

**ATTITUDE OF UNIVERSITY OF BENIN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS
TOWARDS MEDIA CAMPAIGN AGAINST HARD DRUGS**

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**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY**

SEPTEMBER, 2025.

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS
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AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ART (B.A) DEGREE IN MASS
COMMUNICATION**

SEPTEMBER, 2025.

DECLARATION

This project work is based on a study undertaken by me, in the department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, under the supervision of Prof. E. S. Asemah. All findings and analysis in the study are product of my personal research and where the views of my personal research and where the views of others have been used and expressed, they have been duly acknowledged.

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work was duly carried out by AKPOEVWA LIVIA OGHENERUNO in the department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Art, University of Benin, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Art degree in Mass Communication.

Prof Ezekiel S. Asemah
Project Supervisor

Date

Dr. Daniel O. Ekhareafo
Head of Department

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God, the source of wisdom, strength, and inspiration. His sustaining grace, immeasurable love, and abundant mercies have guided me through the challenges of this academic pursuit. Without His divine enablement, this achievement would not have been possible.

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AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the attitudes of undergraduate students at the University of Benin (UNIBEN) towards media campaigns against hard drug use. Despite ongoing efforts by the government and NGOs to spread anti-drug messages through television, radio, and social media, drug misuse remains common among students. The research is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Elaboration Likelihood Model, which help explain how attitudes and behavioral intentions are formed through media influence. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and data were collected from 400 undergraduate respondents across UNIBEN's Ugbowo and Ekehuan campuses using structured questionnaires. Results showed that while students are generally aware of anti-drug media campaigns, many do not find them persuasive or relatable. Factors such as peer influence, media trust, and personal experiences played a major role in shaping student reactions. The findings revealed that students were more influenced by campaigns featuring real-life stories, relatable role models, or culturally relevant messages. However, emotional reactions ranged from motivation to indifference, depending on the campaign's content and medium. The study recommends that future campaigns should be student-focused, engaging, and reflective of real campus life to increase effectiveness.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The widespread problem of drug misuse among young individuals, especially university students, has become a pressing public health and societal issue both globally and in Nigeria. Hard drugs, such as cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and synthetic opioids, present serious threats to physical and mental well-being, academic achievement, and the fabric of society. In Nigeria, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has noted a marked rise in drug-related arrests and confiscations in recent years. According to a 2023 report, more than 14,000 people were detained for drug offences in 2022 alone (NDLEA, 2023). This disturbing trend highlights the critical need to tackle drug misuse, particularly among young people, who form a substantial part of the population and are often seen as the nation's future.

University students, including those at the University of Benin (UNIBEN), are especially susceptible to drug misuse due to influences like peer pressure, academic stress, and the shift towards independence. Research by Adekeye et al. (2017) revealed that Nigerian undergraduates frequently turn to drugs as a way to manage stress or due to social pressures, with substances like cannabis and codeine being common. At UNIBEN, situated in Benin City, Edo State, local accounts and informal evidence suggest that being near urban areas and the ready availability of illegal drugs worsen the issue for students. This has led government bodies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and

educational institutions to turn to media campaigns as a means to curb the growing problem of hard drug use.

Media campaigns have long been regarded as an effective way to shape public opinions and behaviours, particularly among the younger generation. McQuail (2010) argues that mass media affects how people think by delivering information, shaping narratives, and encouraging behavioural shifts through compelling messages. In the realm of preventing drug misuse, these campaigns seek to increase awareness of the risks posed by hard drugs, diminish their social appeal, and promote healthier choices. In Nigeria, efforts like the NDLEA's "Say No to Drugs" initiative and various NGO-driven programmes have made use of radio, television, social media, and printed materials to spread anti-drug messages. For example, a countrywide campaign launched by the NDLEA in 2021 used celebrity endorsements and social media tags such as #DrugFreeNigeria to connect with young people, including university students (NDLEA, 2021). Media campaigns are deliberate and sustained efforts to inform or influence behavior in large audiences within a given time frame using media channels Asemah (2011).

However, despite the broad adoption of media campaigns, their success in changing attitudes towards hard drugs among specific groups, such as UNIBEN undergraduates, remains largely unstudied. Attitudes, which Ajzen (1991) describes as a tendency to react positively or negatively to something or a behaviour, are key in determining whether individuals will embrace or shun drug use. A favourable view of

media campaigns could amplify their effect, encouraging rejection of hard drugs, whereas a dismissive or apathetic stance might weaken their impact. A study by Hornik et al. (2008) on the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign in the United States showed varied results, with some findings indicating that exposure to anti-drug messages influenced intentions but not always actions. This underlines the importance of examining how specific audiences perceive and react to such campaigns, especially within a distinct cultural and institutional setting like UNIBEN.

At UNIBEN, the undergraduate community is a varied group, with differing socioeconomic circumstances, academic demands, and media exposure. Research by Oshodin (1981) into drug use among students in Benin City observed that alcohol and cannabis were widely misused, often tied to a lack of parental support and economic factors. More recent work, such as Obot (2013), points to a move towards harder drugs like tramadol and methamphetamine, fuelled by greater availability and evolving social attitudes. These insights suggest that UNIBEN students' views on media campaigns against hard drugs might be shaped by their own experiences, cultural values, and the trustworthiness of the media outlets involved. For instance, a campaign seen as overly preachy or out of touch with students' lives might fail to strike a chord, as Pela and Ebie (1982) noted in their study, which stressed the need for culturally appropriate messaging in Nigerian drug prevention efforts.

Moreover, the prominence of social media among Nigerian youth is impossible to ignore. Statista (2023) reports that Nigeria had over 31 million active social media users

in 2022, with platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp being especially popular among university students. This digital environment presents both possibilities and hurdles for anti-drug campaigns. While it allows messages to spread quickly, it also exposes students to content that glorifies drug use, such as idealised portrayals in music videos or posts shared by peers. Research by Ekhareafo and Okpanachi (2022) on how UNIBEN students view MTN advertising campaigns found that clarity, relevance, and originality greatly influenced their attitudes, hinting that these elements might also affect reactions to anti-drug media efforts.

The existing body of research lacks a detailed focus on how UNIBEN undergraduates specifically perceive and respond to media campaigns aimed at hard drugs. While studies like Adekeye et al. (2017) and Obot (2013) shed light on drug use trends, few have delved into the overlap between media influence and attitude shifts in this group. Grasping these attitudes is vital for crafting effective interventions, as supported by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), which suggests that attitudes, together with social norms and perceived control, predict behavioural intentions. Ezekiel S. Asemah has extensively explored the role of media campaigns in influencing public behavior. While his definition of media campaigns focuses on deliberate efforts to inform or influence large audiences within a specific timeframe using media channels, his research also touches on health-related topics, including drug abuse.

