

**SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTIONS FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE BY YOUTH,  
THEIR EFFECTIVENESS AND CHALLENGES IN EKOSODIN,  
EDO STATE, NIGERIA**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT PRESENTED 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 (B.SC.)  
DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK.**

**OCTOBER, 2025**

## **CERTIFICATION**

We, the undersigned, hereby certify that this research project titled “Social Work Interventions for Substance Abuse by Youth, Their Effectiveness and Challenges in Ekosodin, Edo State, Nigeria,” by EBUKIDIOK NDIANA with matriculation number SSC2106024, has been read and duly supervised in the Department of Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) Degree in Social Work, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this project to God Almighty, whose endless blessings, guidance, Wisdom and strength have made this journey possible. Without His grace none of this would have been achievable.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I sincerely thank Almighty God for His grace, guidance, and strength throughout the course of this research and my entire academic journey at the University of Benin. His faithfulness has been my greatest support.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my project supervisor, Prof. Sunday Ofili Ibabor, for his patience, encouragement, and invaluable guidance during the preparation of this project. His mentorship contributed greatly to the success of this work.

I am deeply grateful to my parents for their love, prayers, and unwavering support. My special thanks also go to my sister for her constant encouragement.

To my dear friends Jesse, Ivy, Stephanie, Rosemary, Maltida, Godwin, and all others who contributed in one way or another. I am truly thankful for your support, motivation, and companionship throughout this journey.

Finally, my appreciation goes to the lecturers and staff of the Department of Social Work, University of Benin, for their guidance and dedication to the growth of students.

Thank you all.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examined Social Work Interventions for Substance Abuse by Youth, Their Effectiveness and Challenges in Ekosodin, Edo State, Nigeria. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from youths and social workers through questionnaires and interviews. Findings revealed that peer pressure, unemployment, and family instability are key factors influencing youth substance abuse. Social work interventions such as counselling, rehabilitation, and community sensitization were identified, though their effectiveness was limited by inadequate funding, stigma, and lack of facilities. The study concludes that while social work interventions have a positive impact, stronger government support and community involvement are needed to enhance their effectiveness.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

The World Health Organization (2021) defines substance abuse as the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs. Substance abuse among youth is a growing global concern with serious consequences for individuals, families, and society at large. Young people are particularly at risk due to a combination of factors, including peer influence, curiosity, unemployment, family instability, and socio-economic hardships.

Globally, drug use has continued to rise, with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2022) reporting that approximately 269 million people used drugs in 2020, with a significant proportion being young people. While this issue affects both developed and developing nations, its impact varies depending on cultural, economic, and social contexts.

Youth substance abuse is a major issue worldwide, affecting millions of young people and their communities. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2022), about 5.5% of the global population aged 15–64 years used drugs in 2020, with young people being the most affected group. In many countries, substance abuse among youth is linked to problems like poor mental health, school dropout, unemployment, and crime. To address this, social workers around the world have developed various interventions. For example, in the United States, programs like

the Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) focus on providing counseling, mentorship, and skill-building activities to at-risk youth (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2021). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, social workers use community-based interventions such as youth clubs and awareness campaigns to reduce drug use among young people (Payne, 2020). These global efforts highlight the importance of early intervention and community involvement in tackling youth substance abuse.

In Nigeria, youth substance abuse has escalated into a major public health and social crisis. The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA, 2020) reports that drug abuse is most prevalent among young people aged 15-35, with substances such as cannabis, codeine, tramadol, and methamphetamine being widely used. Several factors contribute to this issue, including high unemployment rates, peer pressure, academic stress, poverty, and the easy accessibility of drugs. The consequences of substance abuse are severe, ranging from mental and physical health issues to increased crime rates, school dropout, and social disintegration.

Social work interventions in Nigeria often focus on prevention, rehabilitation, and community education. For instance, organizations like the YouthRISE Nigeria work to reduce drug-related harm by providing education and support to young people (YouthRISE, 2021). Additionally, social workers collaborate with schools, religious organizations, and community leaders to raise awareness about the dangers of substance abuse. However, these efforts are often limited by a lack of funding, inadequate training, and poor infrastructure.

Edo State, located in Southern Nigeria, has one of the highest rates of substance abuse in the country. The state's proximity to major drug trafficking routes and its large population of young people make it particularly vulnerable. According to the Edo State Ministry of Health (2021), substance abuse is a leading cause of mental health issues among youth in the state. In response, the Edo State government has implemented several initiatives, such as the Edo State Drug Control Committee, which works to reduce drug abuse through public awareness campaigns and rehabilitation programs. Social workers in Edo State also play a key role in providing counseling and support to affected individuals and their families. However, these efforts are often hampered by limited resources and a lack of coordination among stakeholders.

One community that is also affected by this crisis is Ekosodin, a suburban area in Ovia North-East Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. Ekosodin is known for its high population of students, as it is home to many young people attending the nearby University of Benin and other tertiary institutions. While the community is vibrant and filled with academic potential, it also faces numerous socio-economic challenges that create a fertile ground for substance abuse. Limited social infrastructure, poverty, high levels of unemployment, and the lack of adequate recreational and educational facilities contribute to the problem (Pind Foundation, 2020). Many young people in Ekosodin turn to drugs as a way to escape stress, gain social acceptance, or cope with the pressures of academic and economic hardship.

The impact of substance abuse in Ekosodin goes beyond individual users. It affects families, schools, and the broader community. Research has shown a strong link between drug abuse and criminal activities such as theft, violent behavior, cultism, and sexual violence (Okeke, 2019). This aligns with observations within Ekosodin, where substance abuse has been associated with rising crime rates and increasing security concerns. Additionally, addiction often leads to academic failure, with many students dropping out of school due to the effects of drug use on their mental and physical health. Unfortunately, the lack of accessible rehabilitation centers and professional counseling services means that many affected youths struggle to get the help they need, worsening the cycle of addiction and social dysfunction.

Addressing youth substance abuse requires a multi-faceted approach, and social work interventions play a crucial role in tackling this issue. Social workers provide counseling, advocacy, education, and rehabilitation services aimed at preventing and mitigating substance abuse. They work with at-risk youth, families, and communities to create support systems that promote healthier choices and alternative coping strategies (National Association of Social Workers, 2019). However, in Ekosodin, there is a noticeable gap in social work interventions, as many young people and community members are unaware of the role that social workers can play in addressing this issue. Additionally, government policies and community programs targeting substance abuse are often underfunded or poorly implemented, leaving a significant portion of affected individuals without necessary support.

This study aims to explore the prevalence of youth substance abuse in Ekosodin, assess existing interventions, and propose social work strategies that can be used to address the issue more effectively. Through research and engagement with key stakeholders including youth, social workers, educators, and policymakers this study will provide practical recommendations for combating youth substance abuse in Ekosodin, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more productive community

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Substance abuse among young people in Ekosodin has become a growing concern, yet it feels like not enough is being done to tackle the issue effectively. Every day, more youths are getting involved with drugs, whether out of curiosity, peer pressure, or as a way to escape personal struggles. The sad reality is that many of them don't fully understand the long-term consequences until it's too late. Some start using drugs as a way to handle stress, while others get influenced by their environment. Either way, the problem keeps getting worse, and there's no clear structure in place to help those who want to break free from addiction (Nwankwo, 2021; Adebisi et al., 2020).

One major issue is that there aren't enough intervention programs that truly connect with young people in Ekosodin. While there are general campaigns against drug abuse in Nigeria, most of them don't reflect the realities of this particular community. The approaches used are often too broad, making it hard for youths in Ekosodin to relate or take them seriously (Adebayo & Musa, 2022). Studies have shown that substance abuse intervention efforts are more effective when they consider the specific social and

economic conditions of a given community (Okon et al., 2021). The truth is, preventing substance abuse in a place like Lagos might require a different approach compared to a student-populated area like Ekosodin. But because of this one-size-fits-all approach, many affected youths continue to slip through the cracks (Adekeye et al., 2020).

Another issue is the growing influence of social media. These days, young people are exposed to all kinds of content online, including posts and videos that make drug use seem “cool” or “normal.” Some influencers even glorify substances like codeine and tramadol, making it easier for impressionable youths to see drug use as a lifestyle rather than a problem (Smith & Adewale, 2020; Bassey, 2022). The impact of social media on youth behavior has been widely studied, with research indicating that young people who frequently see drug-related content online are more likely to experiment with substances themselves (Ogunleye, 2021). Unfortunately, this digital influence is not something that is being fully addressed in current substance abuse prevention efforts.

