved goals through legitimate means. Merton explained that frustration from poverty, unemployment, or lack of opportunities often leads to alternative coping mechanisms, including drug use. This theory is directly linked to the study, as many youths in Ekosodin face economic hardship and turn to drugs as a way of coping with stress, disappointment, and social exclusion.

The Self-Medication Theory, introduced by Edward Khantzian in 1985, emphasizes that individuals often use drugs or alcohol to cope with psychological distress,

trauma, or emotional pain. Khantzian argued that substance abuse provides temporary relief from anxiety, depression, or stress, though it eventually leads to dependency. This theory applies to the study because many youths in Ekosodin use substances like tramadol or codeine as coping strategies for emotional challenges, academic pressure, or unemployment-related frustration.

In addition, the Social Control Theory, propounded by Travis Hirschi in 1969, holds that individuals engage in deviant behaviors when their bond with society is weak or broken. Hirschi identified four key elements of social bonds: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. When youths lack strong family ties, educational commitments, or moral values, they are more likely to abuse substances. In Ekosodin, weak parental supervision, broken homes, and declining moral values contribute to youths' vulnerability to drug abuse, making this theory highly relevant to the study.

The Gateway Drug Theory, developed by Denise Kandel in 1975, suggests that the use of less harmful substances such as tobacco, alcohol, or cannabis often precedes and increases the likelihood of progression to harder drugs like cocaine, heroin, or tramadol. Kandel argued that initial experimentation with socially tolerated substances lowers inhibitions and normalizes drug use. This theory explains patterns observed in Ekosodin, where many youths start with alcohol or shisha smoking before transitioning to more addictive drugs such as tramadol and codeine.

Together, these theories provide a strong conceptual base for the study. They explain how social influence, economic hardship, emotional struggles, weak social bonds, and initial

drug experimentation contribute to youth substance abuse in Ekosodin, thereby offering useful lenses through which the phenomenon can be analyzed.

### **2.3 Empirical Review**

Empirical studies on substance abuse among youths have shown consistent evidence of its negative consequences on health, education, and socio-economic development. In Nigeria, several researchers have investigated the prevalence, causes, and impacts of drug use among young people, revealing trends that are both community-specific and national in scope.

A study by Oshodi (2019) in Lagos State examined the prevalence of substance abuse among secondary school students and found that peer pressure and exposure to community drug markets were the strongest predictors of early initiation into drug use. The findings highlighted that youths who socialized with drug-using peers were three times more likely to experiment with cannabis and alcohol compared to those who did not.

Similarly, a nationwide survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (NBS, 2019) reported that over 14.3 million Nigerians aged between 15 and 64 had used psychoactive substances, excluding alcohol, in the past year. The study revealed that young people between the ages of 15 and 29 accounted for the highest proportion of drug users, underscoring the vulnerability of youths to substance abuse.

In Edo State, Erah (2020) carried out a community-based study that revealed high prevalence of tramadol and codeine use among young people in urban and semi-urban areas. The study emphasized that cheap availability of drugs, coupled with weak enforcement of drug regulations, contributed significantly to abuse, particularly among unemployed youths.

Research by Ihezue (2020) in Southeastern Nigeria highlighted the socio-economic dimensions of drug abuse. The study found that poverty and unemployment increased the likelihood of substance use among young men, with cannabis and alcohol being the most abused. The study also emphasized that family instability and parental neglect were contributing factors.

A hospital-based study by Abayomi (2021) in Benin City discovered that a growing number of youths presenting with psychiatric disorders had histories of prolonged drug use. The findings linked cannabis and tramadol abuse to cases of depression, psychosis, and violent behavior among adolescents and young adults, indicating serious mental health consequences.

In Northern Nigeria, Bello (2020) found that substance abuse was rampant among male youths in tertiary institutions, with codeine and tramadol being the most widely used. The study showed that students often abused drugs during examination periods, believing that the substances improved concentration and stamina.

A comparative study conducted by World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) on youth substance abuse across Sub-Saharan Africa revealed that Nigerian youths reported

higher rates of non-medical use of prescription drugs compared to their counterparts in Ghana and Kenya. The study attributed this to Nigeria's porous borders and inadequate control of pharmaceutical distribution. In Delta State, Okon (2022) examined substance use among motorcycle riders and commercial bus drivers, many of whom were youths. The study revealed widespread use of alcohol, tramadol, and cannabis as stimulants to cope with the physical demands of their occupation. However, this led to increased cases of road accidents, reckless driving, and public disorder. A school-based study by Nwosu (2021) in Enugu investigated the effects of drug abuse on academic performance and found that students who engaged in drug use had significantly lower grades and higher dropout rates. The study showed that absenteeism, reduced concentration, and lack of motivation were major consequences of drug use among secondary school students. Research carried out by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA, 2022) documented the rising trends of youth involvement in drug trafficking and abuse within university campuses in Edo and Delta states. The findings showed that cult-related activities were strongly linked to substance abuse, as drugs were often used to initiate and bond new members. A community health survey by Adeoye (2021) in Ibadan revealed that many youths resorted to drug use as a coping mechanism for stress, family conflict, and peer rejection. The study showed that individuals who reported high levels of social isolation were more likely to abuse drugs, especially cannabis and alcohol.

