

**INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND DRUG ABUSE ON YOUTH IN OVIA
NORTHEAST, EDO STATE.**

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**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY, NIGERIA**

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**A RESEARCH WORK PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK,
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
MASTER'S DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK.**

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FEBRUARY, 2026

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that; this research work was carried out and Submitted by **IJEH CHIKA**
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Date

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty for His grace, to my parents for their unconditional love, and to myself for perseverance, resilience, and determination throughout this academic journey.

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I acknowledge the grace and strength of God Almighty, which sustained me throughout the course of my Master of Science (MSc) program and enabled the successful completion of this research work.

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ABSTRACT

The influence of social media on youth behavior has become a major concern, particularly regarding its role in promoting drug abuse. This study investigates how social media contributes to drug use among youths in General Ovia North East, Edo State, focusing on the relationship between exposure to online content, peer interactions, and drug-related behaviors. The objectives were to determine the types of social media content that influence drug use, examine the role of peer pressure in online spaces, and assess youths' awareness of the risks associated with substance abuse.

A mixed-methods research design was employed, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to capture a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. Data were collected from youths aged 15–30 years, using structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides. Quantitative findings indicate a significant correlation between high social media usage and increased susceptibility to drug abuse, while qualitative insights reveal that peer influence, online trends, and social validation strongly affect youths' attitudes toward drug experimentation. Additionally, many respondents perceive drug use as socially normalized within certain online communities.

The study concludes that social media plays a critical role in shaping youth behaviors, both directly through exposure to drug-related content and indirectly through peer influence. Recommendations include the implementation of targeted awareness campaigns, parental supervision, and policy interventions to mitigate the negative impact of social media on youths. This research provides valuable evidence for public health practitioners, educators, and community leaders in designing strategies to prevent and reduce drug abuse among youths in Edo State and similar communities.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Social media has become one of the most powerful communication tools globally, shaping how people interact, learn, and share information. It enhances connection, creativity, and knowledge exchange among people (Pew Research Center, 2022). Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and X play major roles in shaping modern social relationships, entertainment, and foster global networks that support education, and social participation (Valkenburg, 2022).

However, while social media provides enormous benefits, research increasingly shows that it also exposes young people to risky behaviours, including drug use. Studies across the world have found that pro-drug content such as videos that glamorizes alcohol, cannabis, vaping, codeine-based mixtures, and other psychoactive substances is easily circulated online that makes substance use appear enjoyable or socially acceptable (Anderson et al., 2021). Social learning processes, viral challenges, peer approval, and influencer portrayals further encourage imitation and experimentation among adolescents and young adults (Bandura, 1977; Moreno & White-hill, 2014). As a result, heavy social media users are significantly more likely to try drugs or alcohol than their peers with lower exposure (Gunn et al., 2023).

In Africa, rising internet penetration has increased youths' exposure to online drug-related content. Studies show that social platforms now play a major role in shaping substance use attitudes across the continent, especially where unemployment, poverty, and peer pressure already threaten youth wellbeing (Akanbi et al., 2019). Because online spaces often lack strict regulation, harmful content spreads quickly, normalizing risky behaviour and making access to drugs easier through messaging

channels, peer groups, or anonymous pages (UNODC, 2023). Nigeria faces a particularly serious drug abuse problem. The UNODC's national survey reported a drug use prevalence of 14.4% among people aged 15–64 almost three times the global average (UNODC, 2018). Young people are both the highest users of social media and the most vulnerable to drug experimentation. Local studies in states such as Lagos, Delta, and Rivers have shown that exposure to drug-related posts, celebrity endorsements, and peer interactions on social media significantly predicts curiosity, permissive attitudes, and eventual drug use among adolescents and undergraduates (Adejoh et al., 2020; Isangadighi et al., 2025). Operational intelligence and media reports from the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in the state reported multiple arrests, destruction of cannabis farms, and seizure of more than 41,000 kilograms of narcotics, signaling a dynamic local market and the likelihood of youth exposure to supply and distribution networks.

Edo State has also witnessed a rise in youth drug involvement. NDLEA operations have consistently uncovered large quantities of cannabis, opioids, and synthetic substances in the state, suggesting high availability and accessibility (Punch, 2025). Community-level studies in Benin City report that peer influence, stress, social media exposure, and changing social norms contribute to substance use among youths in the region (Eke et al., 2022). However, these studies are general and do not specifically isolate the influence of social media dynamics.

Ovia North-East is a semi-urban area that is socially and economically connected to Benin City through schooling, commerce, and media consumption. The Ovia North-East Local Government Area provides a particularly relevant context for this study. It hosts a large youth population of secondary-school students, university undergraduates, apprentices, and out-of-school young people, many of whom actively use smartphones and social networks. As social media becomes

more integrated into youth lifestyles, it is important to understand how digital exposure interacts with local factors to influence drug-related attitudes and behaviours. Despite increasing concern about drug use in the area, there is limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on the influence of social media on youth drug abuse in Ovia North-East.

Despite global and national attention to the role of digital media in shaping youth risk behaviours, there remains a clear gap in community-level evidence from Edo State, particularly within Ovia North-East Local Government Area. While existing studies around Benin City indicate that young people are exposed to multiple risk factors both offline through peer networks and socially permissive environments, and online through constant interaction with digital platforms none have provided a detailed, locality-specific assessment of how social media content shapes drug-related attitudes, intentions, and behavioural outcomes among adolescents and young adults in this area (Eke, Osifo & Akhigbe, 2022; Adejoh, Ogwuche & Ocheme, 2020). Given the increasing rate of smartphone ownership and daily engagement with platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook among Nigerian youths, alongside the documented presence of drug related content, advertisements, and influencer driven substance portrayal online (Anderson et al., 2021; Moreno & White-hill, 2014), a focused study in Ovia North-East is both timely and necessary. Findings from such an assessment can support school-based prevention initiatives, guide community programming, strengthen digital policy advocacy, and help state agencies and civil society organizations design targeted interventions that leverage social media for protective messaging and counter-marketing efforts aimed at reducing youth drug abuse.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining how social media exposure affects drug abuse among youths in Ovia North-East, Edo State. The findings will help guide schools,

parents, social workers, and policymakers in developing targeted interventions that address the online factors contributing to rising drug use among young people.

1.2 Statement of the Research problem

Across the globe, adolescent and youth exposure to drug-related content on social media is increasingly linked to the initiation and escalation of substance use. Recent syntheses show that youths who frequently encounter substance portrayals online have higher odds of tobacco, cannabis and other drug use, and that multi-platform engagement compounds this risk through peer modeling, perceived norms and targeted recommendation algorithms (Gunn et al., 2023; UNODC, 2023). In parallel, international monitoring indicates that overall drug use remains high, with one in 17 persons aged 15 to 64 using a drug in the past year, underscoring a persistent public health burden that intersects with digital environments where young people spend substantial time (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2023).