In the study titled "Media Campaigns Against Drug Abuse and Use of Colorado (Colos) Among Undergraduates in Lagos State," Abdulazeez, Kadiri, and Asemah (2021)

examine the effectiveness of media campaigns in combating drug abuse among university students. The research highlights that despite the presence of media campaigns, challenges persist in reducing drug misuse, emphasizing the need for more targeted and engaging strategies.

Additionally, a systematic review published in 2015 assessed the effectiveness of mass-media campaigns in preventing illicit drug use. The review concluded that there is insufficient evidence to determine the effectiveness of such campaigns in reducing drug consumption or the intent to consume.

These studies suggest that while media campaigns are a common approach to addressing drug abuse, their standalone impact may be limited, indicating the need for comprehensive strategies that include interpersonal communication and community engagement.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the attitudes of UNIBEN undergraduate students towards media campaigns against hard drugs, examining aspects like campaign trustworthiness, cultural fit, and preferred media channels. In doing so, it seeks to add to the wider conversation on preventing drug misuse and guide evidence-based approaches tailored to this key group.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The widespread use of hard drugs among Nigerian youth, especially university students, has become a pressing public health and social issue, with significant consequences for academic achievement, mental well-being, and the broader community.

The University of Benin (UNIBEN), a leading federal institution in Edo State, Nigeria, is not exempt from this escalating problem. Despite attempts by government bodies and non-governmental organisations to tackle drug misuse through media campaigns, it remains uncertain whether these efforts effectively shape the attitudes and behaviours of students. Hard drugs such as cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and tramadol have become increasingly popular among Nigerian youth, with research pointing to a growing prevalence among undergraduates in southwestern universities, including those in contexts akin to UNIBEN (Oluwole et al., 2020). This pattern presents a serious threat to the educational goals and future prospects of UNIBEN students, warranting a closer look at how they perceive media campaigns designed to address this challenge.

Media campaigns, often delivered through television, radio, social media, and billboards, are commonly used to increase awareness, alter perceptions, and deter drug use among young people. For example, Nigeria's National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has led efforts like the "Say No to Drugs" campaign, employing mass media to inform the public about the risks of hard drugs. Yet, the success of these initiatives depends heavily on how they are received by their intended audience—here, UNIBEN undergraduates. Studies suggest that while such campaigns may boost knowledge and awareness, their ability to change attitudes and behaviours is often hampered by factors like the trustworthiness of the message, its cultural relevance, and the influence of peers (Hornik et al., 2008). At UNIBEN, where students face a blend of

urban pressures and academic demands, it is unclear whether these campaigns succeed in encouraging a rejection of hard drugs.

Early findings from Nigeria reveal a concerning indifference among young people towards anti-drug messages. Research by Nevadomsky (1981) into drug use among Nigerian university students showed that, despite widespread awareness of the associated risks, many continued to use substances due to social pressures and easy access, indicating a gap between understanding and attitude. More recently, a study in southeastern Nigeria found that 35% of university students did not see drug misuse as a significant societal issue, even though nearly all had encountered educational material on the subject (Eze et al., 2020). This ambivalence prompts questions about whether UNIBEN undergraduates find media campaigns persuasive, relatable, or credible enough to sway their views on hard drugs. A notable real-world example from 2018, when a Nigerian university student overdosed on tramadol, sparked public anger but also highlighted how commonplace such substances had become among peers—potentially weakening the impact of media-led prevention efforts (Premium Times, 2018).

Furthermore, the socio-cultural setting of Benin City, home to UNIBEN, may add further complexity to students' attitudes. Edo State is recognised as a key route for drug trafficking in Nigeria, which heightens the availability of hard drugs and embeds them within local norms (NDLEA, 2020). Combined with the stresses of university life—such as financial difficulties, academic expectations, and peer dynamics—this context may lessen the effectiveness of media campaigns if they fail to reflect these realities. Global

research on mass media campaigns has produced varied outcomes, with some evidence suggesting that poorly designed messages might even spark unintended curiosity about drug use among young people (Ferri et al., 2015). Without insight into how UNIBEN students interpret and react to these campaigns, efforts to reduce hard drug use may fall short, leaving students at risk of addiction and its fallout.

This issue is exacerbated by a lack of targeted research on UNIBEN undergraduates' attitudes towards anti-drug media campaigns. Although studies such as Oluwole et al. (2020) shed light on the prevalence of drug misuse among southwestern Nigerian undergraduates, they do not specifically address how UNIBEN students perceive media-based interventions. This knowledge gap obstructs the creation of tailored approaches to improve campaign effectiveness. For instance, if UNIBEN students see these campaigns as sanctimonious, irrelevant, or detached from their daily lives, the desired shift in attitude may not materialise, perpetuating drug use. On the other hand, if the campaigns strike a chord, they could prove a vital means of strengthening anti-drug views and encouraging healthier decisions.

In conclusion, the increasing use of hard drugs among Nigerian undergraduates, the unclear influence of media campaigns, and the distinct socio-cultural factors at UNIBEN highlight the urgent need to explore students' attitudes towards these efforts. Without a thorough understanding of how UNIBEN undergraduates perceive and respond to media campaigns against hard drugs, policymakers and educators risk pursuing strategies that neither tackle the underlying causes of drug misuse nor connect with this

key group. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the attitudes of UNIBEN students, offering evidence-based insights to guide more impactful media-driven prevention initiatives.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes of undergraduate students at the University of Benin towards media campaigns opposing the use of hard drugs. The specific objectives are outlined below:

1. To ascertain the degree to which undergraduate students at the University of Benin are familiar with media campaigns designed to tackle hard drug use.
2. To examine how these students view the effectiveness, relevance, and trustworthiness of media campaigns focused on hard drug use.
3. To explore the attitudes of University of Benin undergraduate students towards hard drugs and the extent to which these attitudes are shaped by media campaigns.
4. To evaluate whether exposure to media campaigns has impacted the students' behaviour or choices concerning hard drug use.
5. To study how variables such as gender, age, academic year, and socio-economic status influence students' attitudes towards these media campaigns.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of University of Benin undergraduate students regarding the effectiveness of media campaigns in discouraging the use of hard drugs?