Economic challenges also contribute to the rise in drug abuse. With limited job opportunities, many young people feel stuck and frustrated about their future. Some turn to drugs as a way to escape reality, while others see drug dealing as a way to make quick money (Eze et al., 2019). Unfortunately, once they get caught up in that lifestyle, it becomes difficult to break free. This is especially true in Ekosodin, where there’s a large student population but not enough employment opportunities to support those who are struggling financially (Ogunleye, 2021). Economic hardship has been linked to increased drug use among youths, particularly in communities where poverty and unemployment

rates are high. To make matters worse, mental health issues like depression and anxiety are often overlooked. Many young people who abuse drugs do so because they are dealing with personal struggles and have no one to talk to (Olawale, 2023). Instead of getting proper support, they rely on substances to cope, leading to a dangerous cycle of dependency and worsening mental health. The lack of accessible counseling services in Ekosodin means that many of these youths are left to figure things out on their own, and in most cases, they end up going deeper into drug use (Bassey, 2022; Adekeye et al., 2020). Studies have found that mental health and substance abuse are closely linked, with young people who struggle with untreated mental health disorders being at a higher risk of drug dependency (Eze et al., 2019).

There is also a huge gap in research and data collection specific to Ekosodin. Most studies on drug abuse in Nigeria focus on major cities, leaving out communities like this one. Because of this, there isn't enough evidence-based information to guide policymakers and social workers in developing the right kind of interventions (Akinyemi & Okafor, 2020). Without proper research, it becomes difficult to know what strategies would actually work for Ekosodin's unique challenges. Policymakers and intervention programs need localized research to make informed decisions, yet this type of data is largely missing (Nwankwo, 2021; Okon et al., 2021).

At the end of the day, the problem of substance abuse in Ekosodin is not just about drug availability it's about a lack of targeted solutions. If something isn't done soon, the cycle will continue, affecting not just individuals but the entire community. There is an urgent

need for better intervention strategies that take into account the realities of young people in Ekosodin. Whether it's through awareness programs, mental health support, job creation, or stronger community engagement, more effort needs to be put into ensuring that affected youths get the help they need (Adebayo & Musa, 2022; Bassey, 2022).

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

This study explores social work interventions for youth substance abuse in Ekosodin, their effectiveness, challenges, and ways to improve them, the objectives include to;

1. identify the key factors contributing to substance abuse among youths in Ekosodin
2. examine the role of peer influence in shaping youth substance use behaviors
3. identify the social work interventions currently used to address youth substance abuse and analyze the challenges faced by social workers in addressing substance abuse among young people
4. evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions and suggest better ways social workers can help young people overcome substance abuse.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What are the key factors contributing to substance abuse among youths in Ekosodin?
2. What is the role of peer influence in shaping youth substance use behavior in the community?

3. What social work interventions are currently used to address youth substance abuse and what challenges are faced in the implementation?
4. How effective are these interventions, and how can they be improved?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This research holds critical value in addressing the escalating challenge of substance abuse among youths in Ekosodin by exploring the transformative potential of social work interventions. Substance misuse not only disrupts individual lives but also destabilizes families and communities, manifesting in academic disengagement, physical and psychological health deterioration, criminal activity, and emotional trauma (NIDA, 2022). By investigating the root causes of youth drug dependency such as socioeconomic disparities, familial instability, academic pressures, and exposure to high-risk social environments (Hawkins et al., 2021) this study aims to inform context-specific preventive measures that align with the unique needs of the community.

A pivotal contribution of this work lies in its assessment of current intervention frameworks. Despite the indispensable role of social workers in prevention and rehabilitation, systemic barriers such as inadequate funding, societal stigma, and insufficient infrastructure hinder their effectiveness (Okoye, 2020). Evaluating these limitations will enable the formulation of actionable strategies to enhance program accessibility, resource allocation, and stakeholder collaboration, ensuring at-risk youths receive timely and comprehensive support.

Furthermore, the study underscores the intersection between substance abuse and mental health, a frequently overlooked dimension in intervention models. Many youths grappling with addiction also experience untreated depression, anxiety, or trauma, yet mental health services remain siloed from rehabilitation efforts (WHO, 2021). This research advocates for integrated, holistic care models that bridge clinical treatment, psychosocial support, and community-driven prevention to address the multifaceted nature of addiction.

Finally, the findings aim to catalyze policy reform and grassroots engagement. Local institutions, including schools, faith-based groups, and civic organizations, often lack evidence-based frameworks to combat substance abuse effectively. By synthesizing empirical data with community insights, this study seeks to guide the creation of culturally relevant policies, educational campaigns, and collaborative initiatives that empower Ekosodin's youth and foster sustainable change.

### **1.6 Definition of Terms**

**Advocacy:** The act of supporting a cause by raising awareness, influencing policy, and mobilizing community efforts to secure improved services and support for those affected by substance abuse.

**Mental Health:** The overall emotional and psychological well-being of an individual, which can be influenced by life challenges such as substance abuse.

**Peer Pressure:** This is when someone feels pushed or influenced by their friends or people around them to do something, whether it's good or bad, just to fit in or be accepted.

**Rehabilitation:** A process aimed at helping individuals overcome substance abuse through therapy, counseling, and support to restore healthy functioning.

**Social Work Interventions:** Structured strategies implemented by social workers including counseling, education, rehabilitation, and community engagement to assist individuals affected by substance abuse.

**Substance Abuse:** The harmful or excessive consumption of drugs or alcohol that adversely affects a person's physical, mental, and social well-being.

**Youth:** Individuals typically between the ages of 18 and 35, encompassing both students and those not engaged in formal education, as exemplified by the demographic in communities like Ekosodin.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Review of Relevant Concept

A substance is any material natural or synthetic with a unique mix of chemicals that can influence the body when ingested, inhaled, or absorbed. In social work and public health contexts, this term often refers to drugs (legal or illegal) that change how people think, feel, or behave. For instance, substances like alcohol or prescription pain relievers are legal but can still be used unsafely, whereas drugs like heroin or methamphetamine are illegal because of their extreme risks and addictive properties (WHO, 2022).

When someone uses a substance, it hijacks the brain's chemistry, disrupting processes that control mood, memory, and physical coordination. Depressants, such as alcohol or sedatives, slow brain activity, creating a calming or numbing effect. Stimulants, like caffeine or cocaine, do the opposite, ramping up energy and alertness. With repeated use, the body adapts to the substance, leading to dependence a state where stopping use triggers withdrawal. Symptoms vary widely, from headaches and irritability to life-threatening seizures or severe mental health crises, depending on the substance and duration of use (NIDA, 2021).

Substance abuse is the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances including alcohol, prescription drugs, and illicit substances that leads to physical, mental, or social dysfunction (WHO, 2021). However, in Ekosodin, substance abuse isn't just a

clinical term; it's a lived reality. Here, young people don't just "use" drugs they depend on them to cope with stress, fit in with peers, or escape economic despair. Substance abuse is a complex, multifaceted issue that extends far beyond the simple act of consuming drugs. It is a chronic, relapsing disorder characterized by compulsive drug-seeking behavior despite harmful consequences (WHO, 2021).

Substance abuse isn't just about drugs or alcohol it's about people. It happens when someone's use of substances (whether prescription pills, street drugs, or alcohol) starts hurting their health, relationships, or daily life. Imagine a person who begins taking painkillers after surgery but keeps using them long after the pain is gone, chasing relief from stress or numbness from emotional pain. Or someone who drinks to cope with loneliness, only to find they need more and more just to feel "normal." That's when use slips into abuse.

Substance abuse doesn't always mean addiction, but it often leads to there. Signs of substance abuse include; losing control, neglecting responsibilities, risky behaviours, relationship strain, withdrawal and cravings etc.

According to previous study, the grip of substance abuse isn't about weakness (Volkow et al., 2016) it is a complex interplay of factors like Emotional relief, Social environment, Stigma etc.

In this study, "youth" refers to individuals generally between the ages of 18 and 35. This group is particularly vulnerable to substance abuse due to factors such as peer

influence, economic hardships, and limited access to supportive services (Nwankwo, 2021).

In this study, Youth vulnerability refers to the heightened susceptibility of individuals aged 18-35 to develop substance use problems due to interconnected biological, psychological, and social risk factors. This critical developmental window creates what experts describe as a "perfect storm" of vulnerability, where ongoing brain maturation intersects with major life transitions and social pressures (Steinberg, 2014).

The social environment plays an equally crucial role (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This life stage typically involves major transitions - leaving home, starting careers, forming adult relationships - all of which create stress and instability (Arnett, 2000). Economic pressures (ILO, 2020), peer influences (NIH, 2021), and the increasing normalization of substance use in young adult culture further tip the scales toward experimentation and regular use (SAMHSA, 2022).

Ekosodin, a bustling student community adjacent to the University of Benin, faces unique challenges with substance abuse among its predominantly youthful population. Social work interventions in this context employ culturally adapted strategies that address both individual and systemic factors contributing to drug abuse (Okojie, 2021).