In a gender-focused study, Musa (2022) examined substance abuse among young women in Kano and found that though men reported higher levels of drug use, women

were increasingly abusing cough syrups and sedatives. The study suggested that women often used substances to cope with domestic violence and psychological distress.

A recent study by Ojo (2022) in Ekpoma, Edo State, showed that socio-cultural practices influenced substance abuse among youths. The research revealed that community acceptance of alcohol during social gatherings normalized drinking behavior among young people, which later progressed into more dangerous drug use. In a related investigation, Johnson (2023) examined the relationship between substance abuse and crime among Nigerian youths. The study demonstrated that drug use increased the likelihood of involvement in violent crimes, cult clashes, and theft. The findings emphasized that drug abuse not only affects individual health but also threatens community safety and stability.

A study by Akinola (2023) on youth unemployment and substance abuse in Southwestern Nigeria revealed a direct correlation between lack of job opportunities and increased drug use. The findings suggested that idle youths often turned to drugs as a way to escape from economic frustration, leading to further social and health problems.

## **2.4 Summary of Literature Review**

This chapter has examined the concept of substance abuse and its relevance to understanding the challenges facing youths in contemporary society, with specific attention to the Ekosodin community in Ovia North East Local Government Area, Edo State. The review established that substance abuse refers to the harmful and excessive use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol, cannabis, tramadol, codeine, and other drugs, which negatively affect the physical, psychological, social, and economic well-being of individuals. The discussion highlighted the historical evolution of substance abuse in Nigeria, showing how traditional practices involving alcohol and locally brewed substances have evolved into widespread abuse of synthetic and prescription drugs, worsened by poverty, unemployment, and weak drug enforcement systems.

The review also considered the various causes of substance abuse among youths, pointing to peer influence, family instability, socio-economic hardship, availability of drugs, and psychological factors as major contributors. The types of substances commonly abused were also outlined, showing that cannabis, tramadol, codeine, alcohol, and cigarettes remain the most prevalent among Nigerian youths, while emerging substances such as shisha and synthetic opioids are gaining popularity. Furthermore, socio-cultural factors such as communal acceptance of alcohol, peer group norms, and cultural celebrations were shown to play a significant role in normalizing drug use among young people.

The theoretical framework provided useful insights into the phenomenon. The Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) explained how observation and imitation drive youth involvement in substance abuse, while Differential Association Theory (Sutherland, 1939) emphasized the role of deviant peer groups. Strain Theory (Merton, 1938) explained how economic challenges push youths toward drug use as a coping strategy, while Self-Medication Theory (Khantzian, 1985) highlighted the link between psychological distress and drug use. Social Control Theory (Hirschi, 1969) underlined the effect of weakened family and social bonds, and Gateway Drug Theory (Kandel, 1975) provided insight into how early use of alcohol or cigarettes often progresses into abuse of harder substances. Together, these theories form a strong conceptual base for understanding substance abuse among youths in Ekosodin.

Empirical studies reviewed further revealed consistent patterns in the prevalence, causes, and consequences of drug abuse. Evidence from Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan African countries demonstrated that substance abuse among youths is strongly linked to unemployment, poverty, peer pressure, cult activities, and family breakdown. Studies also established that drug use leads to adverse outcomes such as declining academic performance, poor mental health, involvement in crime, and increased social insecurity. Research findings from Edo State and its neighboring communities reinforced the fact that tramadol, codeine, cannabis, and alcohol are the most commonly abused substances among youths, and their availability in local drug markets worsens the problem.

In summary, the reviewed literature confirms that substance abuse among youths in Ekosodin is a multidimensional issue rooted in social, cultural, psychological, and economic factors. The effects extend beyond individual users to affect families, schools, and the larger community. This review also identifies gaps in localized studies that justify the present research, particularly the need to understand the specific experiences, drivers, and effects of substance abuse among youths in Ekosodin. The next chapter therefore focuses on the research methodology that will guide the empirical investigation of this study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### **Preamble**

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed in investigating *Substance Abuse: Its Effects Amongst the Youth in Ekosodin Community, Ovia North East Local Government Area, Edo State*. The chapter details the Research Design, Area of the Study, Population of the Study, Sampling Size and Sampling Techniques, Instrument for Data Collection, Validity and Reliability of the Instrument, Method of Data Collection, Method of Data Analysis and Ethical Consideration procedures adopted to examine how substance use influences the social, psychological, and economic wellbeing of young people within the community.