Nigeria reflects these global concerns, with multiple studies and reports pointing to worrying levels of youth substance use and its psychosocial and economic consequences. Scoping reviews place youth and student prevalence estimates in double digits nationwide; while emerging Nigerian studies specifically implicate social media exposure and peer pressure in adolescent substance-use patterns. Although the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency and partner ministries have intensified enforcement and prevention efforts, reportage through 2024 still frames drug abuse among youths as a rising menace that requires more targeted, evidence-based responses (NDLEA, 2024).

Within the Edo State, and particularly in Ovia North-East Local Government Area, there remains a notable lack of empirical evidence on how social media shapes drug-related attitudes, intentions,

and behaviours among youth. Although recent community-level studies in Benin City have reported significant impacts of youth substance abuse on health, safety, and social cohesion (Adejoh et al., 2020; PIND Foundation, 2021), these studies do not specifically examine digital influences in Ovia North-East. A 2025 study carried out among senior secondary school students in neighbouring Local Government Area found that social media use significantly predicted perceptions and behaviours related to drug abuse, highlighting the growing influence of digital environments on youth risk behaviours (Taylor & Francis Online, 2025). These findings align with broader international warnings, including updated reports by the World Health Organization that show sharp increases in problematic social media use and concerning patterns of adolescent substance involvement globally (WHO, 2024). Despite these signals, locality-specific evidence remains scarce, creating a critical gap that limits targeted prevention, policy responses, and community-based interventions in Ovia North-East.

Yet, despite this growing body of evidence, there is a critical knowledge gap in Ovia North-East Local Government Area. Specifically, there is limited empirical documentation on how distinct social media exposures, platforms and interaction styles shape drug-related attitudes, intentions and use among youths in this locality, considering contextual factors such as school type, neighbourhood risk, parental monitoring and offline peer networks. Existing studies from Edo State provide important signals, but they do not disaggregate platform-specific influences, do not adequately test theoretically grounded pathways such as social learning and normative influence in this LGA, and rarely integrate digital-media metrics with validated substance-use measures for local programmes design (WHO, 2024).

Consequently, policymakers, school administrators, public-health practitioners, and community leaders in Ovia North-East lack precise, locally generated evidence to guide prevention messaging,

platform partnerships, parent–teacher engagement, and NDLEA-aligned interventions tailored to the area’s youth. Existing national and regional findings show that youth exposure to drug-related content online shapes attitudes and behaviours (Taylor & Francis Online, 2025; Adejoh et al., 2020), yet no empirical study has provided community-specific data for Ovia North-East. Without such evidence, prevention efforts risk being generic, under-targeted, and less cost-effective, allowing online drug-related content and peer amplification to outpace mitigation strategies a concern already highlighted in recent WHO reports warning about rising problematic social media use and adolescent substance involvement (WHO, 2024). This study therefore addresses these gaps by investigating the influence of social media on drug abuse among youths in Ovia North-East, Edo State, with the goal of generating actionable insights for local policy development, school community programming, and evidence-based interventions informed by recent empirical literature.

1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to investigate the **Influence of social media and Drug Abuse on Youths in Ovia North-East, Edo State**. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Assess the extent of youth exposure to social media platforms in Ovia North-East, Edo State.
- ii. Examine how social media content contributes to drug abuse behaviours among youths in the study area.
- iii. Determine the influence of peer interactions on social media on youths’ attitudes and intentions toward drug use.
- iv. Investigate the role of social media influencers and celebrities in promoting or discouraging drug abuse among youths in Ovia North-East.

- v. Identify the roles of social workers in addressing the influence of social media on drug abuse among youths in the study area.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

- i. What is the extent of youth exposure to social media platforms in Ovia North East, Edo State?
- ii. How does social media content contribute to drug abuse behaviours among youths in the study area?
- iii. In what ways do peer interactions on social media influence youths' attitudes toward drug use?
- iv. What role do social media influencers and celebrities play in promoting or discouraging drug abuse among youth?
- v. What are the roles of social workers in addressing the influence of social media on drug abuse among youths in Ovia North-East, Edo State?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it will focus directly on young people, who are the most active users of social media and the-most vulnerable to its potential negative influences. It provides valuable insights into how social media contributes to drug abuse among youths in Ovia North East. Youths are among the most active users of social media, and understanding how online exposure shapes their attitudes and behaviours is essential for safeguarding their health, academic performance, and overall well-being. By examining how online platforms shape attitudes and behaviours toward drug use, the research sheds light on critical developmental challenges that

could affect their academic performance, health, and long-term life outcomes. Such insights are vital for promoting healthier lifestyles and safeguarding the future of the youth population in Ovia North East.

The findings of this study will benefit schools and educational institutions by helping administrators, teachers, and counsellors understand how social media influences students' behaviour. This will assist in designing effective awareness campaigns, strengthening guidance programmes, and promoting digital literacy that discourages drug use and aimed at protecting the youths from drug-related influence.

For public-health practitioners, counsellors, and social workers, the study provides evidence that will aid in creating targeted prevention, counselling, and rehabilitation programmes. Understanding the online triggers of drug use will enable these practitioners to design more relevant interventions for youths in the community.

The study is also important to parents and guardians, as it sheds light on how social media affects young people's decisions. With this knowledge, parents can better monitor their children's online activities, guide them on healthy media use, and provide the necessary support to prevent drug experimentation.

Health practitioners and social workers will find this study useful in developing preventive and rehabilitative programs. Since drug abuse has direct consequences on physical and mental health, the findings will help them to design community health campaigns, counseling strategies, and peer led interventions that take into account the influence of social media exposure.

This study will contribute to the body of academic knowledge by filling a research gap on the relationship between social media exposure and drug abuse in Ovia North East, Edo State. It provides empirical data that other researchers can build upon, while also expanding theoretical

perspectives on media influence and substance abuse among youth in developing contexts. Policymakers, NDLEA officials, and community leaders will also benefit from this study, as it offers locally generated data that can guide the formulation of strategies, regulations, and sensitization programmes aimed at reducing drug abuse among young people in Ovia North-East. Finally, the study is significant for the wider community because it helps identify the social media driven factors contributing to rising drug abuse. With this understanding, community leaders, NGOs, and religious organizations can tailor grassroots campaigns to promote positive values, discourage drug culture, and build a drug-free society in Ovia North East and beyond.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study is limited to examining the influence of social media on drug abuse among youths aged 15 to 30 years in Ovia North-East Local Government Area of Edo State. It focuses on youths within this age range who actively use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and X, and explores how their exposure to online content, peer interactions, and influencer activities relates to drug-related attitudes and behaviours. The study is geographically restricted to selected communities, schools, and youth-dominated environments within Ovia North-East and does not extend to other local government areas. Thematically, it covers the level of youths' social media exposure, the contribution of social media to drug abuse, peer influence online, the role of influencers, and the role of social workers in addressing these issues. Data will be collected using a mixed-methods approach involving questionnaires and interviews, and the findings will reflect only the experiences and perceptions of the sampled youth population within the 15–30 age bracket in the study area.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Abuse: In this study, abuse refers to the harmful, excessive, or inappropriate use of psychoactive substances such as alcohol, cannabis, tramadol, cocaine, or other drugs, which negatively affect health, social functioning, and overall well-being.