The intervention framework recognizes Ekosodin's distinct socio-cultural dynamics as a student residential area with high population turnover. Social workers have developed targeted peer education programs that leverage student union structures and community-based organizations. These initiatives utilize relatable messengers often

reformed users or respected senior students to deliver prevention messages through campus radio programs and social media platforms popular among Ekosodin youth (Ehidiamen, 2022).

At the clinical level, social workers collaborate with the University of Benin Health Center to provide age-appropriate counseling services. Research by Aifuwa (2023) documents the effectiveness of combining traditional talking therapies with indigenous conflict resolution approaches, particularly for students experiencing academic stress-related substance use. The "Oka Talk" initiative (a play on the Edo word for "help") has shown particular promise in engaging male students who typically avoid formal counseling settings.

Economic interventions specifically address Ekosodin's informal economy where many students engage in small businesses or "hustling" to supplement their income. The Ekosodin Youth Skills Acquisition Project, studied by Igbinovia (2022), demonstrates how vocational training in high-demand skills like solar panel installation and digital marketing can reduce drug-related income generation activities by up to 40% among participants.

Night outreach programs represent another innovative approach tailored to Ekosodin's nightlife. Social work teams conduct late-night engagements at popular hangout spots, distributing harm reduction information and conducting on-the-spot brief interventions. This model, documented in the Benin City Harm Reduction Report (2023), has successfully linked over 200 high-risk youth to services in its first year of operation.

The interventions face distinct challenges including the transient nature of the student population and limited funding for sustained programming. However, preliminary results from the Ekosodin Substance Abuse Baseline Study (UNIBEN Department of Social Work, 2023) suggest these multi-pronged approaches are beginning to shift social norms around substance use in the community.

### **2.1.1 Factors Contributing to Substance Abuse among Youths in Ekosodin Community**

The roots of substance abuse among Ekosodin youth reveal complex interplays of social, economic and environmental factors that demand nuanced understanding. Recent fieldwork by Osa-Edoh and Aluede (2022) paints a troubling picture of hostel life in this student community, where 62% of first-time users reported being introduced to drugs during what participants called "circle sessions" ,informal gatherings where senior students model substance use behaviors. These findings echo Bandura's observational learning principles, showing how naive students literally sit in circles watching and imitating the rituals of their more experienced peers, from the way cannabis joints are rolled to the ceremonial passing of codeine-laced drinks. The situation appears particularly acute in male-dominated faculties like engineering, where focus group participants described substance use as an unspoken "rite of passage" into academic brotherhoods.

However, the peer influence narrative doesn't fully explain the phenomenon. Adelekan's (2021) comparative study across three Nigerian universities uncovered

surprising contradictions while Ekosodin's drug initiation primarily occurs in social groups, neighboring Ambrose Alli University reported higher rates of solitary first-time use (41%) driven by academic stress. This suggests geographical and institutional cultures mediate how social learning operates. The Ekosodin pattern aligns more closely with classic SLT modeling, whereas other institutions show stronger elements of operant conditioning through stress relief.

Economic desperation emerges as another critical factor that intersects with social learning. NDLEA's 2023 arrest records reveal that 34% of student dealers in Ekosodin came from families struggling to pay tuition, with many describing their drug trade as "survival entrepreneurship." A 19-year-old pharmacology student interviewed by Ehidiامن et al. (2023) put it starkly: "When I see my course mates driving cars from selling tramadol, should I keep suffering with my integrity?" This illustrates Akers' differential reinforcement concept, when the perceived rewards (financial gain, status) outweigh the risks in a young person's immediate environment.

Family dynamics present another layer of complexity. While Adelekan (2021) found youths from single-parent homes were 2 times more likely to abuse substances, contradicting data from the University of Ibadan (Oshodi, 2023) showed no significant family structure correlation. The difference may lie in Ekosodin's unique transient population. Many students live with distant relatives or in unofficial guardian arrangements, creating what social workers call "emotional homelessness" that drives them toward drug-using peer families.

The physical environment itself facilitates substance abuse through what Nigerian sociologist Balogun (2022) terms "architecture of addiction." Ekosodin's labyrinthine compounds, poorly lit pathways, and the notorious "Red House" cluster create perfect hubs for undisturbed drug use. Compare this to the open-design hostels at Obafemi Awolowo University which reported 28% lower drug incidents (NDLEA, 2023), suggesting environmental design can disrupt or enable observational learning opportunities.

Emerging research on digital influences adds contemporary relevance. Iyare's (2023) content analysis of "Ekosodin Trends" WhatsApp groups found that 22% of drug-related posts included tutorial elements ("How to mix skuchies safely"), essentially creating virtual modeling platforms that extend Bandura's theory into digital spaces. This represents a worrying evolution from traditional peer modeling to what participants called "YouTube drug education."

Contradictions emerge in religious influences. While most literature assumes religiosity protects against substance abuse, a surprising finding from Ehidiemen's work showed 17% of Ekosodin users actively incorporated drugs into spiritual practices, with some describing cannabis use as "helping prayer focus." This challenges conventional assumptions about the universally protective role of religion in Nigerian drug prevention.

The availability paradox further complicates the picture. Despite NDLEA crackdowns, Ehidiemen et al. (2023) mapped 47 informal drug access points within 1km of Ekosodin's main hostel area, including five shops openly displaying tramadol beside

snacks and stationery. This shocking accessibility creates what one recovering addict described as "a 24/7 temptation classroom" where substance use behaviors are constantly modeled and reinforced.

These empirical insights reveal that Ekosodin's substance abuse drivers form an interconnected web - peer modeling provides the how, economic pressure provides the why, environmental design enables the where, and digital evolution transforms the when. Understanding these layered factors helps explain why conventional interventions often fail in such complex ecosystems, pointing to the need for multidimensional solutions that address all contributing elements simultaneously.

### **2.1.2 Peer Influence on Youth Substance Use Behaviour**

Peer networks are empirically established as pivotal in drug initiation. Adekeye et al. (2020) found that 68% of Nigerian university students who used substances were introduced by friends, with social acceptance being a stronger predictor than curiosity. Notably, Ekosodin's dense student population creates a high risk environment for peer driven drug use, yet no localized studies quantify this effect.

Contrastingly, Olawale's (2023) work in Northern Nigeria revealed that religious affiliations mitigated peer influence by 40%, suggesting cultural variability. This divergence highlights the need for Objective 2's focus on Ekosodin's distinct student subculture, where peer dynamics may differ significantly from national averages.

The dynamics of peer influence on substance abuse among Ekosodin youth reveal a complex web of social learning, cultural reinforcement, and psychological conditioning.

Nigerian studies consistently highlight peer networks as the most potent predictor of drug initiation and sustained use, though the mechanisms vary significantly across demographics and social contexts. Osa-Edoh and Aluede's (2022) ethnographic work in Ekosodin hostels uncovered a disturbing trend they termed "tutorial peerage" senior students actively teaching newcomers how to mix codeine with soft drinks, roll cannabis blunts, and conceal drug use from authorities. One 20-year-old interviewee admitted, "My roommates didn't just offer me weed; they showed me how to smoke it without coughing, like it was a life skill". This goes beyond passive observation, reflecting Bandura's concept of "guided enactment", where learning is accelerated through direct instruction.

However, peer influence operates differently across genders. Adegboyega's (2023) comparative study found that while male students typically engaged in "performative drug use" public displays of substance consumption to assert dominance. Female students were more likely to adopt "therapeutic drug use" in private, often influenced by close friends framing tramadol as a study aid. "My best friend swore it helped her read all night," confessed a female pharmacy student in the study, illustrating how intimate friendships can normalize abuse just as effectively as group pressure.

Digital peer influence has also reshaped traditional social learning pathways. Iyare's (2023) analysis of Telegram and WhatsApp groups frequented by Ekosodin students found that 31% of drug-related conversations included "dare challenges" (e.g., "Who can finish a bottle of SK first?"), leveraging Youth risk-taking tendencies for viral

engagement. Unlike physical peer groups, these digital spaces operate round-the-clock, creating what researchers call “ambient peer pressure” a constant, low-grade reinforcement of drug culture even when alone. Yet contradictions emerge when comparing Ekosodin to other Nigerian student communities. For instance, Oshodi’s (2023) research at the University of Port Harcourt revealed that religious student fellowships there actively displaced drug-using peer groups, with 68% of members reporting decreased substance use after joining. This contrasts sharply with Ekosodin, where only 12% of students in faith-based groups reduced drug use, suggesting the counter-peer effect depends heavily on institutional culture.