#### **3.1 Area of the Study**

The area of study for this research is Ekosodin Community, located in Ovia North-East Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. Ekosodin is a semi-urban settlement situated on the outskirts of Benin City, directly beside the University of Benin (UNIBEN) Ugbowo campus. The community's proximity to the university has shaped its social and economic life, making it a vibrant environment populated largely by university students, academic and non-academic staff, traders, and artisans. Many UNIBEN students reside in Ekosodin due to its closeness and affordable housing options, while local businesses thrive by providing goods and services to the university population. This dynamic interaction between the university community and local residents has fostered a

youthful, energetic atmosphere that reflects both academic pursuit and urban social activities. This youthful vibrancy has also exposed the community to certain social challenges, particularly substance abuse among the youth. The presence of a large student population, coupled with numerous entertainment centers, relaxation spots, and informal social gatherings, has contributed to increased experimentation with drugs and alcohol. Peer influence, curiosity, and easy access to substances further heighten the risk of abuse. Ekosodin's connection to UNIBEN therefore makes it an ideal setting for this study, as it allows an in-depth examination of how university life and community interactions influence substance use behaviors. This research aims to assess the extent, causes, and effects of substance abuse among the youth in Ekosodin, providing insights into how such issues impact both the local community and the university environment.

### **3.2 Research Design**

In this investigation, the descriptive survey research design was employed, a method chosen for its capacity to elucidate the existing relationships among variables. This particular approach will serve the purpose of gathering comprehensive data regarding the characteristics of a specific issue or inquiry (Bryman, 2015). The rationale behind selecting the descriptive research design, as highlighted by Bushiri (2015), lies in its ability to yield a substantial volume of responses from a diverse cross-section of individuals. Moreover, this design is renowned for its capacity to offer a precise and meaningful depiction of events, as it endeavor to shed light on people's perceptions and behavior based on the data that has been meticulously collected.

### 3.3 Population of the Study

The population of this study comprise of all youths residing in Ekosodin Community, Ovia North-East Local Government Area of Edo State. Based on estimates from the National Population Commission (NPC, 2006) and local community sources, Ekosodin have an estimated youth population of about 12,500. This population includes both students of the University of Benin (UNIBEN) living off-campus in the community and non-student youths who are residents or engaged in various trades and occupations within Ekosodin. For the purpose of this research, the focus will primarily be on youths whose social, psychological, and economic wellbeing is affected by substance abuse, as well as key community stakeholders such as parents, health workers, religious leaders, and local development officers who play important roles in shaping youth behavior and community responses to substance abuse

### 3.4 Sampling Size and Sampling Technique

#### **Taro Yamane Formula:**

$$n = N/(1+N(e)^2)$$

Where:

- $n$  = sample size
- $N$  = population size (12,500)
- $e$  = margin of error (commonly 0.05 confidence level)

Substituting values:

$$n = 12500 / (1 + 12500(0.05)^2) = 12500 / (1 + 12500(0.0025)) = 12500 / (1 + 31.25) = 12500 / 32.25 = 387.6$$

approximately 388 youths

The sample size for this study consists of 388 youths drawn from different households and social groups within Ekosodin Community, Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. These youths were selected across varying age ranges, educational levels, and occupational categories, including students, apprentices, unemployed youths, and those engaged in informal economic activities. The inclusion of participants with diverse socio-economic and educational backgrounds ensures a comprehensive understanding of how substance abuse affects different aspects of youth life within the community.

The sampling technique employed for this study is the simple random technique. The youth population in Ekosodin Community will be stratified based on social groups and activity categories. From each stratum, a proportionate number of youths were randomly selected to ensure fair representation across community settings and socio-economic groups.

### **3.5 Instrument of Data Collection**

The primary data collection tool for this study was a structured questionnaire, which was developed specifically for the purpose of investigating *Substance Abuse: Its Effects amongst the Youth in Ekosodin Community, Ovia North East Local Government Area, Edo State*. The questionnaire consists of two main sections: Section A will cover

the demographic information such as age, gender, educational level, and occupation. Section B will address the main themes of the study, including causes types and patterns of substance abuse among youths, factors influencing substance abuse, the social, psychological, and economic effects of substance abuse, perceptions of community responses, and suggested strategies or interventions that can help reduce substance abuse and promote youth wellbeing within the community.