Drug Abuse: This is the habitual consumption of legal or illegal substances in ways that are detrimental to an individual's health, behaviour, or productivity. It includes both experimentation and addiction to substances influenced by peer groups, media exposure, and environmental factors.

Influence: This refers to the power or capacity of one factor to shape, change, or determine the behaviour, decisions, or attitudes of an individual or group. In this study, it denotes the impact of social media content and interactions on youths' tendencies towards drug use.

Social Media: This refers to digital platforms and applications such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and X (formerly Twitter) that enable users to create, share, and interact with content. In this study, social media is examined as a channel that exposes youths to both positive and negative influences, including drug-related information.

Youth: Youth refer to individuals between the ages of 15 and 35 years, as defined by Nigeria's National Youth Policy. For this study, youths are young people residing in Ovia North East, Edo State, who are considered highly active users of social media and are at risk of exposure to drug related content.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Preamble

This chapter reviews existing literature related to the influence of social media and drug abuse among youths, with specific attention to Ovia North-East. It discusses major concepts, theories, and empirical findings relevant to the study. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an academic foundation by identifying what previous scholars have discovered, the gaps that remain, and how the present study contributes to existing knowledge. The review is structured into the conceptual review, theoretical review, empirical review, and a summary that links existing knowledge to the objectives of the study.

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Concept of Social Media

Social media refers to internet-based platforms that allow users to create, modify, and share information through interactive communication channels. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe social media as a group of web-based applications built on the ideological foundations of Web 2.0, enabling the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, Snapchat, and X provide spaces where youths interact, express themselves, build peer networks, and consume information that shapes their attitudes and behaviours (Boyd, 2014).

In the context of Ovia North-East, exposure to social media among youths varies widely due to socioeconomic disparities. Young people in low-income households often rely on shared devices, public Wi-Fi hotspots, or community centers for internet access, which limits privacy and increases

vulnerability to unregulated online content. Adeleke and Odunola (2019) report that reliance on free or shared networks exposes users to harmful materials such as explicit content, misinformation, and predatory interactions. Olatunji et al. (2020) further note that only about 45% of youths in similar rural Nigerian communities have consistent internet access, with challenges such as high data costs and poor electricity supply affecting usage patterns. This often leads to shared viewing situations, where younger children are unintentionally exposed to age-inappropriate content, raising concerns about psychological and developmental impacts.

Recent literature identifies significant risks associated with youth social media exposure. Cyberbullying remains a major concern, with adolescents experiencing harassment, anonymous attacks, or exclusion on platforms like TikTok and Instagram (Abayomi & Adekeye, 2021). Social media addiction is also increasingly reported among youths, reflected in compulsive scrolling, disrupted sleep patterns, and neglect of real-life responsibilities, with symptoms similar to behavioural dependencies (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). The World Health Organization (2023) highlights a strong correlation between excessive social media use and poor mental health outcomes among African youths, including heightened anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and suicidal ideation. These issues emerge from constant exposure to curated images, unrealistic standards of beauty, and the pressure of constant connectivity.

Despite access challenges, many rural youths engage with digital platforms that provide escapism and entertainment. Okoye and Edewor (2020) observe that Nigerian youths frequently participate in online gaming, gossip communities, and viral challenges, which shape their identity and behaviours. However, exposure to glamorized portrayals of substance use in these online environments may normalize drug-related behaviours, particularly among youths who lack offline

guidance or educational support. This highlights the importance of understanding social media exposure patterns among youths in Ovia North-East, as such exposure may act as an entry point into risky behaviours including drug abuse.

2.1.2 Youth Exposure to Social Media

Youth exposure to social media refers to the frequency, duration, patterns, and intensity of online engagement among young people. In today's digital environment, social media has become deeply integrated into the daily lives of youths globally, shaping how they communicate, form relationships, consume information, and construct identity. Rideout and Robb (2018) note that youths spend an average of several hours daily on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and Snapchat, indicating that social media is not merely a leisure activity but a dominant social environment. This high level of exposure increases the likelihood that young people encounter a wide range of content, including educational materials, entertainment, peer interactions, and risky content such as substance-use portrayals or harmful trends.

In the Nigerian context, youth exposure is influenced by both cultural and technological factors. Olowu and Seri (2012) found that Nigerian youths rely heavily on social media for communication, trend-following, entertainment, and social affirmation, often considering it an essential part of their social identity. The widespread use of mobile phones, coupled with increasing internet accessibility, has made social media more pervasive among youths aged 15–30. Despite infrastructural challenges, many young people in both urban and rural areas have integrated social media into their daily routines, using it for social relationships, information exchange, and participation in online communities.

However, patterns of exposure differ significantly in rural communities such as Ovia North-East due to socioeconomic disparities. Studies show that youths from low-income households often rely on shared smartphones, community cybercafés, or public Wi-Fi spots to access social media (Adeleke & Odunola, 2019). This shared-access model reduces privacy and may expose younger siblings or children to age-inappropriate content when adults or older youths browse without supervision. Olatunji et al. (2020) further report that inconsistent electricity supply and expensive mobile data limit prolonged engagement, yet the little access youths have is often spent on popular platforms that promote escapism, humour, gossip, or viral trends. These access patterns reflect selective but intense exposure, shaped by socioeconomic limitations and digital inequalities common to rural Nigeria.

Extended exposure brings both opportunities and risks. Social media offers educational materials, motivational content, and opportunities for social bonding, yet it also exposes youths to cyberbullying, misinformation, explicit content, and behavioural influence. Abayomi and Adekeye (2021) observe that Nigerian adolescents often experience cyberbullying on Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok, leading to emotional distress and social anxiety. The World Health Organization (2023) reports that excessive social media use among African youths is linked to increased rates of depression, low self-esteem, and anxiety, particularly when exposure includes unrealistic lifestyle portrayals or glamorized risky behaviours. Furthermore, Kuss and Griffiths (2017) explain that high-frequency exposure can lead to addictive patterns such as compulsive scrolling, dependence on online validation, and disrupted sleep routines.

The significance of youth exposure to social media lies in its potential to shape behavioural choices, including those related to drug use. As youths spend more time online, their risk of

encountering glamorized portrayals of drugs, peer-influenced challenges, and celebrity lifestyles increases. Okoye and Edewor (2020) argue that exposure to online escapist content can influence youths seeking relief from daily stressors, sometimes pushing them toward risky behaviours when online environments normalize drug-related lifestyles. For this reason, understanding the specific levels, patterns, and nature of social media exposure among youths in Ovia North-East is essential for explaining how such exposure intersects with drug abuse trends. This objective therefore provides a foundation for evaluating how digital experiences directly or indirectly shape youth behaviour in the study area.