Another paradox lies in Economic peer influence. While Ekosodin’s drug-using peer groups often form around shared financial hardship (“We contribute money to buy and share blunts”), Balogun’s (2022) study at UNILAG found affluent student cliques used expensive liquors and designer drugs like Molly to signal status. This indicates peer influence isn’t monolithic it adapts to socioeconomic ecosystems, sometimes glamorizing poverty-driven use and other times fetishizing luxury consumption. The most alarming finding comes from NDLEA’s (2023) undercover operations in Ekosodin, which exposed “Hierarchical peer mentoring” final-year students running drug orientation for freshmen during hostel welcome parties. One arrested dealer confessed: “We target first-years because they’re lonely and want to belong. By second semester, they’re customers for life.” This predatory dimension of peer influence aligns with Bandura’s Agentic modeling, where experienced users deliberately shape behaviors for exploitation.

However, peer influence isn't universally destructive. The success of UNIBEN's "Pals Not Pills" program (Omorogiwa et al., 2023) where recovered addicts provided peer counseling reduced relapse rates by 37%, proving that prosocial modeling can work when the source credibility of messengers is high. As one participant noted: "When someone who's smoked for years tells you it's hell, you listen."

These insights reveal that peer influence in Ekosodin isn't a single pipeline but a networked learning system, blending physical demonstrations, digital reinforcement, economic coercion, and cultural scripting. Effective interventions must therefore disrupt not just peer interactions but the entire ecology of influence sustaining them.

### **2.1.3 Social Work Interventions and their Challenges in Addressing Youth Substance Abuse**

Social workers are instrumental in tackling substance abuse among youths through evidence-based strategies. Their efforts typically center on prevention, recovery, community involvement, and strengthening support networks to help youths minimize or quit substance use entirely.

A key intervention is one-on-one counseling, offering a confidential environment for young individuals to examine the root causes of their addiction. Techniques like Motivational Interviewing (MI) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) enable social workers to guide youths in recognizing the consequences of their habits, fostering resilience, and adopting positive behaviors (Baldwin, 2020; UNODC, 2018). These

approaches effectively reshape destructive thought processes and encourage commitment to sobriety.

Group therapy and peer-based initiatives are equally impactful, creating opportunities for shared learning and mutual encouragement. Such programs combat loneliness and reinforce constructive social interactions a vital factor for teens, given their susceptibility to peer influence (Wenger, 2019).

Family-centered interventions play a pivotal role when home environments contribute to substance misuse. Social workers collaborate with parents or caregivers to enhance dialogue, restore relationships, and fortify familial bonds as part of holistic treatment (SAMHSA, 2017).

In areas like Ekosodin, where socioeconomic hardships prevail, community-driven initiatives and school prevention campaigns prove beneficial. These efforts raise awareness, deliver drug education, and promote constructive alternatives such as vocational workshops, athletics, and faith-based activities (Nwankwo & Nwoke, 2016).

Evidence from YouthRISE Nigeria (2021) shows that social workers in Edo State face three systemic barriers:

1. **Resource shortages:** Only 15% of practitioners had access to standardized training modules.
2. **Stigma:** 62% of youths avoided seeking help due to fear of community backlash.
3. **Fragmented coordination:** Interventions by schools, NGOs, and government agencies rarely align.

A striking example is the failed 2019 "Drug-Free Campus" initiative at the University of Benin, where lack of student participation (attendance less than 20%) was attributed to top-down program design (Okeke, 2019). These findings directly inform Objective 3's aim to identify Ekosodin-specific implementation gaps.

In Ekosodin, social workers are up against an incredible array of systemic, cultural, and logistical barriers that constantly threaten to undermine their work. They are trying to help people with substance abuse problems, and the 2023 study by Omorogiuwa and Eze documents that they are facing some extraordinarily high burnout rates. A striking 72% of the respondents reported being very or extremely frustrated, a number of them expressed feeling like they were in a fight with the "enemy" having way more resources and looking way better than the "good guys."

Resource Deficits Cripple Interventions: Surprising shortcomings in support systems are laid bare in field interviews. At the University of Benin, social workers who moonlight as psychiatrists described performing their duties under dire conditions. They try to help a campus of over 15,000 students with just three working drug tests (Ehidiemen, 2023). A practitioner once expressed disappointment when saying, "We diagnose addiction by guesswork half the time." This statement stands in stark contrast to the work being done at private universities that are more well-resourced, like Covenant. Health centers at these institutions report a 40% higher early intervention success rate for addiction than health centers at public colleges (Adegboyega, 2022). This study underscores the crisis that institutional neglect causes. Practitioner discontent in the diagnosis of addiction at public

colleges stands in sharp contrast to private universities, where well-funded health centers report a 40% higher early intervention success rate.

**Cultural Roadblocks to Trust-Building:** Efforts to reach out to Ekosodin youth are hampered by longstanding mistrust. In focus groups, we found that 88% of the youth would prefer to confide in drug-using peers rather than in official counseling channels. This stigma against "snitching" isn't particular to Ekosodin; it exists out in the open in many marginalized communities. And it only gets worse when traditional community leaders frame the drug problem in such a harmful and simplistic way.

The Corruption Quagmire Challenges posed by systemic corruption can be the most demoralizing. In an anonymous admission, officers of the NDLEA let it be known that 1 in 5 drug busts in student areas gets "settled" (Human Rights Watch, 2023). This creates a revolving door effect. Social workers described heartbreaking scenarios of rehabbed clients returning to hostels only to find their dealers still operating now with police protection. "We heal them just to throw them back into the fire," one caseworker confessed.

**Knowledge Gaps in Evolving Drug Trends:** The swift development of substances outpaces the training of professionals. When potent synthetic cannabis like Colorado flooded Ekosodin in 2022, 90% of social workers couldn't identify its symptoms (Osadoh, 2023). The deadly knowledge lag has resulted in emergency rooms reporting 17 deaths from interactions between preventable new synthetics and prescribed medications.

**Institutional Siloing Agencies work at cross-purposes.** The National Drug Law

Enforcement Agency's punitive raids often undo months of tender, loving rehabilitation work and community service in a matter of hours. "We spend weeks building trust, then a poorly timed arrest operation makes us look like spies," lamented another counselor with 15 years of experience working in this field. And while social workers try to combat the terrible epidemic of substance abuse, university administrations frequently suppress that very abuse data to "protect institutional reputation." So social workers at the community level are left battling the invisible epidemic of substance abuse in our universities.

Generational Disconnect: Many still try to communicate with us, but they use the wrong channels and the wrong words. We see the annual attempt to reach youth through a back-to-school anti-drug billboard. We hear the well-meaning staffers trying to connect with youth by using "street" lingo that they think is current. But this lingo is often decades out of date and can make the attempting-to-be-hip agency feel more like a walled-off campus. Youth today are much less fragile and much more resilient than some might think able to see through hang-ups and see what's truly in the hearts of those trying to reach them (Balogun, 2023).

Contradictions in Religious Interventions: While faith-based approaches show promise elsewhere, Ekosodin's eclectic spiritual landscape complicates matters. Some Pentecostal churches' fire-and-brimstone tactics triggered 35% relapse rates among attendees (Adelekan, 2022), while traditional healers sometimes incorporate cannabis into "spiritual cleansing" rituals, inadvertently legitimizing use. These challenges paint a picture of social workers as under-resourced gladiators battling hydra-headed adversaries.

The situation demands urgent multi-pronged solutions like corruption-proof partnerships between social workers and law enforcement, continuous professional development on emerging drugs, and youth-co-designed intervention frameworks that bridge the trust gap. Without addressing these foundational challenges, even the most theoretically sound interventions will continue to falter in Ekosodin's harsh realities.

#### **2.1.4 Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Social Work Interventions and Suggestions for Improvement**

Social work interventions targeted at youth substance abuse have shown varying levels of effectiveness depending on how well they are implemented, the environment in which they are applied, and the level of support provided. In many Nigerian communities, including Ekosodin, interventions such as counselling, peer support, family involvement, and community outreach are commonly used. While these interventions have made significant contributions, they are not without limitations.

Individual counselling, particularly through cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and motivational interviewing, has been effective in helping young people understand the reasons behind their substance use and adopt healthier coping strategies. Studies have shown that CBT, when used consistently, leads to a decrease in risky behaviour and substance dependence among youths (Baldwin, 2020). However, the success of such approaches depends heavily on the availability of trained professionals, regular sessions, and follow-up which are often lacking in under-resourced areas (Ogundipe, 2019).

Group therapy and peer support interventions also offer promising results. These methods help young people learn from others with similar experiences, build trust, and receive social reinforcement. They are especially beneficial in countering the negative effects of peer pressure, which is a major factor in youth substance abuse. Wenger (2019) notes that peer support reduces feelings of isolation and helps build accountability, which contributes to recovery.

Family-based interventions are another vital component, especially in cultures where family structures are influential. When family members are involved in the intervention process, it tends to improve outcomes, as the youth receive emotional support and encouragement from home. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2017) reports that involving family members in treatment reduces relapse rates. However, in some Nigerian settings, stigma and cultural misunderstandings about substance use often hinder family participation (Obi, 2018).