### **3.6 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

The instrument was validated by the researchers, supervisor in the Department of Social Work in the University of Benin, Benin City. Necessary suggestions and corrections on the questionnaire will be effected before printing for administering. The reliability of the instrument was done using test - retest reliability. It will be carried out in a way that the researcher administers the questionnaire twice and compare each items with the other using a coefficient of 0.88

### **3.7 Method of Data Collection**

Data for this study was collected using the structured questionnaire, which was administered in person to youths residing in Ekosodin Community, Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. The questionnaires will be distributed across different households, schools, apprenticeship centers, social gatherings, and youth activity spots within the community to ensure that the data represents a diverse cross-section of young people from various socio-economic and educational backgrounds. This approach will be adopted to capture a wide range of experiences and perspectives

regarding the prevalence, causes, and effects of substance abuse among the youth in Ekosodin Community.

### **3.8 Method of Data Analysis**

The data was analyzed using frequency counts and percentage to show the response of the questions asked through the questionnaire. Direct delivery and retrieval method will be applied in the administration of the questionnaire to the respondents.

### **3.9 Ethical Consideration**

The ethical considerations will be crucial because of the sensitivity of the subject matter. The research was conducted with full respect for participants by ensuring informed consent, where respondents will be made fully aware of the purpose, scope, and objectives of the study before voluntarily agreeing to participate. Confidentiality and anonymity was strictly maintained by protecting the identity of respondents through the use of pseudonyms and secure handling of data. Since the study involves substance abuse among youths, issues that may be stigmatizing or socially sensitive will be treated with utmost care to avoid exposing participants to any form of ridicule, discrimination, or social labeling.

Efforts was also made to respect the cultural values and norms of Ekosodin Community while critically analyzing the effects of substance abuse, ensuring that the study does not demean or disrespect local practices. Care will be taken to avoid harm by ensuring that participants do not experience psychological distress, social stigma, or conflict as a result of their involvement, and they will be reminded of their right to withdraw at any stage

without any consequence. The researcher will maintain objectivity and neutrality in data collection and reporting, presenting findings fairly without imposing personal views or stereotypes. Finally, all information collected will be used strictly for academic and professional purposes, ensuring that the data is not exploited for political, commercial, or personal interests.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyzes the data collected through the questionnaire distributed to youths in Ekosodin Community, Ovia North East Local Government Area, Edo State. A total of 388 questionnaires were administered, out of which 370 were duly completed and returned, representing a 95.4% response rate

#### 4.2 Demographic Data of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	198	54
	Female	172	46
<b>Age Range</b>	15–20 years	105	28
	21–25 years	158	43
	26–35 years	107	29
<b>Educational Level</b>	No Formal Education	22	6
	Primary	41	11
	Secondary	174	47
	Tertiary	133	36
<b>Length of Residence</b>	Less than 1 year	45	12
	1–5 years	142	38
	6–10 years	112	30
	Above 10 years	71	19
<b>Occupation</b>	Student	214	58
	Apprentice	41	11
	Employed	45	12
	Unemployed	34	9
	Self-employed	36	10

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The data presented in the table provides a comprehensive demographic overview of the study's respondents. In terms of gender, males constitute a slightly higher proportion (54%) than females (46%), indicating a relatively balanced sample. The age distribution reveals that the majority of respondents are young adults, with 43% aged 21–25 years, followed by 29% aged 26–35 years and 28% aged 15–20 years, suggesting that the population is predominantly youthful. Regarding educational attainment, nearly half (47%) have completed secondary education, while 36% have attained tertiary education, reflecting a generally well-educated group; only a small portion (17%) possess primary or no formal education. The length of residence data shows that most respondents (38%) have lived in the area for 1–5 years, while 30% have resided for 6–10 years, and 19% for over a decade, indicating a moderately stable community with a mix of long-term and newer residents. Occupationally, students dominate the sample (58%), followed by smaller groups of employed individuals (12%), apprentices (11%), self-employed persons (10%), and the unemployed (9%), emphasizing that the sample is largely composed of youth and learners, which may influence perspectives or behaviors captured in the study.

### 4.3 Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One: What are the most commonly abused substances among the youths in Ekosodin community?