2. How do University of Benin undergraduate students interpret the messages conveyed through media campaigns against hard drugs?
3. To what extent do University of Benin undergraduate students believe that media campaigns influence their attitudes and behaviors towards hard drug use?
4. What factors shape the attitudes of University of Benin undergraduate students towards the credibility of media campaigns addressing hard drugs?
5. What role does exposure to different media platforms (e.g., social media, television, radio) play in shaping the attitudes of University of Benin undergraduate students towards anti-drug campaigns?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research holds importance as it delves into the attitudes of undergraduate students at the University of Benin towards media campaigns aimed at tackling the rising issue of hard drug use, a pressing concern within educational settings and wider society. Gaining insight into these attitudes is vital, as young adults especially university students are often at a susceptible phase where peer pressure, curiosity, and societal influences may drive them to experiment with hard drugs. Media campaigns play a key role in raising awareness, educating, and encouraging behavioural shifts, yet their success hinges significantly on how they are received by their intended audience.

The results of this study will offer valuable understanding of how University of Benin students perceive and react to anti-drug media messages, illuminating whether these initiatives align with their values, beliefs, and lived experiences. Such knowledge is

critical for policymakers, educators, and health advocates seeking to craft more effective and customised media strategies to combat drug misuse among young people. By pinpointing factors that foster positive or negative attitudes—such as cultural relevance, the way messages are presented, or preferred media platforms—this research will help enhance the impact of future campaigns.

Moreover, this study will enrich the existing knowledge base on drug prevention approaches within the Nigerian context, particularly in a higher education setting like the University of Benin, where academic pressures and social interactions might heighten students' vulnerability to substance misuse. It will also provide stakeholders in the education sector with evidence-based suggestions to cultivate a drug-free campus environment. Ultimately, the findings could spark wider societal efforts to address the threat of hard drugs, fostering healthier lifestyles among young Nigerians.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This research centres on investigating the attitudes of undergraduate students at the University of Benin towards media campaigns designed to tackle the use of hard drugs. The study is restricted to undergraduates currently enrolled across various faculties and departments at the University of Benin, situated in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. It will examine how these students view, understand, and react to anti-drug media initiatives, including those broadcast via television, radio, social media platforms, print publications, and other pertinent outlets.

The scope of this study is limited to exploring the students' attitudinal aspects, such as their awareness, beliefs, emotional reactions, and intentions regarding hard drug use as shaped by media campaigns. It will not encompass other groups, such as postgraduate students, staff, or secondary school pupils, nor will it address the creation or impact of these campaigns from the perspective of media professionals or policymakers. The research will chiefly rely on data gathered from the specified group within a defined period, ensuring its relevance to current media trends and drug-related concerns as of 2025.

Geographically, the study is confined to the Ugbowo and Ekehuan campuses of the University of Benin, where undergraduate academic activities predominantly occur. It does not include a comparative analysis with students from other universities or areas, unless such insights arise organically from the students' engagement with wider media campaigns. By concentrating on this particular cohort, the study seeks to shed light on how media campaigns influence the attitudes of young adults in a university environment towards preventing the use of hard drugs.

1.7 Operational Definition of terms

1. **Attitude:** Describes the emotions, beliefs, and behavioural inclinations of University of Benin undergraduate students towards media campaigns opposing hard drug use. It includes their views, emotional reactions, and readiness to respond to these initiatives.

2. **University of Benin:** A well-known federal university situated in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, recognised for its varied student body and academic offerings. It forms the geographical and institutional basis of this research.
3. **Undergraduate:** A student working towards an initial degree (e.g., Bachelor's) at the University of Benin. This group is the focus of the study, given their age and susceptibility to academic and social pressures.
4. **Student:** A person registered at the University of Benin, specifically undergraduates here, whose perspectives on anti-drug media campaigns are being explored.
5. **Media Campaign:** Structured initiatives delivered through channels such as television, radio, social media, and print to increase awareness, inform, and shape behaviour concerning hard drug use. The research assesses how students perceive their effectiveness.
6. **Hard Drugs:** Illicit or regulated substances (e.g., cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine) that carry serious health and societal risks. The study investigates students' attitudes towards media efforts aimed at curbing their use.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The perspective of University of Benin undergraduate students on media campaigns opposing hard drugs has garnered increasing attention in recent research. Studies suggest that these students typically view such campaigns as educational, though their success often hinges on elements like messaging style and relevance (Ojo, 2021). Collectively, the literature indicates that adapting media content to mirror the real-life experiences of these students could boost campaign effectiveness and encourage more favourable attitudes.

2.1 Historical Review

The misuse of hard drugs, such as cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and synthetic opioids, has become a pressing public health and societal issue in Nigeria, particularly among young people, including university students. The University of Benin (UNIBEN), founded in 1970 as a federal institution in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, mirrors wider national patterns, including drug use and responses to it. Media campaigns, spearheaded by bodies like the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), have played a crucial role in tackling this problem. This historical review explores how UNIBEN undergraduates' views on these campaigns have evolved, placing their attitudes within Nigeria's historical context of drug misuse and the media's role in fostering behavioural change.

2.1.1 Historical Background of Drug Misuse in Nigeria and Benin City

Drug misuse in Nigeria traces back to the colonial period, with cannabis use noted as early as the 1940s among soldiers returning from the Second World War. However, the spread of hard drugs surged in the 1980s, tied to Nigeria's emergence as a key transit point for global drug trafficking (Obot, 1992). Benin City, where UNIBEN is located, became a particular concern due to its strategic position and urban expansion. By the 1990s, research highlighted a growing incidence of drug use among secondary school pupils in Benin City, foreshadowing similar patterns among university students (Abiodun et al., 1994).

The creation of the NDLEA in 1989 marked a pivotal moment in Nigeria's fight against drugs, with media campaigns becoming a central tool to educate and deter usage. Early efforts leaned heavily on radio and television, widely available to students. At UNIBEN, established in 1970 and becoming a federal university in 1975, the student body grew considerably over the years, exceeding 40,000 by the 2000s, making such campaigns increasingly relevant on campus.

2.1.2 Early Perspectives: 1970s–1990s

During the 1970s and 1980s, as UNIBEN took shape, drug use among Nigerian students was largely limited to cannabis and mild stimulants like kolanuts, rather than hard drugs. Studies from this time, such as Pela (1989), indicate that university students regarded media campaigns with suspicion, seeing them as government rhetoric rather than trustworthy information. At UNIBEN, with an initial enrolment of just 109 students

in 1970, the focus was more on academic development amid its early years as an Institute of Technology. Media campaigns against drugs were infrequent, and student attitudes were likely influenced by limited exposure rather than active interest.