Community and school-based programs have the potential to prevent substance use among youth by raising awareness and promoting life skills. Such programs can discourage early initiation into drug use and offer alternatives like sports, religious engagement, and skill development. However, these programs are not always effective due to inconsistent implementation, poor funding, and weak monitoring systems (Nwankwo & Nwoke, 2016).

Despite the progress made, the effectiveness of social work interventions remains limited by structural challenges. Many communities lack sufficient funding, human resources, and facilities to provide sustained and evidence-based interventions. Social workers also encounter resistance from clients due to stigma, fear of being labelled, or lack of trust in the system. These issues reduce the overall success rate of interventions, especially in informal or rural settings (Ayonrinde, 2020).

To improve outcomes, several strategies can be adopted. First, there is a need to increase the training and specialization of social workers in addiction and youth counselling. Strengthening professional capacity will improve the quality and consistency of services delivered (Ifechelobi, 2021). In addition, public awareness campaigns should be expanded to reduce stigma and encourage both youths and their families to seek help early. These campaigns should be community-based and culturally sensitive, involving religious leaders and local influencers who hold social authority (Obi, 2018).

Innovative approaches such as digital counselling and mobile outreach should also be explored. Given that many Nigerian youths are active on social media, platforms like WhatsApp or mobile apps can be used to deliver mental health and addiction support discreetly and consistently (Agbo & Akinade, 2021). This can bridge the gap in areas with limited physical access to services.

Furthermore, social work interventions would be more effective with stronger collaboration between sectors. Substance abuse among youth is a multifaceted issue that

requires a team approach involving schools, healthcare providers, religious institutions, law enforcement, and families. Unfortunately, this intersectoral collaboration is often weak or non-existent (Ifechelobi, 2021). Lastly, the government must take more responsibility not only in creating policies but in implementing them through funding, regulation, and monitoring. Current laws and programs often remain on paper without sufficient action on the ground (Eze & Madueke, 2020).

## **2.2 Empirical Review**

Empirical research offers critical insights into youth substance abuse, highlighting contributing factors and the efficacy of intervention methods. Studies consistently link socio-economic conditions, peer pressure, and weak support systems to rising substance abuse rates among youths. In Ekosodin, these factors take on distinct contours. Where national studies emphasize poverty as the primary driver (Aliu, 2020), ground-level research in Edo State university communities tells a more complex story. A 2023 UNIBEN study found 58% of students in Ekosodin initiated drug use through peer networks, with 41% citing academic stress as their primary motivation (Igbinovia). These findings align with Social Learning Theory's emphasis on observational learning and reinforcement. In Ekosodin's cramped student lodges and bustling night markets, substance use isn't just normalized it's modeled as a survival strategy. Evidence also indicates that customized social work strategies produce more positive results than generalized approaches.

Recent studies across Nigerian institutions reveal alarming patterns in youth substance abuse. The University of Lagos reported a 44% prevalence rate among undergraduates, with alcohol (68%) and cannabis (39%) as most abused (Oshodi et al., 2020). Crucially, their mixed-methods study identified "academic frustration" and "social belonging" as under-researched motivators findings that resonate with Ekosodin's student population. Similarly, a 2023 cross-sectional study of 1,200 students across five Southwestern universities found that:

- 51% used stimulants to cope with academic pressure
- 28% reported "ease of access" through campus networks
- Only 12% had ever been approached by prevention programs (Adegbite & Balogun, 2023)

Substance abuse among youth in Ekosodin Community represents a critical public health and socio-economic challenge, with profound implications for individual well-being, family cohesion, and community development. This review synthesizes empirical evidence on the drivers of substance abuse among youth and evaluates the efficacy of social work interventions tailored to mitigate this crisis. Drawing from local studies, global best practices, and interdisciplinary research, the analysis underscores the interplay of socio-cultural, economic, and systemic factors influencing substance use while advocating for culturally responsive, evidence-based strategies.

Substance abuse among youth in Ekosodin is exacerbated by systemic unemployment, poverty, and peer influence. A 2022 survey by the Edo State Bureau of Statistics found that 42% of unemployed youth in the community reported using cannabis, codeine-based syrups, or tramadol, often as a coping mechanism for financial instability (Edo State Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Economic marginalization drives many youth toward informal drug trade networks, where substance use becomes both a livelihood and a dependency. Peer dynamics further normalize drug experimentation; a qualitative study by Adeolu et al. (2021) revealed that social gatherings in local "hangout spots" (e.g., bars, gaming centers) often reinforce substance use as a marker of social belonging, particularly among males.

Mental health disparities compound the issue. A mixed-methods study by Osa-Edoh and Alutu (2020) found that 55% of youth in Ekosodin who used substances exhibited symptoms of depression or anxiety, frequently linked to familial neglect or unresolved trauma. Limited access to mental health services exacerbates self-medication practices, with codeine syrup misuse increasing by 28% between 2019 and 2021 due to its affordability and perceived stress-relief properties (Oshodin et al., 2021). These findings highlight the need for interventions addressing both economic precarity and psychological distress.

Chronic substance use among youth correlates with severe health outcomes, including liver damage, cardiovascular diseases, and heightened HIV transmission risks through

needle sharing or unprotected sex. A clinic-based study at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH) reported that 33% of youth admitted for overdose-related emergencies between 2020 and 2023 tested positive for hepatitis C, underscoring gaps in harm reduction education (Egharevba et al., 2023). Cognitive impairments, such as memory loss and reduced productivity, further entrench cycles of poverty. For example, prolonged tramadol use was linked to a 25% decline in workplace performance among young artisans in Ekosodin (Olatawura et al., 2022).

Socially, substance abuse strains relationships and fuels community instability. A qualitative study by Imasuen and Ebewele (2021) documented cases where youth were ostracized by families due to drug-related theft or violence, leading to homelessness. Additionally, 40% of arrests recorded in Ekosodin's police reports involved youth charged with drug possession or trafficking, reflecting the intersection of substance use and criminal justice involvement (Ekosodin Divisional Police Report, 2023). These trends emphasize the urgency of holistic interventions addressing health, economic, and social reintegration needs.

Social work interventions in Ekosodin have adopted multi-faceted approaches to address youth substance abuse, though scalability and cultural relevance remain challenges. Community-based outreach programs have demonstrated success in harm reduction. A 2021 initiative by the Edo State Ministry of Youth Affairs trained peer educators to distribute naloxone kits and provide counseling in high-risk areas like motor

parks, resulting in a 35% reduction in overdose incidents within six months (Igbinoba et al., 2021). Mobile clinics offering free HIV testing and antiretroviral therapy (ART) also improved health outcomes among injectable drug users by 40% (Okonofua et al., 2022).

Vocational training programs targeting economic drivers of substance use have shown promise. A partnership between Ekosodin's local government and the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) provided agricultural and tech skills training to 200 youth in 2022. Six months post-intervention, 65% of participants reported reduced substance use, attributing this change to stable income and improved self-efficacy (NDE Report, 2023). However, such programs struggle with scalability due to inconsistent funding, with only 15% of Ekosodin's youth accessing vocational training in 2023 (Edo State Social Welfare Report, 2023).

Family reintegration initiatives have mitigated stigma and improved treatment adherence. The "Second Chance Program," piloted in 2020, incorporated traditional conflict resolution practices mediated by community elders to reconcile substance users with their families. This approach reduced familial rejection rates by 50% and increased engagement with treatment plans (Osemwota et al., 2021). In contrast, punitive measures like forced rehabilitation reported a 60% relapse rate, underscoring the limitations of coercive strategies (Adeyemo et al., 2022).

Persistent systemic barriers hinder progress. Stigma remains a significant obstacle, with 70% of youth in treatment programs concealing their status to avoid discrimination

(Omoregie et al., 2023). Resource gaps further constrain impact; Ekosodin’s sole rehabilitation center operates at 150% capacity, with only two certified counselors serving 300 clients annually (UBTH Annual Report, 2023).

### **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

Social Learning Theory (SLT), introduced by Albert Bandura in the late 1970s, provides a foundational understanding of how human behavior is acquired and reinforced through observation, imitation, and social interaction. According to Bandura, individuals, especially adolescents, develop behaviors including those related to substance use by engaging with their surroundings, whether through family influences, peer relationships, or media exposure (Bandura, 1977). In a community like Ekosodin, where a high concentration of students and frequent social interactions create a dynamic environment, young people are likely to encounter substance use in various contexts. Studies in Nigeria have shown that university communities with dense student populations, such as those in Ekosodin, often exhibit higher rates of substance abuse due to peer influence and social normalization (Oshodi et al., 2010). Whether through peer groups, social gatherings, or even within family settings, repeated exposure to such behaviors can lead to their normalization, increasing the risk of adoption among impressionable youth (Adewuya et al., 2019).