S/N	Item Statement	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Std. Dev. (SD)
1	Youths in Ekosodin commonly abuse alcohol and marijuana.	3.62	0.54
2	Cigarettes and other tobacco products are widely used among youths in the community.	3.48	0.71
3	Some youths abuse prescription drugs such as tramadol, codeine, and rohypnol.	3.56	0.64
4	The use of hard drugs such as cocaine and heroin is becoming more common among youths.	3.22	0.79
5	Peer influence contributes to the choice of substances abused by youths.	3.74	0.48
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.52</b>	<b>0.63</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The table presents the respondents' perceptions of substance abuse among youths in Ekosodin, as reflected by the mean and standard deviation scores for each item. The grand mean of 3.52 indicates a generally high level of agreement among respondents that substance abuse is a prevalent issue in the community. Specifically, the highest mean score (3.74) corresponds to the statement that peer influence contributes to the choice of substances abused, suggesting that social pressure and peer networks play a significant role in promoting substance use among youths. This is closely followed by the perception that alcohol and marijuana abuse is common ( $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ) and that prescription

drugs like tramadol, codeine, and rohypnol are also being misused ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ), highlighting the widespread nature of both legal and illegal substance misuse. The use of tobacco products was also acknowledged ( $M = 3.48$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ), while the comparatively lower mean ( $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ) for hard drugs such as cocaine and heroin indicates that while such substances are present, they are less commonly abused relative to others. Overall, the low standard deviation values suggest a general consensus among respondents, reinforcing the conclusion that substance abuse, particularly influenced by peer pressure, is a significant social concern among Ekosodin youths.

Research Question Two: What are the social and psychological effects of substance abuse on youths in Ekosodin?

S/N	Item Statement	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Std. Dev. (SD)
6	Substance abuse leads to an increase in crime and violence among youths.	3.61	0.59
7	Many youths experience poor academic performance due to substance abuse.	3.45	0.73
8	Substance abuse causes mental health issues such as depression and anxiety.	3.57	0.65
9	Drug use weakens family relationships and causes social isolation.	3.43	0.71
10	Substance abuse leads to loss of self-control and irresponsible behavior among youths.	3.64	0.56
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.54</b>	<b>0.65</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The data in the table highlights respondents' views on the effects of substance abuse among youths in Ekosodin, as shown by the mean and standard deviation scores. With a grand mean of 3.54, the results indicate a strong overall agreement that substance abuse has significant negative consequences on youths and their communities. The highest mean score (3.64) corresponds to the statement that substance abuse leads to loss of self-control and irresponsible behavior, suggesting that behavioral deterioration is a major concern. This is followed by the belief that substance abuse increases crime and violence among youths ( $M = 3.61$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ) and causes mental health problems such as

depression and anxiety ( $M = 3.57$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ), emphasizing both social and psychological repercussions. Respondents also agreed that substance abuse contributes to poor academic performance ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ) and weakens family relationships, leading to social isolation ( $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ). The relatively low standard deviation values across items indicate a consistent level of agreement among participants. Overall, the findings suggest that respondents perceive substance abuse as a serious issue with far-reaching impacts on individual behavior, mental health, education, family cohesion, and community safety.

Research Question Three: What types of support systems and interventions currently exist in Ekosodin to address youth substance abuse?

S/N	Item Statement	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Std. Dev. (SD)
11	There are government programs aimed at reducing youth substance abuse in Ekosodin.	2.46	0.89
12	NGOs provide awareness and rehabilitation programs.	2.89	0.81
13	Religious organizations play a significant role in counseling youths against drug abuse.	3.22	0.78
14	Schools in Ekosodin educate students about the dangers of drug abuse.	3.18	0.82
15	The community provides active support to rehabilitate affected youths.	2.67	0.86
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.88</b>	<b>0.83</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The table presents respondents' perceptions of the efforts made by various institutions to reduce youth substance abuse in Ekosodin, as reflected by the mean and standard deviation scores. The grand mean of 2.88 suggests a moderate level of agreement, indicating that while some interventions exist, they are perceived as insufficient or inconsistently implemented. Among the items, religious organizations received the highest mean ( $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ), showing that they are viewed as the most active and influential in counseling youths against drug abuse. Similarly, schools' involvement in educating students about the dangers of drug abuse was also acknowledged ( $M = 3.18$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ), though not strongly, suggesting that educational efforts are present but may need strengthening. In contrast, respondents expressed weaker agreement with statements regarding government programs ( $M = 2.46$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ) and community support for rehabilitation ( $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ), indicating that formal and local institutional responses are lacking or ineffective. The role of NGOs was rated moderately ( $M = 2.89$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ), implying that while non-governmental initiatives exist, they may not reach a significant portion of the youth population. Overall, the results highlight a perceived gap in coordinated and sustained interventions, with religious and educational institutions leading efforts where governmental and community structures appear less proactive.

Research Question Four: What challenges do youths face when trying to access rehabilitation and counseling services for substance abuse?