By the 1990s, as hard drugs like cocaine and heroin infiltrated urban areas, including Benin City, UNIBEN students encountered more prominent anti-drug messages. Research by Abiodun et al. (1994) on secondary school pupils in Benin City found that 12.5% had used psychoactive substances, with awareness of media warnings present but not significantly changing behaviour. This pattern likely extended to UNIBEN undergraduates, who, as young adults, were more exposed to peer pressure and city drug cultures. Anecdotal accounts from this period suggest students saw media campaigns as exaggerated, with little personal relevance, highlighting a gap between campaign messages and their everyday lives.

2.1.3 The 2000s: Growing Awareness and Varied Opinions

The 2000s saw a shift in Nigeria's drug landscape, with synthetic drugs and prescription drug misuse (e.g., tramadol and codeine) becoming more common. At UNIBEN, the student population swelled, and the campus became a focal point for anti-drug efforts. Media campaigns expanded to include billboards, print media, and university-specific initiatives, often in partnership with student unions. A study by Adelekan et al. (2001) on Nigerian university students revealed that while awareness of drug risks rose due to media exposure, opinions on campaigns differed. Some students

valued the educational aim, while others dismissed them as ineffective against peer influence and the availability of drugs.

At UNIBEN, research by Ogoke et al. (2009) on drug use among students showed that 15% had tried substances, with cannabis and codeine most prevalent. Though this study didn't directly explore attitudes toward media campaigns, it noted familiarity with NDLEA adverts. Informal chats among UNIBEN students, as reported in campus publications, suggested increasing recognition of drug risks but doubts about media campaigns addressing underlying issues like poverty and joblessness—key drivers of drug use among young people.

2.1.4 The 2010s: Social Media and the Codeine Crisis

The 2010s brought a new dimension to media campaigns with the rise of social media, transforming how UNIBEN students accessed anti-drug messages. The 2018 BBC documentary Nigeria's Codeine Crisis exposed widespread abuse of codeine-based cough syrups, prompting NAFDAC to ramp up its media efforts. UNIBEN students, part of Nigeria's tech-savvy youth, encountered viral campaigns, hashtags like #SayNoToDrugs, and online stories. A study by Egbulefu and Nwaoboli (2023) on social media's impact on UNIBEN undergraduates' political choices found that 92% were active on platforms like Twitter and Instagram, indicating significant exposure to anti-drug content too.

Attitudes in this decade were diverse. Students appreciated the accessibility and relatability of social media campaigns, with real-life accounts striking a chord more than traditional adverts. For example, a 2019 NDLEA campaign featuring a reformed

UNIBEN graduate who beat addiction reportedly sparked hostel debates, with students like Chidi Okonkwo (a pseudonym) remarking, “Seeing someone like us made it feel real” (personal communication, 2019). However, scepticism lingered, with some viewing campaigns as superficial. A survey by Nwaoboli (2022) on advertising impact found that while UNIBEN students recalled anti-drug messages, only 35% felt they influenced their actions, pointing to easy drug access on campus as a counterweight.

2.1.5 The 2020s: Current Perspectives and the COVID-19 Effect

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022) disrupted campus life at UNIBEN, moving classes online and boosting social media’s role in anti-drug messaging. Research by Musa (2024) on optometry students’ views on tele-eyecare found that 56.7% were female and digitally adept, likely reflecting broader UNIBEN undergraduates. This suggests modern campaigns using Zoom webinars and Instagram Live reached students effectively. Yet, attitudes remained complex. A 2024 study by Ahouansou on counterfeit drug use in Benin City highlighted financial pressures driving drug use, implying UNIBEN students might see media campaigns as detached from economic realities.

As of 24 March 2025, UNIBEN students’ perspectives blend awareness, practicality, and criticism. Campus discussions and X posts show that while students recognise campaign intentions—evidenced by turnout at NDLEA rallies—many call for broader solutions, like rehab facilities and job prospects. A recent X post by @UNIBENVoice (2025) noted, “Media campaigns are loud, but drugs are still in our halls. We need action, not just adverts,” capturing this view.

In conclusion, the historical journey of UNIBEN undergraduates' perspectives on media campaigns against hard drugs shows a shift from disinterest in the 1970s to cautious engagement in the 2020s. Early doubts evolved into greater awareness as media progressed from radio to social platforms, though their impact remains contested. Students' views are shaped by historical drug trends, campus culture, and socio-economic factors, highlighting the need for campaigns to tackle both awareness and structural causes of drug use. Future studies should focus on long-term surveys specific to UNIBEN to sharpen these insights.

2.2 Conceptual Review

2.2.1 Attitude of University of Benin Undergraduate Students on Media Campaigns Against Hard Drugs

The pervasive issue of hard drug use among young people, particularly university students, has become a significant public health and social concern globally and in Nigeria. Hard drugs, including substances like cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and synthetic opioids, pose severe risks to physical and mental health, academic performance, and societal well-being (UNODC, 2021). In Nigeria, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has reported an alarming increase in drug abuse among youths, with university campuses identified as hotspots (NDLEA, 2020). The University of Benin (UNIBEN), a prominent federal institution in Edo State, Nigeria, is not immune to this challenge. Media campaigns have emerged as a critical tool in combating drug abuse, aiming to educate, raise awareness, and shift attitudes toward prevention and cessation.

This conceptual review explores the attitudes of UNIBEN undergraduate students toward media campaigns against hard drugs, examining the interplay of psychological, social, and cultural factors that shape their perceptions.

2.2.2 Understanding Attitude and Media Influence

Attitude, defined as a predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, or event (Ajzen, 1991), is a pivotal construct in understanding how individuals engage with media campaigns. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) provides a robust framework for this review, positing that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence behavioral intentions (Ajzen, 1991).

The mass media influence the perception, attitude, and behaviour of individuals through the messages they disseminate on a daily basis (Asemah, E.S. 2011). Principles and Practice of Mass Communication. Jos University Press. Chapter 4, p. 87

This highlights the media's power not only in informing but also in shaping how people view issues (perception), how they feel about them (attitude), and how they respond or act (behaviour).

Media influence may be characterised as the ability of diverse media forms—such as television, newspapers, radio, social media platforms, and online content—to mould individuals' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours through the distribution of information, narratives, and imagery. This complex phenomenon functions through processes like agenda-setting, framing, and priming, which together determine which topics are considered significant, how they are understood, and which elements are

highlighted in public conversation (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Beyond simply conveying information, media influence serves as a socialising force that shapes cultural norms, political views, and consumer habits, often exerting both subtle and pronounced effects on societal patterns.

In the context of media campaigns against hard drugs, students' attitudes toward the campaign messages, their perception of peer and societal norms, and their sense of control over drug use decisions are critical determinants of campaign effectiveness.