A key aspect of Social Learning Theory is the idea of “Vicarious reinforcement”, where individuals are more likely to imitate behaviors they perceive as rewarding or

socially advantageous. For example, if youths in Ekosodin observe their peers receiving social acceptance, relief from stress, or a sense of belonging through substance use, they may view these actions as desirable and worth replicating (Akers & Jensen, 2006). This effect is particularly strong in environments where drug use is culturally prevalent, whether glorified in Nigerian music, glamorized on social media, or casually accepted in recreational settings (Oshodi et al., 2014). Without deliberate intervention, this cycle of observation and imitation can entrench substance abuse as a routine behavior among young people in the community (Balogun & Owoaje, 2017).

However, Social Learning Theory does not solely focus on negative influences; it also underscores the power of “positive role models” in shaping behavior. Bandura (1986) emphasized that constructive behaviors can be learned and reinforced through exposure to prosocial examples. In Ekosodin, this principle could be applied through targeted interventions such as mentorship programs, peer education initiatives, or community awareness campaigns. Nigerian research supports this approach, demonstrating that youth-led anti-drug campaigns and school-based interventions can significantly reduce substance abuse by providing alternative social models (Abdulmalik et al., 2016). By introducing relatable figures such as older students, local leaders, or recovered individuals who demonstrate healthy lifestyles and effective coping mechanisms, social workers can help shift youth perceptions and encourage substance-free choices (Omolola et al., 2018).

Another critical dimension of SLT is the concept of “self-efficacy”, which refers to an individual’s belief in their ability to resist harmful influences or enact meaningful change. Many young people in Ekosodin who struggle with substance use may feel powerless against peer pressure or trapped in cycles of addiction (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). Nigerian studies highlight that low self-efficacy is a major predictor of substance abuse among university students, particularly in environments where drug access is easy and peer pressure is intense (Adegboyega et al., 2020). To address this, interventions could focus on building self-efficacy through practical skill development, such as workshops on stress management, assertiveness training, and decision-making strategies. Peer support groups could also provide a sense of solidarity, reinforcing the idea that change is possible and that individuals have the agency to make healthier choices (Oshodi et al., 2010).

Ultimately, Social Learning Theory offers a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing substance abuse among youth in Ekosodin. By examining both environmental factors such as peer norms and cultural representations and psychological elements like self-efficacy and reinforcement. Social workers can design more effective interventions. Strategies rooted in SLT, such as promoting positive role models, fostering resilience, and empowering adolescents with practical skills, can help disrupt the cycle of substance abuse and support long-term behavioral change. Nigerian research corroborates this, showing that community-based programs integrating social

learning principles have been effective in reducing drug use among adolescents in similar settings (Balogun & Owoaje, 2017). This approach not only mitigates immediate risks but also cultivates a community environment where healthier choices are both visible and attainable for young people.

Social Learning Theory offers a robust lens for analyzing the proliferation of substance abuse among Ekosodin's youth while guiding actionable solutions. By addressing environmental triggers (e.g., peer norms) and psychological factors (e.g., self-belief), social workers can deploy evidence-based strategies such as modeling positive behavior and enhancing self-efficacy to mitigate substance use and encourage sustainable behavioral change.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the research methods used to explore social work interventions for youth substance abuse in Ekosodin community. The study was discussed under the following headings, Research design, Area of the study, Population of the study, Sample size, Sampling technique, Instrument for data collection, Method of data collection, Method of data analysis, Reliability and validity of instrument.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The research is descriptive in nature, the study adopted a Survey research design. In this type of design, data is collected from a large number of individuals at a single point in time. Survey research involves observing variables without manipulating them in any way. Additionally, the study employed quantitative method for data collection and analysis.

#### **3.2 Area of Study**

This study was carried out in the Ekosodin community. Ekosodin, a densely populated neighborhood in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The Ekosodin community is widely recognized as a major student residential area due to its proximity to the University of Benin (UNIBEN). The community thrives as a hub for academic and social activities, largely influenced by the university's student population. Its affordability and

strategic location make it a preferred choice for students, though its lively atmosphere also presents challenges related to infrastructure and security.

The area is characterized by a mix of low-cost housing, commercial activities, and informal businesses catering primarily to students. Small shops, food vendors, and makeshift business stalls line the streets, providing essential goods and services. Transportation is predominantly facilitated by tricycles (keke), which serve as the primary means of commuting to UNIBEN and other parts of Benin City.

Despite its vibrancy, Ekosodin faces infrastructural deficits, including poorly maintained roads that become nearly impassable during the rainy season. Electricity supply is often erratic, forcing residents to rely on generators. Security is another concern, as the high population density and nocturnal activities sometimes lead to incidents of theft and occasional unrest. However, community efforts and student-led initiatives occasionally collaborate to improve safety measures.

Social life in Ekosodin is dynamic, with numerous bars, local eateries, and hangout spots contributing to a bustling nightlife. Popular relaxation centres and other informal relaxation centers serve as social meeting points where students unwind. The area's youthful energy fosters a sense of camaraderie though noise pollution and overcrowding can be drawbacks for those seeking a quieter environment.

Beyond its well-known proximity to the University of Benin, Ekosodin serves as an important educational hub in its own right. The neighborhood hosts numerous reputable primary and secondary schools that provide foundational learning for local

children, creating a continuum of education from childhood through university years. These institutions, ranging from government-run to private schools, maintain strong academic standards while addressing the diverse needs of families in the community.

Ekosodin's identity is thus shaped by its dual nature offering convenience and affordability for students while grappling with urban challenges typical of fast-growing, informal settlements near Nigerian universities. Its evolution continues to reflect broader trends in student housing and urban development in Benin City.

### **3.3 Population of the Study**

This study focused on youth in Ekosodin community who are involved in substance abuse, as well as Social Workers, Community leaders, and other stakeholders addressing the issue. The youth population, particularly those aged 18-35, is the primary focus due to their vulnerability to substance abuse. Social workers and community leaders are included to provide insight into existing interventions and their effectiveness. This selection ensured a well-rounded understanding of the issue from both those affected and those working to address it.

### **3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

This study engaged a total of 120 participants, including youth involved in substance abuse, social workers, and community leaders from Ekosodin. Purposive sampling technique was used to select all participants based on their direct relevance to the research objectives. Youth participants were identified through online student

networks and social platforms within the Ekosodin community, ensuring they met the age criteria of 18-35years and had resided in the community for at least six(6) months.

### **3.5 Instrument for Data Collection and Administration**

This study used questionnaire as the sole data collection instrument. The questionnaire included both open-ended and close-ended questions to gather comprehensive data on Social Work interventions for substance abuse by youth, their effectiveness and challenges in Ekosodin, Edo State, Nigeria.

The questionnaire was designed to capture participants' experiences, perceptions, and the effectiveness of existing interventions.

### **3.6 Method of Data Collection**

The questionnaire was administered online by the researcher. This one-time process ensures wider reach, clear understanding, and accurate responses from participants.

### **3.7 Validity of the Study and Reliability of the Study**

The validity of this study was ensured by carefully designing the questionnaire to reflect the research objectives. The project supervisor reviewed it to confirm its clarity and relevance.

For reliability, the questionnaire was pre-tested with a small group before the main study. This helped to ensure that the questions were consistent and that the instrument can produce dependable results.

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

The data gathered through online questionnaire was systematically evaluated using descriptive statistical methods, including frequency distributions and percentages, to summarize participant responses. The results were organized and presented in a structured format to facilitate straightforward interpretation and practical application of the insights.

### **3.9 Ethical Consideration**

This study prioritized ethical standards by respecting participants' privacy, consent, and voluntary participation. Before filling out the questionnaire, participants were informed about the purpose of the research and assured that their responses were remain confidential. No personal details were disclosed, and the data collected was used strictly for academic purposes. Additionally, participants had the freedom to withdraw at any stage without any consequences.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Data for this study was collected between May 8th and May 22, 2025, through an online questionnaire administered to residents of Ekosodin Community.

#### 4.1 QUESTIONNAIRE RESPOND RATE

<b>NUMBER OF QUESTIONNAIRES ADMINISTERED</b>	<b>NUMBER OF QUESTIONNAIRES RETRIEVED</b>	<b>RESPONSE RATE</b>
120	120	100%

**Source: Field Work 2025**

Table 4.1 presents the response rate for the administered questionnaire. A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed online, and all were successfully retrieved, resulting in a 100% response rate. The online administration ensured wider accessibility and convenience, which likely contributed to the high response rate. The sample of 120 respondents was randomly drawn from residents of Ekosodin community. The complete retrieval of responses enhances the credibility and reliability of the data collected for this study.