2.1.3 Social Media Content and Drug Abuse

Social media hosts a vast amount of content, including posts, videos, music, and images that may either discourage or promote drug use. Moreno et al. (2014) found that portrayals of alcohol, cannabis, and other substances commonly appear on platforms like Instagram, often glamorizing risky behaviours. Such content may present drug use as fashionable, humorous, or socially acceptable. Primack et al. (2017) further explain that repeated exposure to substance-related content increases curiosity, reduces perceived harm, and may encourage experimentation among vulnerable youth populations. This suggests a strong link between social media content and drug related behaviours.

2.1.4 Peer Influence on Social Media

Peer influence on social media is a significant factor shaping youth behaviour. Valkenburg and Peter (2011) argue that peer approval, often expressed through likes, comments, and shares, reinforces certain behaviours, making them more appealing to impressionable youth. Boschman et al. (2017) demonstrate that digital peer groups can encourage experimentation with risky

behaviours, including drug use. Social media amplifies peer pressure because online interactions often occur publicly and repeatedly, increasing the urge to conform to group expectations.

2.1.5 Role of Influencers and Celebrities

Influencers and celebrities are powerful agents of social and behavioural modelling. Brown and Tiggemann (2016) note that youths tend to admire and imitate public figures whose lifestyles appear glamorous or successful. When influencers display smoking, alcohol consumption, or drug related behaviour online, it can encourage imitation among followers. Conversely, influencers who promote healthy choices or share anti-drug messages can have a positive impact. The effect therefore depends on the nature of the content youths are exposed to.

research conceptualizes this influence through the lens of parasocial relationships, a term coined by Horton and Wohl (1956) to describe one-sided, imagined bonds between media consumers and performers, akin to friendships. Djafarova and Rushworth (2023) updated this framework for the digital age, highlighting how social media algorithms amplify these bonds by personalizing content feeds, fostering a sense of intimacy and trust. Followers may perceive influencers as peers or mentors, internalizing their actions such as posting about "unwinding" with a drink or endorsing wellness products that include psychoactive elements as normative. This parasocial dynamic is particularly potent among youth, who are navigating identity formation and peer pressure, leading to imitation that can manifest in real-world behaviors, from fashion choices to risk-taking.

Empirical evidence from a 2021 study published in the *International Journal of Communication* provides quantitative insights into these effects. Researchers analyzed content from 200 prominent influencers across platforms like Instagram and TikTok, focusing on posts related to substance use. The findings revealed that influencers promoting substances often through sponsored posts,

giveaways, or subtle integrations (e.g., a vape pen in a lifestyle video) increased drug curiosity among youth viewers by an average of 22%, as measured by pre- and post-exposure surveys. Conversely, anti-drug campaigns led by celebrities, such as Dwayne Johnson's public service announcements on mental health and substance avoidance, correlated with a 15% reduction in curiosity, demonstrating the potential for positive modeling. The study emphasized that the impact varies by influencer authenticity; micro-influencers with niche followings (e.g., music or gaming niches) often wield more targeted influence than global stars, as their content feels more relatable and less commercialized.

In the Nigerian context, where social media penetration has surged, influencers on platforms like Instagram and TikTok frequently endorse what has been dubbed "codeine culture" a trend glorifying the misuse of codeine-laced syrups (often combined with other substances for heightened effects) as a symbol of urban coolness, wealth, or escapism. A 2022 BBC Africa report investigated this phenomenon, analyzing over 500 posts from Nigerian influencers and correlating them with national drug abuse data. The report linked these endorsements to a 10% rise in youth substance abuse rates between 2020 and 2022, attributing the increase to para social emulation, where fans mimic behaviors seen in aspirational content. For example, influencers like Nigerian musicians or social media personalities posting about "sipping lean" (a codeine-based concoction) can inspire followers in rural areas like Ovia North East, where economic pressures amplify the appeal of virtual escapism, despite limited access to the substances themselves.

Overall, the sway of influencers underscores the need for greater accountability on platforms, such as clearer labeling of sponsored content or algorithmic tweaks to prioritize educational messaging. Without intervention, the para social bonds forged online could continue to shape youth behaviors in ways that amplify societal challenges like drug abuse.

In Ovia North East, where local celebrities (e.g., musicians from Benin City) have large followings, their endorsements could normalize drugs as symbols of success. This objective seeks to evaluate influencer impact, identifying opportunities for positive role-modeling in a region with high youth aspiration but low awareness.

2.1.6 The Roles of Social Workers in Addressing the Issue of Social Media on Drug Abuse Among Youth in Ovia North East, Edo State

Social workers play a vital role in preventing and reducing drug abuse among youths. Hepworth, Rooney, and Larsen (2017) highlight that social workers provide counselling, intervention, advocacy, and community education aimed at preventing risky behaviours. In the age of digital influence, social workers can also promote digital safety, support rehabilitation programmes, and work with families, schools, and communities to address social media-related risks.

Social workers occupy pivotal roles in mitigating the negative effects of social media on drug abuse among youth, employing a multifaceted approach that encompasses prevention, intervention, and advocacy to address the complex interplay between digital influences and real world behaviors. Through prevention efforts, they proactively educate youth on digital literacy, teaching skills like critical content evaluation, privacy management, and recognizing manipulative tactics in online spaces, such as sponsored posts glamorizing substances. Intervention involves direct support for at-risk individuals, including counseling sessions on platforms contributes to techniques to rebuild healthier online habits. Advocacy, meanwhile, extends to broader systemic change, where social workers lobby for policies like stricter platform regulations, community internet safety initiatives, and funding for mental health resources, ensuring that vulnerable populations are not left behind. Healy (2022) found that digital literacy programs often delivered through workshops, school

curricula, or app-based tools significantly reduced youth vulnerability to online influences, with participants showing a 20% lower incidence of drug abuse initiation compared to control groups.

A 2021 study by Adebayo, published in the Nigerian Journal of Social Work, examined social workers' contributions in urban drug hotspots like Lagos, revealing their emphasis on counseling and community education. Community education initiatives, like awareness campaigns in schools and local markets, educated families on monitoring youth online activity, leading to anecdotal reports of reduced abuse in targeted areas.

In contexts like Ovia North East, these dynamics are amplified by socioeconomic factors, such as economic stress and family migration, which heighten youth reliance on social media for belonging.

Social workers play pivotal roles in mitigating social media's negative effects on drug abuse through prevention, intervention, and advocacy.

2.1.7 Consequences of Drug Abuse Among Youths

Drug abuse has significant physical, psychological, and social consequences. The World Health Organization (2022) reports that substance use can lead to mental health disorders, physical health damage, impaired judgment, and addiction. Among youths, drug abuse is associated with poor academic performance, behavioural problems, risky sexual behaviour, and criminal involvement (UNODC, 2023). These consequences highlight the importance of understanding and addressing the factors that influence drug use among young people.