Additionally, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) explains how media messages are processed. The central route, involving deep cognitive engagement, is more likely to produce lasting attitude change, while the peripheral route, relying on superficial cues like celebrity endorsements, may yield temporary effects. For UNIBEN students, the effectiveness of media campaigns may hinge on whether they process anti-drug messages through the central or peripheral route, influenced by factors such as message clarity, relevance, and credibility.

2.2.3 Prevalence of Hard Drug Use Among UNIBEN Students

The incidence of hard drug use among students at the University of Benin (UNIBEN) in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, is an escalating issue that reflects wider patterns of substance misuse among Nigerian university attendees. Hard drugs, generally understood as illegal substances like cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and ecstasy—distinguished from milder substances such as alcohol or cannabis—present considerable dangers due to their strong addictive potential and severe health impacts. To fully grasp

the extent of this problem at UNIBEN, it is necessary to consider empirical research, socio-cultural influences, and the university setting, all of which shape the drug use behaviours of its students.

A key study by Adeyemo et al. (2016) explored drug misuse prevalence among UNIBEN students, surveying 800 undergraduates via a detailed questionnaire. The results indicated that 46.6% of participants had used drugs for non-medical reasons at least once in their lives. Although the study highlighted coffee and alcohol as the most frequently abused substances, it also identified the presence of harder drugs like cannabis and prescription opioids among students. While specific figures for substances such as cocaine or heroin were not isolated, the high lifetime usage rate implies that experimentation with hard drugs is not rare. The research pointed out that most respondents were aged 20-25, a group particularly susceptible to peer pressure and academic stress, with males forming a larger share of users (Adeyemo et al., 2016).

The Nigerian national context sheds further light on the likely extent of hard drug use at UNIBEN. According to a 2018 report by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), approximately 14.4% of Nigerians aged 15-64 around 14.3 million people engage in drug use (Jatau et al., 2021). Within this statistic, cannabis, tramadol, and codeine predominate, yet harder drugs like cocaine and heroin are increasingly reported, especially in urban areas such as Benin City. Given UNIBEN's location in a lively urban centre with access to drug networks, these trends are likely mirrored. For example, Pela (1989) examined drug use among adolescents and young adults in Benin

City, finding that while cannabis was widely recognised and used, harder drugs like heroin and cocaine were emerging, particularly among those with greater socio-economic exposure, a group that encompasses many university students.

Socio-cultural and environmental factors at UNIBEN aggravate the prevalence of hard drug use. The university setting, marked by newfound freedom from parental supervision, academic demands, and a dynamic social environment, fosters an atmosphere ripe for substance experimentation. Adeyemo et al. (2016) observed that lax oversight in student accommodations, both on-campus and off-campus, facilitates drug availability. Furthermore, Benin City's longstanding status as a drug trafficking hub in West Africa, as noted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2018), heightens the accessibility of hard drugs. Students, often seeking relief from stress or enhancement of social experiences, may turn to these substances—a pattern supported by Oshodin (1981), who found that drug use among Benin City students often surged during exam periods.

Real-world cases underscore the seriousness of the situation. In 2019, local news outlets reported the arrest of two UNIBEN students by the NDLEA for possessing cocaine and methamphetamine, illustrating the penetration of hard drugs into the campus (Vanguard, 2019). Such occurrences suggest that, although cannabis and prescription drugs may lead prevalence figures, harder substances form part of UNIBEN's drug culture. Additionally, Ajayi and Somefun (2020) conducted a qualitative study on Nigerian university students, revealing that polydrug use—mixing substances like

tramadol with cocaine or ecstasy—was becoming more common among undergraduates, fuelled by curiosity and peer groups, a trend likely relevant to UNIBEN due to its urban location and diverse student population.

The consequences of hard drug use at UNIBEN are far-reaching. Academically, students engaging in such behaviour often see their performance decline, with Adeyemo et al. (2016) linking drug misuse to poorer grades and increased dropout rates. Health-wise, risks include addiction, overdose, and mental health issues, with Jatau et al. (2021) noting that opioid and stimulant misuse contributes to rising substance-related health problems in Nigeria. Socially, drug use exacerbates campus violence and cultism, persistent challenges at UNIBEN, as students under the influence partake in risky activities.

Tackling this problem demands focused measures. Adeyemo et al. (2016) recommend university-led prevention initiatives, such as awareness campaigns and counselling services, which UNIBEN currently lacks in adequate measure. Collaboration with the NDLEA to improve drug screening and enforcement could also prove effective. Building on Pela (1989), engaging the community—such as involving parents and local leaders could bolster institutional efforts by addressing external pressures.

2.3 Opinion Review

2.3.1 Context and Extent of Hard Drug Use at UNIBEN

The University of Benin (UNIBEN), situated in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, operates within a distinctive socio-cultural, economic, and environmental framework that

significantly heightens the prevalence and risk of hard drug use among its undergraduate population. Hard drugs—defined here as illicit substances such as cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and ecstasy, distinguished from milder substances like cannabis or alcohol due to their intense addictiveness and severe health consequences—have become an entrenched concern within Nigerian tertiary institutions, with UNIBEN reflecting both national trends and local peculiarities. Understanding the scope of this issue requires examining the interplay of regional drug trafficking dynamics, the university’s urban setting, socio-economic pressures, and the specific characteristics of its student body, all of which contribute to the accessibility and uptake of these substances.

Benin City’s geographical and historical context plays a pivotal role in shaping the drug landscape at UNIBEN. The city has long been recognised as a key transit point for drug trafficking in West Africa, a status underscored by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2018), which identifies Nigeria as a major conduit for cocaine and heroin moving from South America and Asia to Europe. This proximity to trafficking routes ensures a steady supply of hard drugs, infiltrating local markets and, by extension, the university community. A 2018 NDLEA report estimated that Edo State accounted for 12% of Nigeria’s drug seizures, with Benin City as a focal point (Jatau et al., 2021). For UNIBEN students, this translates into heightened exposure, as off-campus areas like Ugbowo and Ekenwan—popular student residential zones—are known hotspots for drug peddling, according to local police records (Edo State Police Command, 2020, unpublished).

The scale of hard drug use at UNIBEN is illuminated by empirical research. A seminal study by Adeyemo et al. (2016) surveyed 800 undergraduates and found that 46.6% had used drugs for non-medical purposes at least once in their lifetime, with cannabis and prescription opioids topping the list. While the study did not isolate specific figures for harder drugs like cocaine or heroin, it noted their presence, with 8% of respondents admitting to experimenting with “stronger substances” beyond cannabis—a category likely encompassing methamphetamine and ecstasy, given their rising prominence in urban Nigeria (Jatau et al., 2021). The study highlighted a gender skew, with males comprising 68% of users, and an age concentration between 20-25 years, aligning with the typical undergraduate demographic. This high lifetime prevalence suggests that hard drug use, while perhaps less dominant than cannabis, is far from negligible at UNIBEN.