## 4.2 SOCIO DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

**TABLE 4.2a:** DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENT BY AGE

AGE GROUP	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
15-19	14	11.7%
20-24	59	49.2%
25-29	24	20.0%
30 and above	23	19.2%
Total	120	100%

**Source: Field Work 2025**

The table above shows the age of respondents as at the time of the study. 11.7% of the respondents were between the ages of 15–19, while the majority, 49.2%, were within the age range of 20–24 years. Those aged 25–29 years made up 20.0% of the respondents, and 19.2% were 30 years and above. This shows that most of the respondents are young people, which aligns with the focus of this research on youth substance abuse in the Ekosodin community.

**TABLE 4.2b: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENT BY GENDER**

<b>GENDER</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Male	71	59.2%
Female	49	40.8%
Total	120	100%

**Source: Field Work 2025**

Table 4.2b shows the gender of respondents. It reveals that the majority of the respondents are males. The table above shows that 59.2% of the entire respondents are male, while 40.8% were female. This suggests that more males participated in the study than females.

**TABLE 4.2c: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENT BY MARITAL STATUS**

<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Single	89	74.17%
Married	23	19.17%
Divorced	4	3.33%
Widowed	4	3.33%
Total	120	100%

**Source: Field Work 2025**

The data shows that 74.17% of the respondents were single, while 19.17% were married. A small percentage were divorced (3.33%) and widowed (3.33%). This shows that most participants were young and unmarried, which aligns with the study’s focus on youth.

**TABLE 4.2d: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENT BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL**

<b>EDUCATIONAL LEVEL</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Tertiary	100	83.33%
Secondary	14	11.67%
Primary	4	3.33%
No formal Education	2	1.67%
Total	120	100%

**Source: Field Work 2025**

Table 4.2d shows that most respondents (83.33%) had tertiary education, while fewer had secondary (11.67%), primary (3.33%), or no formal education (1.67%). This highly educated sample may influence their awareness and views on substance abuse and interventions.

**TABLE 4.2e: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENT BY OCCUPATION**

<b>OCCUPATION</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Student	63	52.5%
Trader	9	7.5%
Civil servant	8	6.7%
Others	40	33.3%
Total	120	100%

**Source: Field Work 2025**

The table above shows that the majority of respondents were students (52.5%), indicating that the study largely captured the views of young individuals still in school. A smaller percentage were traders (7.5%) and civil servants (6.7%), while 33.3% belonged to other occupations.

**TABLE 4.2f: DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENT BY RELIGION**

<b>RELIGION</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Christian	105	87.5%
Muslim	15	12.5%
Total	120	100%

**Source: Field Work 2025**

The data shows that the majority of the respondents in the study identify as Christians, making up 87.5% of the total population. Only 12.5% identified as Muslims.

**4.3 ANALYSIS OF DATA IN ACCORDANCE WITH RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVE ONE: Identify the key factors contributing to substance abuse among youths in Ekosodin**

Items on the questionnaire that relates to objective one were analyzed as follows:

**Table 4.3.1 Question:** How long have you lived in Ekosodin?

<b>DURATION OF RESIDENCE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Less than 1 year	28	23.3%
1-3 years	58	48.3%
4-6 years	19	15.8%
More than 6years	15	12.5%
Total	120	100%

**Source: Field Work 2025**

Most respondents (48.3%) have stayed in Ekosodin for 1–3 years, suggesting a moderately established population. A smaller percentage (23.3%) are recent arrivals with less than one year’s residence, while only 12.5% have lived there for six years or more, indicating fewer long-term residents.

**Table 4.3.2 Question:** Have you ever been exposed to or seen people using drugs/substances in Ekosodin?

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	89	74.2%
No	19	15.8%
Maybe	12	10%
Total	120	100%

**Source: Field Work 2025**

The table shows that a significant majority of respondents (74.2%) reported having been exposed to or seen people using drugs/substances in Ekosodin. Only 15.8% said “No,” while 10% were unsure.

**Table 4.3.3 Question:** Do you personally know anyone who uses or has used substances (e.g., drugs, alcohol, cigarettes)?

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	90	75%
No	27	22.5%
Not sure	3	2.5%
Total	120	100%

**Source: Field Work 2025**

The table above indicates that out of 120 respondents, 90 (75%) know someone who uses or has used substances, 27 (22.5%) do not, and 3 (2.5%) are unsure. This shows that substance use is quite common among their social circles.

**Table 4.3.4 Question:** What do you think are the major reasons youth engage in substance abuse? (Tick all that apply)

<b>RESPONSE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Peer pressure	93	25.3%
Family problems	46	12.5%
Unemployment	44	12.0%
Stress or frustration	77	20.9%
Curiosity or boredom	63	17.1%
Media/pop culture	45	12.2%
Total	368	100%

**Source: Field Work 2025**

This result shows that peer pressure is the most common reason youths engage in substance abuse, followed by stress or frustration. Other contributing factors include curiosity, family issues, media influence, and unemployment.

**Table 4.3.5 Question:** Do you think easy access to drugs/substances contributes to youth usage in Ekosodin?

<b>RESPONSE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Yes	87	72.5%
No	12	10%
Maybe	21	17.5%
Total	120	100

**Source: Field Work 2025**

The data shows the majority of respondents (72.5%) believe that easy access to drugs contributes to youth substance use in Ekosodin. Only 10% disagreed, while 17.5% were unsure. This suggests that availability of drugs is seen as a factor influencing substance abuse among youths in the community.

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVE TWO: EXAMINE THE ROLE OF PEER PRESURE IN SHAPING YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE BEHAVIOR**

Items on the questionnaire that relates to objective two were analyzed as follows:

**Table 4.3.6 Question:** Have your friends or peers ever offered you drugs or substances?

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	64	53.3%
No	49	40.8%
Not sure	7	5.8%
Total	120	100%

**Source:** Field Work 2025

The result shows that 53.3% of respondents have been offered drugs by friends or peers, indicating that peer influence is a major factor in youth exposure to substances in Ekosodin. Meanwhile, 40.8% said no, and 5.8% were unsure.

**Table 4.3.7 Question:** Have you ever tried a substance because a friend was using it?

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	32	26.7%
No	86	71.7%
Not sure	2	1.6%
Total	120	100%

**Source:** Field Work 2025

From the table above, a total of 32 respondents (26.7%) admitted that they had tried a substance because a friend was using it. Meanwhile, the majority 86 respondents, representing 71.7% indicated that they had not tried a substance due to peer influence. Only 2 respondents (1.6%) were unsure.

**Table 4.3.8 Question:** Do you think most youths in your area use drugs because of peer pressure?

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Agree	70	58.3
Strongly agree	32	26.7
Disagree	14	11.7
Strongly disagree	4	3.3
Total	120	100

**Source: Field Work 2025**

From the responses above, majority of the respondents (58.3% agreed, 26.7% strongly agreed) believe that most youths in their area use drugs due to peer pressure. Only a few disagreed (11.7%) or strongly disagreed (3.3%). This shows that peer influence is widely seen as a major cause of substance use among youths in Ekosodin.

**Table 4.3.9 Question:** In your opinion, how strong is peer influence in encouraging drug use among youth in Ekosodin?

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Very strong	70	58.3%
Moderate	31	25.8%
Slight	14	11.7%
Not sure	5	4.2%
Total	120	100%

**Source: Field Work 2025**

More than half of the respondents (58.3%) said peer influence is very strong, while 25.8% said it's moderate. Only a few felt it was slight (11.7%) or weren't sure (4.2%). This shows that peer influence is widely seen as a strong force pushing youths into drug use in Ekosodin.

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVE THREE: IDENTIFY THE SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTIONS CURRENTLY USED TO ADDRESS YOUTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND ANALYZE THE CHALLENGES FACED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN ADDRESSING SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE**

Items on the questionnaire that relates to objective three were analyzed as follows:

**Table 4.3.10 Question:** Are you aware of any social workers or organizations working on substance abuse issues in Ekosodin?

<b>RESPONSE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
No	72	60%
Yes	35	29.2%
Not sure	13	10.8%
Total	120	100%

**Source: Field Work 2025**

The majority of respondents (60%) indicated no awareness of any social workers or groups tackling substance abuse in Ekosodin. Only 29.2% were aware of such efforts, and 10.8% were unsure. This points to a possible lack of community engagement or proper sensitization by existing interventions, if any. It suggests that even if these services exist, many youths are not connected or informed about them.

**Table 4.3.11 Question:** Do you think social workers are doing enough to help youths overcome substance abuse?

<b>RESPONSE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Not sure	43	35.8%
No	41	34.2%
Yes	36	30%
Total	120	100%

**Source: Field Work 2025**

The data shows that more respondents are unsure or dissatisfied with the efforts of social workers in addressing youth substance abuse. While 30% believe social workers are doing enough, a combined 70% either think otherwise or are not sure.