2.2 Review of Relevant Theories

2.2.1 Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory posits that behaviours are learned through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. On social media, vicarious reinforcement occurs when likes, comments, and shares reward substance-linked posts. Observational learning is intensified by algorithms that surface similar content, and by peers or influencers who model perceived benefits and downplay risks. The literature shows that visible peer approval and perceived norms mediate links between exposure and substance use among adolescents.

2.2.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and gratifications theory explains why youth actively select platforms and content to satisfy needs such as social connection, entertainment, status display, and identity work. Where drug related memes, tracks, or challenges are associated with status or belonging, gratifications may tilt towards communities where use is normalized. Prevention efforts that deliver credible, youth designed content can harness the same mechanisms for prosocial outcomes.

Perceived descriptive norms (what peers do) and injunctive norms (what peers approve) are robust predictors of adolescent substance use. Social media heightens the salience of injunctive cues, with peer reactions signaling approval. Empirical work shows social media's association with peer injunctive norms that in turn predict use.

2.2.4 Theory of Planned Behaviour

TPB links attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control to intention and behaviour. Social media can affect all three components at once through persuasive narratives, peer approvals, and modeling of access or techniques, but can also strengthen control when credible voices and peers frame refusal skills and pathways to help.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Preamble

This chapter explains the methods and procedures adopted for the study on the influence of social media on drug abuse among youth in Ovia North East, Edo State. It describes the area of the study, research design, population, sample size and sampling technique, model specification, research instrument, validity and reliability procedures, operationalization of variables, methods of data analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study. The methodology is structured to ensure that the research objectives are adequately addressed in line with established academic standards.

3.1 Research Design

The study will adopt a cross-sectional survey design. This design is appropriate because it will enable the collection of quantitative data from a relatively large number of respondents within a short period of time. It also will give room for the examination of associations between independent variables (social media intensity, exposure to drug-related content, peer norms, and engagement behaviours) and the dependent variable (drug abuse) at a single point in time. Cross-sectional surveys have been widely used in public health and communication research where behaviours and risk factors are measured simultaneously (Setia, 2016; WHO, 2023).

3.2 Area of the Study

The study will be carried out in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. Ovia North East is one of the eighteen Local Government Areas in Edo State and is located in the southern part of the state. The administrative headquarters is at Okada, which is also home to

Igbinedion University, one of Nigeria's first private universities. The LGA covers both semi-urban and rural communities, with a population that is ethnically diverse, consisting mainly of the EDO speaking people and other Nigerian groups who have migrated for business, farming, and education.

The area is notable for its mix of farming settlements, student populations, artisans, traders, and civil servants. The youth population is particularly significant, as many secondary school students, university undergraduates, and out-of-school young people reside there. The presence of higher institutions and growing internet penetration has increased the use of social media among youth in the area. At the same time, like many parts of Nigeria, Ovia North East is not insulated from the rising challenge of drug abuse among adolescents and young adults (NBS & UNODC, 2019). These features make the area highly relevant for examining how social media influences drug abuse behaviours among youth.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of the study will consist of all youths aged between 15 and 29 years residing in Ovia North East Local Government Area. This group will include both in-school youths (secondary and tertiary institutions) and out-of-school youths engaged in apprenticeships, informal businesses, or unemployed. The focus on this age bracket is justified because young people are among the heaviest users of social media and are also most vulnerable to experimenting with or misusing drugs (Adewuyi et al., 2022).

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study is determined using Cochran's formula for unknown populations. is a statistical method used to determine the appropriate sample size for research studies. It ensures that the data collected is representative, contributing, to the validity of the research findings. This

formula plays a crucial role in planning studies by helping researchers select a sample size that accurately reflects the population being examined (Omorugiuwa, 2016).

At a 95 percent confidence level, 5 percent margin of error, and assuming maximum variability ($P= 0.5$), the initial sample size is 384. After adjusting for a design effect of 1.3 to account for multistage sampling, the size increases to approximately 499. With an additional 10 percent allowance for nonresponse, the final sample size is rounded to 550 respondents.

A multistage sampling technique is employed. In the first stage, wards within the local government are selected at random. From the selected wards, communities are also chosen by simple random sampling. Within each community, households are systematically selected. Where households have more than one eligible youth, the Kish grid method is used to randomly select one participant. This method ensures representativeness, minimises bias, and reflects the diversity of the study area.

3.5 Model Specification

The study specifies two models. The first is a binary logistic regression model, where the dependent variable is drug abuse status (coded 1 for users and 0 for non-users). The model estimates the likelihood of drug abuse based on social media use patterns while controlling for demographic variables such as age, gender, parental monitoring, and socioeconomic background. The second model is an Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression using a continuous drug abuse risk score, which is computed from measures of frequency, intentions, and consequences of drug use. The OLS model provides additional insights into how variations in social media exposure and engagement influence the degree of risk for drug abuse among youth.

3.6 Research Instrument for Data Collection

The research instrument is a structured questionnaire developed specifically for the study. The questionnaire is divided into six sections. Section A contains demographic questions. Section B captures social media intensity (daily hours, number of platforms used, and late-night use). Section C measures exposure to drug-related content, while Section D focuses on peer norms and pressures experienced through social media. Section E examines active engagement behaviours such as liking, sharing, or posting drug-related content. Section F measures drug abuse outcomes, including self-reported use of psychoactive substances in the last 12 months.

The questionnaire items are adapted from validated international surveys such as the Global School-Based Student Health Survey and Monitoring the Future survey, with modifications to reflect the Nigerian context. A five-point Likert scale is used for most attitudinal and behavioural measures, while the drug abuse outcome variable is coded as binary.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The validity of the questionnaire will be ensured in several ways. Content validity will be established through expert review by specialists in public health, communication, and sociology. Face validity will be tested through a pilot study involving 30 youths outside the study sample, ensuring that the items are clear, culturally appropriate, and easy to understand. Construct validity is assessed using factor analysis, ensuring that items group correctly under their intended variables. Reliability will be measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient for internal consistency, with a minimum threshold of 0.70 accepted as adequate. Composite reliability indices are also computed. Test-retest reliability will be carried out during the pilot phase to check the stability of responses over time.

3.8 Operationalization and Measurement of Variables

The independent variables include social media intensity, exposure to drug-related content, peer norms and pressures, and engagement behaviours. These are measured using multiple Likert-type items designed to capture frequency, level of exposure, and behavioural responses. The dependent variable is drug abuse status, measured dichotomously as “yes” or “no” based on reported substance use in the past 12 months. A drug abuse risk score is also developed from items that capture frequency and consequences of use. Control variables such as age, gender, parental monitoring, religiosity, and socioeconomic status are also included in the model.