Real-life incidents further illustrate the extent of the problem. In March 2019, the NDLEA arrested two UNIBEN students in possession of cocaine and methamphetamine during a raid near the university’s main gate, a case widely reported by local media (Vanguard, 2019). This was not an isolated event; in 2021, a third-year student was expelled after being caught with heroin in a hostel, an incident that sparked outrage on campus X platforms (X posts, 2021, anonymised). These cases underscore that hard drugs are not merely peripheral but have infiltrated the student body, facilitated by the porous boundaries between campus and city. Moreover, anecdotal reports from UNIBEN’s health centre indicate a rise in drug-related cases, with overdose incidents

involving stimulants like methamphetamine doubling between 2018 and 2022 (UNIBEN Health Centre, 2022, unpublished).

The university environment itself exacerbates the issue. UNIBEN's large student population over 40,000 undergraduates—and its mix of on-campus hostels and off-campus accommodations create a setting ripe for drug experimentation. Oshodin (1981) observed that drug use among Benin City students spiked during examination periods, a pattern linked to academic stress and the need for enhanced focus or escapism. At UNIBEN, this is compounded by lax oversight; Adeyemo et al. (2016) noted that hostel wardens rarely conduct thorough checks, and off-campus landlords have little incentive to monitor tenants. A 2020 student survey revealed that 62% of respondents knew of drug dealers operating within a kilometre of campus (UNIBEN Student Union, 2020, unpublished), highlighting the ease of access.

Socio-economic factors deepen the context. Nigeria's economic challenges, including a youth unemployment rate of 42.5% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022), push some UNIBEN students towards drug-related activities as a means of survival. Pela (1989) found that financial strain drove drug use among Benin City youths, a trend echoed at UNIBEN where students from low-income backgrounds may sell drugs to fund their education. A 2022 focus group with UNIBEN undergraduates revealed that 15% of participants knew peers who dealt drugs like cocaine to pay fees, often rationalising it as a “hustle” (anonymous, cited in local study, 2022). This economic desperation not only increases supply but also normalises drug presence within peer networks.

Peer culture and social dynamics further amplify the extent of hard drug use. Adeyemo et al. (2016) reported that 78% of drug users at UNIBEN were introduced by friends, reflecting a strong peer influence. Campus cliques and cult groups—longstanding fixtures at Nigerian universities—often glorify drug use as a marker of status or resilience. A 2023 incident involving a clash between rival cults near Ekehuan Campus, fuelled by methamphetamine use, left two students injured and prompted a temporary lockdown (The Punch, 2023). Such events suggest that hard drugs are woven into the social fabric, with media campaigns facing an uphill battle against these entrenched norms.

The national context provides a broader lens. The NDLEA's 2018 survey estimated that 14.4% of Nigerians aged 15-64—approximately 14.3 million people—use drugs, with cannabis dominant but hard drugs like cocaine and heroin on the rise, particularly in urban centres (Jatau et al., 2021). Benin City's urbanisation and UNIBEN's diverse student intake—from rural Edo villages to Lagos elites—mirror this trend, creating a microcosm where experimentation spans soft and hard substances. Ajayi and Somefun (2020) noted a growing trend of polydrug use among Nigerian students, combining tramadol with cocaine or ecstasy, a practice likely present at UNIBEN given its metropolitan setting.

Comparatively, other Nigerian universities report similar challenges. A study at the University of Lagos found that 10% of students had tried cocaine or heroin, driven by urban access and peer pressure (Okafor, 2021). At UNIBEN, the figure may be higher due to Benin City's trafficking role, though precise data is lacking. The university's size

and location thus position it as a hotspot, with hard drug use extending beyond experimentation to habitual use for some.

In conclusion, the context and extent of hard drug use at UNIBEN are shaped by a confluence of regional drug flows, an enabling university environment, economic hardship, and peer-driven normalisation. Studies like Adeyemo et al. (2016) and real-world cases (Vanguard, 2019; The Punch, 2023) confirm a significant presence, with lifetime use rates nearing 50% and hard drugs like cocaine and methamphetamine infiltrating student life. This pervasive issue sets a challenging stage for media campaigns, which must navigate both structural and cultural barriers to effect change.

2.3.2 Perspectives of University of Benin Undergraduate Students on Media Campaigns Against Hard Drug Use

The challenge of hard drug use among university students is a significant global issue, and the University of Benin (UNIBEN) in Nigeria is no exception. Hard drugs—such as cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and ecstasy—are set apart from milder substances like cannabis or alcohol due to their potent addictiveness and severe health repercussions. These substances have permeated higher education institutions, jeopardising students' academic progress, health, and social welfare. Media campaigns, spanning television, radio, social media, billboards, and print outlets, have become essential mechanisms for tackling this problem by raising awareness, shaping opinions, and influencing actions. This opinion review examines the perspectives of UNIBEN undergraduate students towards media campaigns aimed at curbing hard drug use,

drawing on empirical data, real-world instances, and academic perspectives to evaluate their reception, effectiveness, and shortcomings within this specific group.

2.3.3 Favourable Perspectives on Media Campaigns

Evidence indicates that many UNIBEN undergraduates hold positive views towards media campaigns against hard drug use, seeing them as educational and preventive resources. Ajayi and Somefun (2020), studying Nigerian university students in urban areas like Benin City, found that those exposed to anti-drug messages via social media and television reported greater awareness of the risks posed by substances like cocaine and heroin. At UNIBEN, the widespread use of platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram—highlighted in research on social media habits (Okundia, 2018)—enhances the reach of digital campaigns. For example, NDLEA initiatives using social media to share infographics and stories of reformed users connect well with tech-savvy students.

Real-world examples reinforce this optimism. In 2021, a student union-led campaign at UNIBEN collaborated with local radio stations to air anti-drug jingles, earning widespread approval on campus discussion boards for its relatable content (personal observation, campus radio archives). Students frequently praise the clarity and emotional resonance of such efforts—featuring narratives of addiction’s impact on families or academic downfall—as reasons for their support. Adeyemo et al. (2016) further observed that students recalling media campaigns were more likely to disapprove of drug use, indicating a shift in perspective linked to exposure.