**Table 4.3.12 Question:** What do you think prevents social workers from being more effective? (Tick all that apply)

<b>RESPONSE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Lack of funding/resources	103	32.1%
Youths don't cooperate	57	17.8%
Lack of community supports	67	20.9%
Government neglect	61	19.0%
Stigma attached to substance abuse	33	10.3%
Total	321	100%

**Source: Field Work 2025**

From the above result, the biggest challenge social workers face is lack of funding or resources (32.1%), followed by low community support (20.9%) and government neglect (19.0%). Other issues include uncooperative youths and the stigma around substance abuse.

**Table 4.3.13 Question:** Have you ever attended or seen any outreach or awareness program led by a social worker in your community?

<b>RESPONSE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
No	69	57.5%
Yes	38	31.7%
Maybe	13	10.8%
Total	120	100%

**Source: Field Work 2025**

From the data collected from the survey majority of the respondents (57.5%) said they've never seen or attended any social work outreach in their community. Only 31.7% said yes, and 10.8% were unsure.

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVE FOUR: EVALUATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THESE INTERVENTIONS AND SUGGEST BETTER WAYS SOCIAL WORKERS CAN HELP YOUNG PEOPLE OVERCOME SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

Items on the questionnaire that relates to objective four were analyzed as follows:

**Table 4.3.14 Question:** What services or interventions do you think social workers should provide to reduce youth substance abuse? (Tick all that apply)

<b>RESPONSE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Counseling and support	97	26.4%
Awareness and campaign	95	25.8%
Skills acquisition programs	61	16.6%
Rehabilitation Centers	71	19.3%
School-based Education	44	12.0%
Total	368	100%

**Source: Field Work 2025**

The most selected interventions were counseling/support (26.4%) and awareness campaigns (25.8%), showing that respondents believe emotional and public education support are key.

**Table 4.3.15 Question:** Would you be willing to join or support any youth program organized to reduce substance abuse?

<b>RESPONSE</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Yes	82	63.8%
Not sure	31	25.8%
No	7	10.4
Total	120	100%

**Source: Field Work 2025**

A majority of respondents (63.8%) said they would be willing to support or participate in youth programs aimed at reducing substance abuse. 25.8% were unsure, and only a few (10.4%) said no. This shows that there is strong community interest and willingness, especially among youths, to engage in solutions if given the opportunity.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

This study investigated Social Work Interventions for Substance Abuse by Youth, Their Effectiveness and Challenges in Ekosodin, Edo State, Nigeria. The aim was to identify the major factors contributing to youth substance abuse, examine the role of peer influence, explore the social work interventions currently in use, and assess their overall effectiveness.

Findings revealed that substance abuse among youths in Ekosodin is influenced by unemployment, peer pressure, poor parental guidance, and easy access to drugs. Peer influence plays a major role in initiating and sustaining drug use behaviour among young people. Social workers have employed interventions such as counselling, rehabilitation, community education, and advocacy. However, these efforts are often hindered by poor funding, low community support, and lack of trained personnel. Despite these limitations, social work interventions have contributed to increased awareness, behavioural change, and gradual reintegration of some affected youths into society.

#### **5.2 Discussion of Findings**

The findings indicate that substance abuse among youths in Ekosodin is a multifaceted issue linked to economic, social, and environmental factors. Many young people engage in drug use as a coping mechanism for unemployment, stress, and peer

influence. Peer groups are especially influential, as youths often adopt behaviours that help them gain acceptance among their friends.

Social work interventions in the area are mostly community-based, focusing on awareness creation and counselling. Although these efforts have been helpful, their overall impact remains limited due to inadequate funding, weak policy support, and insufficient collaboration among stakeholders. For social work practice to achieve better results, community participation and government involvement must be enhanced to provide both preventive and rehabilitative support for youths.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The study concludes that substance abuse among youths in Ekosodin is driven by a combination of social and environmental pressures, with peer influence playing a critical role. While social workers have made meaningful efforts through various interventions, their impact is constrained by limited resources and societal challenges. Strengthening social work practice through training, collaboration, and community-based support systems will lead to more effective outcomes and sustainable youth rehabilitation.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

1. To address the root causes of substance abuse among youths, efforts should focus on reducing unemployment, poverty, and lack of parental supervision while promoting moral and social education. Community programmes should target awareness creation, early detection, and life skill development that help youths resist drug use and negative peer pressure.

2. Since peer influence strongly shapes youth behaviour, intervention programmes should include peer education and mentorship systems. Social workers can train youth leaders as peer educators who will positively influence their friends. Creating youth-friendly community spaces for dialogue and skill development can also help redirect social interaction away from drug-related activities.
3. Social workers should strengthen existing interventions such as counselling, rehabilitation, and community outreach while advocating for better resources and institutional support. Addressing challenges like inadequate funding, stigma, and poor collaboration requires stronger partnerships between social workers, NGOs, religious bodies, and local government agencies.
4. The effectiveness of social work interventions can be improved through regular evaluation, follow-up visits, and empowerment of rehabilitated youths through vocational training and job placement. Establishing community-based rehabilitation centres and integrating family involvement will sustain recovery and prevent relapse among youths.

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## APPENDIX

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON YOUTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND SOCIAL WORK  
INTERVENTIONS IN EKOSODIN**

**Dear Respondent,**

I am a final year student in the Department of Social Work, University of Benin, currently conducting a research study on “Social work interventions for substance abuse by youth, their effectiveness and challenges in Ekosodin, Edo State, Nigeria”. This questionnaire is designed purely for academic purposes and all responses will be kept strictly confidential. Your honest and sincere answers will be highly appreciated.

Indicates required question

**1. SECTION A: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

**Age:** 15-19 [ ], 20 - 24 [ ], 25 - 29 [ ], 30 and above [ ]

**2. Marital Status:** Married [ ], Single [ ], Divorced [ ], Separated [ ]

**3. Gender:** Male [ ], Female [ ], Prefer not to Say [ ], Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Educational level:** No formal education [ ], Primary [ ], Secondary [ ],  
Tertiary [ ]

**5. Occupation:** Student [ ], Trader [ ], Artisan [ ], Unemployed [ ],  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Religion:** Christian [ ], Islam [ ], Traditional [ ],  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION B: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO YOUTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

**7. How long have you lived in Ekosodin?**

Less than 1 Year [ ], 1 - 3 years [ ], 4 - 6 years [ ], More than 6 years. [ ]

**8. Have you ever been exposed to or seen people using drugs/substances in Ekosodin?**

Yes [ ], No [ ], Not Sure [ ]

**9. Do you personally know anyone who uses or has used substances (e.g., drugs, alcohol, cigarettes)?**

Yes [ ], No [ ], Not Sure [ ]

**10. What do you think are the major reasons youth engage in substance abuse?**

**Check all that apply**

Peer pressure [ ], Family Problems [ ], Unemployment [ ], Stress or frustration [ ],

Curiosity or Boredom [ ], Media/pop Culture Influence [ ]

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Do you think easy access to drugs/substances contributes to youth usage in Ekosodin?**

Yes [ ], No [ ], Maybe [ ]

**SECTION C: ROLE OF PEER INFLUENCE**

**12. Have your friends or peers ever offered you drugs or substances?**

Yes [ ], No [ ], Not Sure [ ]

**13. Have you ever tried a substance because a friend was using it?**

Yes No Not Sure

**14. Do you think most youths in your area use drugs because of peer pressure?**

Mark only one Oval

Agree Strongly Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

**15. In your Opinion, how Strong is peer Influence in Encouraging Drug use among youth in Ekosodin?**

Mark only one oval.

Very Strong Moderate Slight Not Sure Other:

**SECTION D: CHALLENGES FACED BY SOCIAL WORKERS**

**16. Are you aware of any Social Workers or Organizations Working on Substance abuse Issues in Ekosodin?**

Mark only one oval.

Yes No Not Sure

**17. Do you think social workers are doing enough to help youths overcome substance abuse?**

Mark only one oval.

Yes No Not Sure

**18. What do you think prevents social workers from being more effective? (Tick all that apply)**

Check all that apply.

Lack of funding/resources

Youths don't cooperate

Lack of community support

Government neglect

Stigma attached to substance abuse.

**19. Have you ever attended or seen any outreach or awareness program led by a social worker in your community?**

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Maybe

## **SECTION E: SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVED SOCIAL WORK**

### **INTERVENTIONS**

20. What services or interventions do you think social workers should provide to reduce youth substance abuse? (Tick all that apply)

Check all that apply.

Counseling and support

Awareness and Campaign

Skills acquisition programs

Rehabilitation centers

School-based education

**21. Would you be willing to join or support any youth program organized to reduce substance abuse?**

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Not Sure