3.9 Methods of Data Analysis

The data collected will be coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Stata. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, will summarise demographic characteristics and key study variables. Bivariate analyses such as chi-square tests and t-tests will examine preliminary relationships. The main inferential analyses will include logistic regression for the binary drug abuse outcome and OLS regression for the continuous risk score. Significance levels will be set at 0.05. Effect sizes and confidence intervals will be reported alongside p-values to provide a balanced interpretation of the findings.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The study will adhere strictly to ethical principles. Approval will be sought from the appropriate Institutional Review Board. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants aged 18 years and above, while assent and parental consent will be obtained for those under 18 years. Participation will be voluntary, and respondents will be assured of confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any stage. No personal identifiers will be collected, and all data will be anonymised.

Sensitive questions on drug use will be carefully worded to minimise discomfort. Where necessary, respondents who disclose problematic drug use will be referred to relevant health and counseling services in Edo State.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis, and interpretation of the data collected for the study on influence of social media and drug abuse on youths in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. The analysis is guided and structured in line with the research questions and objectives stated in chapter one. Data were obtained using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Stata. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to analyze demographic characteristics and key study variables, while chi-square (χ^2) tests were used to examine preliminary relationships among variables. Results are presented in tables and interpreted accordingly.

4.2 Questionnaire Distribution and Response Rate

Table 4.1: Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questionnaires Distributed	550	100
Questionnaires Retrieved	550	100
Not Retrieved	0	0

Table 4.1 shows the distribution and retrieval of questionnaires used for the study. A total of 550 questionnaire was administered to respondents in Ovia North East, Edo state. All 550 questionnaires were completed and retrieved, giving a 100% response rate.

4.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.2: Sex Distribution of Respondents (N = 550)

Sex	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Male	290	52.7
Female	250	45.5
Other	10	1.8
Total	550	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 4.2 presents the sex distribution of the respondents. Out of the total 550 respondents, 290 (52.7%) were male, making them the majority of the study population. Female respondents accounted for 250 (45.5%), indicating a relatively balanced representation between males and females. A small proportion of the respondents, 10 (1.8%), identified as “Other.”

Overall, the table shows that both male and female respondents were fairly well represented in the study, with a slight predominance of males, while respondents identifying as other genders constituted a very small fraction of the sample. This distribution suggests that the findings of the study reflect perspectives across different sex categories.

4.4 Descriptive Analysis of Study Variables

Research Question 1

Extent of Youth Exposure to Social Media Substance-Related Content

Table 4.3: Exposure to Substance-Related Content on Social Media

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.
I often see posts/videos where people use drugs	210 (38.2%)	70 (12.7%)	55 (10.0%)	25 (4.6%)	34.5%	3.88	0.96
I frequently see tips on how to obtain substances	160 (29.1%)	200 (36.4%)	80 (14.5%)	70 (12.7%)	40 (7.3%)	3.67	1.08
Substance-related content appears regularly on my feed	180 (32.7%)	215 (39.1%)	65 (11.8%)	60 (10.9%)	30 (5.5%)	3.83	0.99

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 4.3 presents respondents' perceptions of their exposure to substance-related content on social media platforms. The findings indicate a generally high level of exposure among the respondents. For the statement "*I often see posts/videos where people use alcohol or drugs,*" the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (72.7%), while a smaller proportion disagreed or strongly disagreed (14.6%). The mean score of 3.88, with a standard deviation of 0.96, suggests frequent exposure and relatively consistent responses among participants.

Similarly, responses to the statement "*I frequently see tips on how to obtain substances*" show that more than half of the respondents (65.5%) agreed or strongly agreed, indicating that instructional or enabling substance-related content is commonly encountered online. The mean score of 3.67, though slightly lower than the previous item, still reflects a high level of agreement. The higher

standard deviation (1.08) implies greater variation in respondents' experiences regarding this type of content.

Furthermore, the statement "*Substance-related content appears regularly on my feed*" recorded the highest level of agreement, with 71.8% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. The mean score of 3.83 and a standard deviation of 0.99 reinforce the perception that such content is a regular feature on respondents' social media feeds.

Overall, the mean scores across all items are above the criterion mean of 3.00, indicating that respondents are frequently exposed to substance-related content on social media. This suggests that social media platforms may play a significant role in normalizing or promoting substance use behaviors among young people.

Research Question 2

Perceived Social Media Norms about Substance Use

Table 4.4: Perceived Social Media Norms (N = 550)

Statement	Agree / Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree / Strongly Disagree
Substance use seems common among people my age online	380 (69.1%)	85 (15.5%)	85 (15.5%)
Most youths online approve of substance use	355 (64.5%)	100 (18.2%)	95 (17.3%)
I feel pressure from social media to experiment	330 (60.0%)	110 (20.0%)	110 (20.0%)

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 4.4 presents respondents' perceptions of social media norms regarding substance use among youths. The results indicate a strong perception that substance use is normalized and widely accepted on social media platforms.

A large majority of the respondents, 380 (69.1%), agreed or strongly agreed that substance use seems common among people of their age online, while only 85 (15.5%) disagreed, suggesting that many youths are frequently exposed to substance-related content on social media. Similarly, 355 respondents (64.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that most youths online approve of substance use, indicating a perceived culture of acceptance and endorsement within online peer groups.

Furthermore, 330 respondents (60.0%) reported feeling pressure from social media to experiment with substances. Although 110 respondents (20.0%) remained neutral and another 110 (20.0%) disagreed, the majority agreement highlights the influential role of social media in shaping attitudes and behavioral intentions related to substance use.

Overall, the findings suggest that social media environments may contribute to the normalization and social approval of substance use among youths, potentially increasing susceptibility to experimentation due to perceived peer norms and online social pressure.

Research Question 3

Attitudes toward Substance Use

Table 4.5: Attitudes toward Substance Use

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive Attitude	310	56.4
Neutral Attitude	135	24.5
Negative Attitude	105	19.1
Total	550	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 4.5 presents the distribution of respondents' attitudes toward substance use. The results show that a majority of the respondents, **310 (56.4%)**, demonstrated a **positive attitude** toward substance use, indicating that more than half of the participants hold favorable views or are accepting of substance use. This suggests a relatively high level of openness or tolerance toward substance-related behaviors among the respondents.

Furthermore, **135 respondents (24.5%)** expressed a **neutral attitude**, implying that nearly one quarter of the participants neither strongly support nor oppose substance use. This group may represent individuals who are undecided or indifferent, possibly influenced by situational factors or limited information.

In contrast, **105 respondents (19.1%)** exhibited a **negative attitude** toward substance use, reflecting disapproval or resistance to such behaviors. Although this group constitutes the smallest proportion, it still represents a significant segment of the population.

Overall, the findings indicate that **positive attitudes toward substance use are predominant** among the respondents, while fewer participants hold negative views. This pattern highlights the need for targeted educational and preventive interventions aimed at reshaping perceptions and promoting healthier attitudes toward substance use.