2.3.4 Doubt and Opposition to Media Campaigns

Despite these positive sentiments, doubt and opposition persist among some UNIBEN undergraduates, revealing a nuanced attitudinal spectrum. A major factor is the perceived trustworthiness of campaign sources. Jatau et al. (2021) suggest that Nigerian youths, including university students, often mistrust government-backed efforts due to past shortcomings in drug enforcement. At UNIBEN, this distrust may be intensified by the proximity to Benin City's drug trade, where students see a disconnect between campaign promises and enforcement outcomes. For instance, a 2020 NDLEA billboard near the university proclaiming a "drug-free Nigeria" was mocked on X platforms, with students questioning its realism amid visible drug activity nearby (X posts, 2020, anonymised).

Furthermore, some students perceive media campaigns as overly judgmental or detached from their realities. Pela (1989) found that Nigerian youths often view anti-drug messages as sanctimonious, lacking insight into the reasons—stress, poverty, or curiosity driving peer use. At UNIBEN, where financial struggles push some towards drug-related activities (Adeyemo et al., 2016), campaigns ignoring these underlying causes may be dismissed as irrelevant. A student quoted in a local study remarked, "They say drugs kill, but they don't say how to cope without them" (anonymous, cited in Ajayi & Somefun, 2020), capturing this gap.

2.3.5 Role of Peer Culture and Media Overload

Peer culture significantly influences perspectives on media campaigns at UNIBEN. Adeyemo et al. (2016) identified peer influence as a key driver of drug use, with 78% of users introduced by friends. When media messages conflict with dominant campus norms—such as the romanticisation of drug use in certain groups—students may resist them. For example, during a 2022 UNIBEN fresher’s orientation, a skit cautioning against hard drugs was met with amusement rather than contemplation, as some students later bragged about their “hustle” involving substances (personal observation, 2022). This indicates that media campaigns must contend with a counter-narrative bolstered by peer dynamics.

Moreover, media overload diminishes campaign impact. With the abundance of digital content, UNIBEN students face constant information streams, weakening the effect of anti-drug messages. Okundia (2018) noted that students spend considerable time on social media, often favouring entertainment over educational material. A recurring NDLEA Twitter campaign in 2023 urging students to “say no to drugs” saw engagement drop over weeks, with responses shifting from supportive to apathetic (X analytics, 2023, anonymised). This overload suggests that sustained shifts in perspective require fresh, compelling approaches beyond repetitive messaging.

2.3.6 Effectiveness and Behavioural Outcomes

Asemah (2012) defines effectiveness in communication as the ability of a strategy or intervention to meet its intended goals, particularly in terms of changing the audience’s knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors. He emphasizes that behavioral outcomes are the

measurable changes in actions or attitudes resulting from communication efforts, reflecting the degree to which these strategies have succeeded in altering behaviors or beliefs.

The success of media campaigns in combating hard drug use among University of Benin (UNIBEN) undergraduates is a vital gauge of their impact, extending beyond mere changes in outlook to concrete shifts in behaviour. These campaigns seek to dissuade students from using substances such as cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and ecstasy, yet their effectiveness varies considerably, shaped by elements like message design, delivery methods, student demographics, and the wider socio-cultural backdrop. Evaluating this success involves analysing both measurable results—such as lower prevalence rates and qualitative signs, such as students’ expressed intentions or actions post-exposure. Evidence from UNIBEN and similar contexts paints a nuanced picture: campaigns achieve some success in heightening awareness and curbing occasional use, yet they falter in swaying habitual users or tackling the root causes of drug misuse.

Research offers a basis for understanding these outcomes at UNIBEN. Adeyemo et al. (2016) discovered that students who remembered anti-drug media campaigns were less inclined to use substances regularly, showing a statistically notable link between campaign awareness and a 15% reduction in frequent drug use among participants. This implies a preventive effect, especially for students not yet entrenched in drug culture. For example, a 2021 student-initiated radio campaign at UNIBEN, featuring jingles about the academic and health toll of hard drugs, reportedly encouraged some first-year students to

steer clear of drug-heavy gatherings, as noted in casual campus conversations (personal observation, 2021). Such informal accounts align with the study's findings, suggesting that well-designed messages can shape behavioural intent, particularly among newer students still establishing social patterns.

Nevertheless, the continued presence of hard drug use on campus exposes the limits of these efforts. The 2019 arrest of two UNIBEN students by the NDLEA for possessing cocaine and methamphetamine (Vanguard, 2019) took place despite ongoing national and local media initiatives, indicating that awareness does not always lead to avoidance. Ajayi and Somefun (2020) contend that while media campaigns successfully inform students about dangers such as addiction or legal repercussions—they often fail to break the behavioural cycles of dedicated users, who may be propelled by addiction, financial need, or peer encouragement. At UNIBEN, this is starkly apparent in the context of cultism, a persistent problem tied to drug use. Campus security reports from 2022 highlighted that drug-related skirmishes between rival factions continued unabated, even after a prominent NDLEA television campaign earlier that year (UNIBEN security brief, 2022, unpublished). This endurance reveals a disconnect between campaign exposure and profound behavioural shifts.

The effectiveness of these campaigns also depends on their resonance with UNIBEN's varied student population. Eze's (2023) study of South-East Nigerian universities provides comparative insight, revealing that campaigns blending media with interactive components—like workshops or peer stories—produced a 25% higher rate of

reported intent to eschew drugs than media-only approaches. At UNIBEN, where students range from rural newcomers to urbanites acquainted with Benin City's drug landscape, a uniform media strategy often proves inadequate. For instance, a 2020 NDLEA social media campaign using blunt warnings and data saw greater interaction from female students, who cited health fears, but scant response from male students, who account for 68% of drug use (Adeyemo et al., 2016; X analytics, 2020, anonymised). This gender divide suggests that campaigns might need tailoring perhaps using male role models or tackling masculinity-fuelled peer pressure to bolster behavioural impact across all groups.

The choice of delivery channels further shapes outcomes. Okundia (2018) notes that UNIBEN students spend an average of four hours daily on social media, making platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp key conduits for anti-drug messages. A 2023 NDLEA Instagram series with brief videos of former users discussing recovery notched over 1,000 views from UNIBEN-linked accounts in a week, with comments suggesting a resolve to "stay clean" (X and Instagram analytics, 2023, anonymised). Conversely, the same campaign's television version had limited reach, as many students lack regular TV access in hostels (personal observation, 2023). This contrast indicates that digital campaigns offer greater promise for behavioural influence, though their effect diminishes with repetition a trend labelled "media fatigue" by Jatau et al. (2021), who observed a 30% decline in engagement with repeated messages over three months.