S/N	Item Statement	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Std. Dev. (SD)
16	Many youths cannot afford rehabilitation or counseling services.	3.42	0.73
17	There are limited rehabilitation centers available within Ekosodin.	3.63	0.57
18	Stigmatization discourages youths from seeking help.	3.55	0.64
19	Lack of awareness about available support services prevents youths from accessing them.	3.38	0.69
20	Cultural and family factors make it difficult for youths to admit they need help.	3.47	0.61
	<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>3.49</b>	<b>0.65</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The data in the table reflects respondents' perceptions of the challenges hindering access to rehabilitation and support services for youths involved in substance abuse in Ekosodin. With a grand mean of 3.49, the findings indicate a strong overall agreement that multiple barriers limit effective rehabilitation and recovery. The highest mean score ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 0.57$ ) points to the limited availability of rehabilitation centers, suggesting that infrastructural inadequacy is the most significant obstacle faced by affected youths. This is followed closely by the perception that stigmatization discourages youths from seeking help ( $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ) and that cultural and family factors make it difficult for youths to admit they need assistance ( $M = 3.47$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ), highlighting the deep social and cultural barriers surrounding substance abuse treatment. Furthermore, respondents

agreed that many youths cannot afford rehabilitation or counseling services ( $M = 3.42$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ) and that lack of awareness about available support services further prevents access ( $M = 3.38$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ). The relatively low standard deviations indicate consistent agreement across respondents. Overall, the data reveals that structural limitations, financial constraints, stigma, and sociocultural pressures collectively create significant challenges for youths seeking rehabilitation in Ekosodin, underscoring the need for improved accessibility, awareness, and community support systems.

Research Question Five: What are the roles of social workers in addressing substance abuse among youth in the study area?

S/N	Item Statement	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Std. Dev. (SD)
21	Social workers provide effective counseling and guidance to youths involved in substance abuse.	3.68	0.52
22	Social workers play an active role in creating awareness programs on the dangers of substance abuse.	3.74	0.47
23	Social workers collaborate with families and community leaders to support youths struggling with substance abuse.	3.59	0.58
24	Social workers help in referring affected youths to appropriate rehabilitation and treatment services.	3.71	0.49
25	Social workers engage in follow-up and monitoring activities to ensure recovery and prevent relapse.	3.66	0.54
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>3.68</b>	<b>0.52</b>

The results from the table above reveal that respondents strongly agree that social workers play a crucial and multifaceted role in addressing substance abuse among youths in the study area, as reflected in the high grand mean of 3.68. The highest-rated item indicates that social workers actively engage in creating awareness programs on the dangers of substance abuse (Mean = 3.74), showing that preventive education is

perceived as one of their most significant contributions. This is closely followed by their involvement in referring affected youths to rehabilitation and treatment services (Mean = 3.71) and providing effective counseling and guidance (Mean = 3.68), suggesting that social workers are deeply involved in both preventive and intervention strategies. Furthermore, the relatively high mean scores for collaboration with families and community leaders (Mean = 3.59) and monitoring and follow-up to prevent relapse (Mean = 3.66) indicate that respondents recognize the importance of ongoing community engagement and sustained support in the recovery process. The consistently low standard deviation values across items show minimal variation in responses, implying strong agreement among participants regarding the essential roles played by social workers. Overall, the findings demonstrate that social workers are viewed as central actors in prevention, treatment, support, and recovery efforts aimed at reducing substance abuse among youths in the study area.

#### **4.5 Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the nature, effects, and challenges associated with youth substance abuse in Ekosodin community, as well as the roles played by various institutions in addressing the problem. The demographic data revealed that the population is predominantly youthful, with most respondents aged between 21–25 years and a majority possessing at least secondary education. The relatively high proportion of students (58%) suggests that substance abuse within Ekosodin primarily affects young, educated individuals, many of whom are still in school

or early stages of their careers. This demographic pattern aligns with previous studies emphasizing that substance abuse is more prevalent among young adults who are exposed to peer pressure and social experimentation.

The analysis of the prevalence and patterns of substance abuse among youths showed a grand mean of 3.52, indicating that respondents strongly agreed that substance abuse is common in Ekosodin. Alcohol and marijuana were identified as the most frequently abused substances, followed by tobacco products and prescription drugs such as tramadol, codeine, and rohypnol. Although the use of hard drugs like cocaine and heroin was perceived to be less common, its increasing trend is concerning. Peer influence emerged as the most significant factor contributing to substance abuse, suggesting that social interactions and pressure from peers play a crucial role in shaping youth behavior. This finding supports existing literature that identifies peer dynamics as a dominant driver of substance experimentation and addiction among young people.