Research Question 4

Perceived Behavioural Control and Access via social media

Table 4.6 Perceived Access to Substances through social media

Statement	Yes	No
Can obtain drug-related information online	390 (70.9%)	160 (29.1%)
Can easily contact someone online to get drugs	360 (65.5%)	190 (34.5%)
Finds it hard to avoid substance-related content	400 (72.7%)	150 (27.3%)

The data from Table 4.6 highlights individuals' perceptions of their ability to access substances and related information through social media. A significant majority, approximately 71%, believe they can obtain drug-related information online, while around 29% do not perceive such access. Similarly, about 66% of participants feel they can easily contact someone online to acquire drugs, whereas 34% do not find it easy to do so. Additionally, a large portion roughly 73% find it difficult to avoid content related to substances on social media, indicating persistent exposure to such material. Overall, these findings suggest that many individuals perceive social media as a potential source for both information and access to substances, and that avoiding substance-related content can be challenging for a considerable number of people.

Substance Use Intentions and Behaviour

Table 4.7: Substance Use Intentions among Respondents

Intention/Behaviour	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Intends to try substances	230	41.8
Has tried substances after online exposure	180	32.7
No intention or behavior	140	25.5
Total	550	100.0

According to the data, 41.8% of respondents, which amounts to 230 individuals, intend to try substances in the future. Additionally, 32.7%, or 180 respondents, have already tried substances after being exposed to online influences. On the other hand, 25.5% of the respondents, totaling 140 individuals, reported having no intention to try or use substances. Overall, the majority of respondents have either experimented with or are considering experimenting with substances, highlighting a significant level of exposure or intent related to substance use within this group.

Chi-Square Test of Relationship

Table 4.8: Chi-Square Test between Social Media Exposure and Substance Use Intention

Variable	χ^2	df	p-value
Social media exposure × Substance use intention	18.62		0.001

The chi-square analysis reveals a statistically significant association between exposure to substance-related content on social media and the tendency of youths to intend to use substances. Specifically, the chi-square value of 18.62, with a p-value less than 0.05, indicates that the observed relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance alone. In practical terms, this finding suggests that as youths are exposed to more substance-related material on social media platforms, their

likelihood of considering or intending to use substances increases. The data imply that social media content related to substances may play a role in shaping attitudes and intentions among young people, highlighting the importance of monitoring and potentially regulating such content to mitigate its influence on youth behavior.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the influence of social media on drug abuse among youth in Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. The demographic data reveal a fairly balanced gender distribution, with males constituting slightly over half of the respondents at 52.7%, females accounting for 45.5%, and a small fraction, 1.8%, identifying as “Other.” This diversity ensures that the insights gathered reflect perspectives across different gender groups, enhancing the relevance and applicability of the results.

The core of the study focused on understanding youths’ exposure to substance-related content on social media. The results indicated a high level of exposure among respondents. More than 70% agreed or strongly agreed that they frequently see posts or videos depicting alcohol and drug use. Similarly, the majority also acknowledged encountering tips on how to obtain substances online. This widespread exposure suggests that social media platforms are actively serving as channels where substance use is not only visible but also seemingly normalized. The consistency of responses, reflected in the high mean scores above 3.5, underscores that such content is a regular feature on respondents’ social media feeds. This aligns with existing literature indicating that social media often glamorizes or trivializes substance use, thereby potentially influencing young people's perceptions and behaviors.

Further insights into social media norms revealed that a significant majority of respondents perceive substance use as common among their peers online. Over 69% believed that substance

use appears to be widespread among their age group, and about 64.5% thought that most youths online approve of such behaviors. These perceptions of widespread acceptance and normative behavior reinforce the idea that social media environments foster a culture where substance use is viewed as socially acceptable. Additionally, a notable 60% of respondents reported feeling pressured by social media to experiment with substances. Although some respondents remained neutral or disagreed, the overall trend indicates that perceived peer approval and online social pressures play a substantial role in shaping youth attitudes toward substance use. These perceptions are critical because they can influence behavioral intentions, especially among impressionable youth who seek social validation.

When examining attitudes toward substance use, the data showed that more than half of the respondents, 56.4%, held positive attitudes toward drug use. This suggests that a significant portion of the youth population is accepting or even favorable toward substance consumption. Conversely, 24.5% maintained neutral attitudes, indicating ambivalence or indifference, while 19.1% expressed negative views. The prominence of positive attitudes is concerning because such perceptions can serve as precursors to actual substance use, especially when reinforced by perceived norms and online exposure. These attitudes may foster tolerance and reduce perceived risks associated with drug use, thereby increasing the likelihood of experimentation and continued abuse.

Perceived behavioral control and access via social media were also examined, revealing that many youths believe they can easily access drugs and related information online. Specifically, about 71% of respondents felt they could obtain drug-related information, and roughly 66% felt they could contact someone online to acquire substances. An even larger proportion, approximately 73%, reported difficulty in avoiding substance-related content, highlighting that exposure to such material is persistent and challenging to ignore. These perceptions suggest that social media acts

as a potential gateway, providing accessible avenues for information and contact related to drug procurement. This environment lowers barriers to experimentation and increases the risk of substance use initiation.

In terms of actual behaviors and intentions, the data revealed a concerning trend. Nearly 42% of respondents expressed an intention to try substances in the future, while about 33% reported having already experimented with drugs after online exposure. Only a quarter of the respondents, 25.5%, reported no such intentions or behaviors. This high prevalence of experimentation and future intent underscores the significant influence that online content and perceived norms exert on youth. The findings suggest that online exposure not only shapes attitudes but also translates into behavioral outcomes, increasing the risk of drug abuse.

To establish the relationship between exposure to substance-related content and behavioral intentions, a chi-square test was conducted. The results indicated a statistically significant association, with a chi-square value of 18.62 and a p-value of less than 0.05. This confirms that increased exposure to online substance-related content is linked to a higher likelihood of intending to use drugs. Such a relationship underscores the potential causal influence of social media environments in promoting substance use among youth.

In conclusion, this study highlights the pervasive nature of substance-related content on social media and its influential role in shaping youth perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors regarding drug use. The high levels of exposure, perceived norms of acceptance, and the perceived ease of access to substances suggest that social media environments may be fostering a culture that normalizes and encourages drug use among young people. The significant association between exposure and behavioral intentions emphasizes the urgent need for targeted interventions. Stakeholders, including parents, educators, policymakers, and social media platforms, must collaborate to

develop strategies that limit exposure to harmful content, promote healthy attitudes, and provide education on the risks associated with drug use. Addressing these online influences is critical to curbing the rising trend of drug abuse among youth in the area and safeguarding their health and future.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study by providing a comprehensive summary of the key findings, drawing conclusions based on the data analysis, and offering recommendations for stakeholders. It also discusses the contribution of this research to existing knowledge on the influence of social media on drug abuse among youth, particularly within the context of Ovia North East Local Government Area of Edo State. The purpose of this chapter is to synthesize the research outcomes, reflect on their implications, and suggest actionable steps to address the identified issues.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study investigated the influence of social media on drug abuse among youth in Ovia North East, focusing on exposure to substance-related content, social media norms, attitudes, perceived behavioral control, access, and behavioral intentions.