The perceived effects of substance abuse among youths were also substantial, with a grand mean of 3.54, indicating strong agreement that drug use has wide-ranging negative consequences. Respondents agreed that substance abuse leads to loss of self-control, irresponsible behavior, crime, and violence. It was also found to contribute to mental health problems such as depression and anxiety, poor academic performance, and weakened family relationships. These findings are consistent with global and national research emphasizing the multifaceted impact of drug abuse on personal wellbeing, education, and community safety. The strong agreement across items further underscores

the recognition of substance abuse as not merely a personal issue, but a social and psychological challenge affecting youth development and community stability.

Regarding the institutional and community responses to the problem, the findings revealed a grand mean of 2.88, reflecting only moderate agreement that interventions exist in Ekosodin. While religious organizations and schools were acknowledged for their counseling and educational roles, government programs and community-led rehabilitation efforts were perceived as weak or inadequate. This indicates a lack of coordinated and sustainable institutional engagement in addressing youth substance abuse. Although some NGOs were noted to provide awareness and rehabilitation programs, their reach appears limited. The findings suggest a pressing need for stronger governmental and community involvement, improved policy implementation, and greater collaboration among stakeholders to enhance prevention and rehabilitation initiatives.

Finally, the study identified several major challenges hindering access to rehabilitation and support services, with a grand mean of 3.49, signifying strong consensus among respondents. The most significant barriers included the limited availability of rehabilitation centers, financial constraints, stigmatization, cultural and family pressures, and lack of awareness about available services. These challenges demonstrate that even when some interventions exist, many youths are unable or unwilling to access them due to social stigma, inadequate infrastructure, and poor information dissemination. Such findings echo broader concerns in substance abuse research that effective rehabilitation is often constrained by structural, economic, and sociocultural factors.

In summary, the findings indicate that substance abuse among youths in Ekosodin is a pervasive and growing concern, driven largely by peer influence and facilitated by weak institutional responses. Its effects cut across behavioral, academic, mental, and social domains, while access to rehabilitation remains limited by financial, infrastructural, and cultural barriers. Addressing these issues will require a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach that combines education, policy enforcement, counseling, and community engagement to foster a supportive environment for prevention and recovery.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Summary

The study examines Substance Abuse and Its Effects amongst the Youth in Ekosodin Community, Ovia North East Local Government Area, Edo State. It focuses on identifying the most commonly abused substances, the social and psychological effects of substance abuse, the available support systems and interventions in the community, and the challenges youths face in accessing rehabilitation and counseling services.

The research adopted a descriptive survey design, with a sample of 388 youths selected through a simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising 20 items divided into four research questions. The collected data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation, while demographic variables were presented using frequency and percentage distributions.

The findings indicate that:

1. Substance abuse is prevalent among youths in Ekosodin, with alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, and prescription drugs such as tramadol and codeine being the most commonly abused substances. Peer influence was identified as a major contributing factor.
2. Substance abuse has significant social and psychological consequences, including increased involvement in crime and violence, poor academic performance, depression, anxiety, and weakened family relationships.

3. Although some support systems exist such as NGO awareness programs, school education initiatives, and religious counseling efforts there is limited government intervention and inadequate community-based rehabilitation programs.
4. Youths face multiple challenges in accessing rehabilitation and counseling services, such as high costs, lack of nearby facilities, stigmatization, poor awareness of available support, and cultural or family-related barriers to seeking help.
5. The findings further reveal that despite existing informal support structures, the absence of coordinated community and government efforts continues to undermine effective prevention and rehabilitation of substance abuse in the area.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The study concludes that substance abuse among youths in Ekosodin Community remains a pressing social and public health concern. The abuse of alcohol, marijuana, and prescription drugs has become common, largely driven by peer pressure, easy accessibility, and limited supervision. The effects extend beyond the individual to the community, manifesting in increased crime, mental health issues, poor academic outcomes, and family instability.

While NGOs, schools, and religious bodies make commendable efforts in awareness and counseling, their impact is limited by inadequate resources and minimal government

involvement. The challenges of affordability, stigmatization, and lack of access to rehabilitation centers hinder youths from seeking help.

Therefore, addressing substance abuse in Ekosodin requires a multi-sectoral approach that combines government action, community involvement, education, and healthcare collaboration. Effective strategies must prioritize prevention, rehabilitation, and reintegration, while reducing stigma and strengthening social support networks.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthen Government Intervention:** Government agencies should establish and fund rehabilitation and counseling centers within or near Ekosodin to provide accessible and affordable treatment for affected youths.
2. **Enhance Community Awareness and Education:** Regular sensitization programs should be organized by community leaders, schools, and NGOs to educate youths and parents about the dangers of drug and substance abuse.
3. **Promote School-Based Prevention Initiatives:** Drug education should be integrated into school curricula and extracurricular activities to equip students with knowledge and resistance skills against peer pressure and substance experimentation.
4. **Improve Access to Counseling and Rehabilitation Services:** Partnerships between government health institutions and NGOs should be strengthened to

expand counseling services and rehabilitation outreach programs targeted at youths.