Demographic Characteristics: The sample consisted of 550 respondents, with a slight majority of males (52.7%) compared to females (45.5%), and a small proportion (1.8%) identifying as "Other." This balanced gender representation provided a diverse perspective on the issue.

Exposure to Substance-Related Content: The findings indicated a high level of exposure among youth to substance-related content on social media. Over 70% of respondents frequently saw posts or videos depicting drug and alcohol use, and more than half encountered tips on how to obtain substances online. The responses suggested that such content is a regular feature on their social media feeds.

Perceived Social Media Norms: A significant majority believed that substance use is common among their peers online, with 69.1% perceiving it as widespread and 64.5% indicating that most

youths online approve of substance use. About 60% felt social media exerted pressure to experiment with substances, indicating perceived social norms favoring drug use.

Attitudes Toward Substance Use: Over half (56.4%) of respondents held positive attitudes toward substance use, demonstrating acceptance or favorable views. A smaller segment (19.1%) held negative attitudes, indicating disapproval.

Perceived Behavioral Control and Access: A large proportion believed they could easily access drug-related information and contact individuals online to obtain substances. Additionally, 73% found it difficult to avoid substance-related content, suggesting persistent exposure and perceived ease of access.

Behavioral Intentions and Actual Use: Nearly 42% expressed an intention to try substances in the future, and 32.7% reported having already tried substances after online exposure. Only 25.5% reported no such intentions or behaviors.

Relationship Between Exposure and Intentions: The chi-square analysis revealed a significant association ($\chi^2 = 18.62, p < 0.05$) between exposure to substance-related content and the intention to use drugs, indicating that increased exposure correlates with a higher likelihood of substance use intentions among youth.

5.3 Conclusion

The study underscores the pervasive influence of social media in shaping youth perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors regarding drug use in Ovia North East. The high levels of exposure to substance-related content, perceived norms of acceptance, and perceived ease of access collectively contribute to an environment conducive to experimentation and potential abuse. The significant relationship between online exposure and behavioral intentions emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to mitigate social media's influence on youth drug use. Overall, the

findings highlight the critical role those social media platforms play in normalizing and promoting substance use among young people, requiring concerted efforts from stakeholders to address this emerging challenge.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1. Regulation and Monitoring:** Social media platforms should implement stricter policies to monitor and regulate substance-related content. This includes removing posts that promote or trivialize drug use and promoting content that educates youth about the risks associated with drug abuse.
- 2. Educational Campaigns:** Stakeholders such as schools, community organizations, and health agencies should develop educational programs that raise awareness about the influence of social media on drug use. These programs should aim to foster critical media literacy among youth, enabling them to discern and critically evaluate online content.
- 3. Parental and Community Engagement:** Parents and community leaders should be involved in guiding youth's social media use. Workshops and awareness programs can equip them with skills to monitor and guide online behavior effectively.
- 4. Policy Development:** Policymakers should formulate regulations that address the online promotion of substance use and establish penalties for violations. Collaboration with social media companies is essential to enforce these policies effectively.
- 5. Research and Data Collection:** Further research should be conducted regularly to monitor trends and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing online exposure to substance-related content.

5.5 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between social media exposure and drug abuse intentions among youth in a Nigerian context, specifically within Ovia North East Local Government Area. It highlights the significant role social media plays in shaping perceptions and behaviors related to drug use, emphasizing the normalization and accessibility of substances online. The findings reinforce the importance of integrating digital literacy, regulation, and community engagement into strategies aimed at combating youth drug abuse. Additionally, the research offers a foundation for future studies exploring online influences on health-related behaviors among young populations in similar sociocultural settings.

5.6 Limitations of the study

The study was limited to youths in Ovia North- East Local Government Area and relied on self-reported data, which may be subjected to response bias. Additionally, time and financial constraints also limited broader coverage

5.7 Suggestions for Further Research

Further studies should explore in greater depth how social media influences youths involvement in substance use, particularly in different communities beyond Ovia North-East. Further investigations may also examine the nature and strength of the relationship between social media exposure and drug abuse to enhance understanding of this issue.

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APPENDIX

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
QUESTIONNAIRE ON INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND DRUG ON YOUTH IN
OVIA NORTH EAST, EDO STATE.**

Dear Respondents,

The researcher is a student of the above-named department, faculty and university. This questionnaire is designed to investigate “The influence of social media and drug abuse on youth in Ovia North East, Edo State”.

You are requested to complete the questionnaire as sincerely and objectively as possible. Your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

EVARISTA IJEH

Student Researcher

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Sex: Male (), Female (), Other _____

Section B: General Perception of Social Media and Drug Abuse on Youth in Ovia North East, Edo State.

Instructions: Please read each statement and tick to the option that indicates how much the statement applied to you.

SA= Strongly Agree | A= Agree | N= Neutral | D= Disagree | SD= Strongly Disagree

Research Question 1: Extent of youth exposure to social media platforms in Ovia North East, Edo State?

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I often come across posts or videos where people use alcohol or drugs.					
2	I frequently see tips or information about how to obtain substances on social media.					
3	Substance-related content appears on my “For You/Explore” pages regularly.					
4	Influencers I follow sometimes promote or glamorize substance use.					
5	I have joined or viewed groups, pages, or threads that discuss alcohol or drugs.					

Research Question 2: Perceived Social Media Norms about Substance Use

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6	Most people my age on social media seem to approve of using alcohol or drugs.					
7	On social media, using substances appears common among people like me.					
8	My online friends would support me if I tried alcohol or drugs.					
9	I feel pressure from what I see online to experiment with substances.					
10	On social media, negative views about substance use are rare.					

Research Question 3: Attitudes toward Substance Use (Affective/Cognitive)

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
11	Using alcohol or drugs seems enjoyable when I see it online.					
12	The risks of using substances look small in the posts I view.					
13	Trying substances looks like a good way to fit in socially.					
14	The benefits of trying substances appear to outweigh the harms.					

15	Substance use seems acceptable for someone my age.					
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Research Question 4: Perceived Behavioural Control / Access via Social media

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16	If I wanted to, I could find out how to get substances through social media.					
17	It would be easy for me to contact someone online to obtain substances.					
18	I feel confident I could avoid substance-related content if I chose to.					
19	Algorithms make it hard for me to avoid substance related content once I interact with it.					
20	I know how to use platform features to block or report drug-related content.					

Research Question 5: Substance Use Intentions/Behaviour

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
21	In the next three months, I intend to try alcohol or drugs					
22	have used alcohol or drugs after seeing related content on social media					
23	Seeing substance-related posts makes me more likely to try them.					
24	I have contacted someone online about obtaining alcohol or drugs					
25	If my favourite influencer promoted a substance, I would consider trying it					