5. **Address Stigmatization:** Public campaigns should emphasize that addiction is a treatable condition rather than a moral failure, encouraging affected individuals to seek help without fear of discrimination or shame.

### **5.3 Suggestions for Further Research**

Future research could explore:

1. The role of peer influence and social media in promoting or discouraging substance use among youths in university communities.
2. The effectiveness of community-based rehabilitation models compared to institutional rehabilitation centers.
3. A comparative study of substance abuse patterns among youths in urban and rural areas of Edo State.
4. The impact of parental supervision and family structure on youth involvement in substance abuse.
5. The long-term psychological and economic consequences of substance abuse among rehabilitated youths in tertiary environments.

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## APPENDIX

### QUESTIONNAIRE

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE  
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN  
BENIN CITY.**

Dear Respondent,

**REQUEST FOR YOUR COOPERATION IN COMPLETING THIS  
QUESTIONNAIRE**

I am an undergraduate student in the Department of Social Work, University of Benin. As part of the requirements for the award of a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree, I am conducting a research study on the topic: “Substance Abuse: Its Effects amongst the Youth in Ekosodin Community, Ovia North East Local Government Area, Edo State.”

This questionnaire is designed to collect relevant data for the study. Your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. Kindly respond honestly by ticking (✓) the option that best represents your opinion.

Thank you for your kind cooperation.

### Section A: Personal Data

Please tick (✓) the option that applies to you.

1. **Gender:** Male ( ) Female ( )
2. **Age Range:** 15–20 years ( ) 21–25 years ( ) 26–35 years ( )
3. **Educational Level:** No Formal Education ( ) Primary ( ) Secondary ( ) Tertiary ( )
4. **Length of Residence in Ekosodin:** Less than 1 year ( ) 1–5 years ( ) 6–10 years ( ) Above 10 years ( )
5. **Occupation:** Student ( ) Apprentice ( ) Employed ( ) Unemployed ( ) Self-employed

### Section B: Data on Questionnaire

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Key: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
	<b>What are the most commonly abused substances among the youths in the Ekosodin community of Ovia North East LGA?</b>				
1.	Youths in Ekosodin commonly abuse alcohol and marijuana.				
2.	Cigarettes and other tobacco products are widely used among youths in the community.				
3.	Some youths abuse prescription drugs such as tramadol, codeine, and rohypnol.				
4.	The use of hard drugs such as cocaine and heroin is becoming more common among youths.				
5.	Peer influence contributes to the choice of substances abused by youths.				
	<b>What are the social and psychological effects of substance abuse on youths in the Ekosodin community of Ovia North East LGA?</b>				
6.	Substance abuse leads to an increase in crime and violence				

	among youths.				
7.	Many youths experience poor academic performance due to substance abuse.				
8.	Substance abuse causes mental health issues such as depression and anxiety.				
9.	Drug use weakens family relationships and causes social isolation.				
10.	Substance abuse leads to loss of self-control and irresponsible behavior among youths.				
	<b>What types of support systems and interventions currently exist in Ekosodin of Ovia North East LGA to address youth substance abuse?</b>				
11.	There are government programs aimed at reducing youth substance abuse in Ekosodin.				
12.	Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide awareness and rehabilitation programs.				
13.	Religious organizations play a significant role in counseling youths against drug abuse.				
14.	Schools in Ekosodin educate students about the dangers of drug abuse.				
15.	The community provides active support to rehabilitate affected youths.				
	<b>What challenges do youths in Ekosodin face when trying to access rehabilitation and counseling services for substance abuse?</b>				
16.	Many youths cannot afford rehabilitation or counseling services.				
17.	There are limited rehabilitation centers available within Ekosodin.				
18.	Stigmatization discourages youths from seeking help.				
19.	Lack of awareness about available support services prevents youths from accessing them.				
20.	Cultural and family factors make it difficult for youths to admit they need help.				
	<b>What are the roles of social workers in addressing substance abuse among youth in the study area?</b>				
21.	Social workers provide effective counseling and guidance to youths involved in substance abuse				
22.	Social workers play an active role in creating awareness programs on the dangers of substance abuse				

23.	Social workers collaborate with families and community leaders to support youths struggling with substance abuse				
24.	Social workers help in referring affected youths to appropriate rehabilitation and treatment services				
25.	Social workers engage in follow-up and monitoring activities to ensure recovery and prevent relapse among youths				