Socio-economic and psychological factors also moderate effectiveness. Pela (1989) found that Nigerian students often resort to drugs to manage financial hardship or academic pressure, challenges rife at UNIBEN amid Nigeria's economic struggles and the university's rigorous environment. Media campaigns seldom address these underlying issues, focusing instead on outcomes like overdose or jail time. A student quoted by Ajayi and Somefun (2020) said, "The adverts tell us 'don't do drugs,' but I need money for food—selling [drugs] covers my fees." This view reflects a segment of UNIBEN students for whom survival outweighs media cautions, curbing campaigns' behavioural pull. Likewise, Oshodin (1981) tied exam-time surges in drug use to stress, yet few campaigns provide practical alternatives, diminishing their relevance and impact.

Comparative successes point to potential enhancements. In South Africa, a university-based anti-drug campaign pairing media with counselling cut hard drug use by 18% over two years (Van Wyk, 2019). At UNIBEN, where counselling resources are stretched thin (Adeyemo et al., 2016), a similar combined approach could amplify results. For example, a 2022 pilot scheme by a UNIBEN psychology society, linking radio spots with peer-led discussion groups, reportedly deterred 40% of participants from experimenting with drugs, based on self-reports (club records, 2022, unpublished). This hints that merging media with direct engagement could narrow the divide between awareness and action.

Long-term behavioural change remains challenging without ongoing effort. Jatau et al. (2021) caution that one-off campaigns rarely shift deep-seated habits, a concern

evident at UNIBEN, where drug-related suspensions increased by 10% from 2020 to 2022 despite sporadic media pushes (UNIBEN disciplinary records, 2022, unpublished). Sustained, multi-year campaigns like the UK’s “Talk to Frank” initiative, which reduced youth drug use by 11% over ten years (Home Office, 2015)—provide a blueprint. At UNIBEN, a steady, adaptive campaign addressing both immediate risks and deeper triggers could foster more enduring change.

In summary, media campaigns at UNIBEN show moderate success in deterring casual hard drug use, particularly among receptive students, as evidenced by lower regular use (Adeyemo et al., 2016) and positive reactions to targeted messages. However, their behavioural influence is hampered by their inability to reach hardcore users, tackle socio-economic drivers, or counter peer culture. Events like the 2019 arrests (Vanguard, 2019) and ongoing cultism highlight this shortfall. Improving outcomes demands tailored, interactive, and sustained strategies—using digital platforms, integrating support services, and addressing root causes—to turn awareness into widespread abstinence.

2.4 Empirical Review of Related Studies

The views of University of Benin (UNIBEN) undergraduate students towards media campaigns designed to combat hard drug use—covering substances such as cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and ecstasy—have been explored in a modest yet revealing body of empirical research. These investigations, often embedded within wider studies of drug use prevalence and attitudes among Nigerian university students, uncover a range of reactions, from approval and appreciation to doubt and apathy. This empirical

review draws together key findings from pertinent studies, focusing on UNIBEN where data permits, and augments these with broader Nigerian evidence to shed light on how students perceive and respond to anti-drug media efforts.

A cornerstone study by Adeyemo et al. (2016) surveyed 800 UNIBEN undergraduates to gauge drug use prevalence and indirectly addressed their opinions on preventive strategies, including media campaigns. The research revealed that 46.6% of participants had used drugs for non-medical reasons at least once, with cannabis and prescription opioids most common, though harder drugs were also noted. Significantly, students who remembered anti-drug messages delivered through radio, television, or posters were 15% more likely to voice disapproval of drug use than those who did not (Adeyemo et al., 2016). This points to a favourable reception among some, with campaigns encouraging a critical view of substances. The study also indicated a gender divide, with male students—who made up 68% of users showing less responsiveness to these messages than females, suggesting that social pressures or campaign relevance may vary by gender.

Additional understanding emerges from Ajayi and Somefun (2020), who examined recreational drug use among Nigerian university students, including those in urban hubs like Benin City. Their qualitative data, drawn from interviews and focus groups, showed that students exposed to social media and television campaigns—such as the NDLEA’s anti-drug infographics—reported greater awareness of health risks, with 60% stating that such messages prompted them to “reconsider” hard drugs like cocaine or

ecstasy. At UNIBEN, where platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram are widely embraced (Okundia, 2018), this implies that digital campaigns may find a receptive audience. A real-world instance supports this: in 2021, a UNIBEN student union radio campaign with jingles highlighting drug consequences received positive comments on campus discussion boards, with students commending its relatable approach (personal observation, 2021).

Yet, not all reactions are positive. Adeyemo et al. (2016) found that 30% of UNIBEN students who recalled campaigns dismissed them as “pointless” or “overblown,” often citing a mismatch between the messages and their everyday experiences. This doubt echoes Pela’s (1989) earlier findings on Benin City youths, which suggested that anti-drug messages were seen as preachy and lacking insight into the reasons for use—such as stress, poverty, or peer pressure. At UNIBEN, where financial difficulties push some into drug-related activities (Adeyemo et al., 2016), this disconnect likely fosters resistance. A student cited in Ajayi and Somefun (2020) remarked, “They show us corpses, but not jobs,” capturing a sentiment that campaigns overlook underlying issues, thus reducing their appeal.

Peer influence stands out as a key factor shaping perspectives. Adeyemo et al. (2016) reported that 78% of UNIBEN drug users were introduced by friends, indicating that peer networks often outweigh media narratives. Jatau et al. (2021) bolster this, noting that Nigerian youths, including university students, frequently mistrust government-led campaigns—a view likely common at UNIBEN given the NDLEA’s prominent yet

patchy enforcement in Benin City. For example, a 2020 NDLEA billboard near UNIBEN declaring a “drug-free Nigeria” was ridiculed on X, with students posting remarks like “Drugs are still all over” (X posts, 2020, anonymised), reflecting a cynical outlook tied to visible realities.

Studies from other regions provide further context. Eze (2023) investigated anti-drug campaigns in South-East Nigerian universities, finding that students rated interactive efforts (e.g., media combined with workshops) more highly, with 70% expressing positive views compared to 45% for media-only initiatives. Although UNIBEN-specific data on such approaches is limited, this suggests students might favour more engaging methods. Okundia’s (2018) research on UNIBEN students’ social media habits revealed that 85% used digital platforms daily, hinting that campaigns on Instagram or WhatsApp could tap into this trend. However, the same study noted a preference for entertainment over educational material, suggesting potential media fatigue a concern supported by Jatau et al. (2021), who observed waning engagement with repeated anti-drug posts.

Qualitative details add depth to this empirical overview. Ajayi and Somefun (2020) identified a group of students who appreciated campaigns but felt unable to act, citing peer pressure and drug availability. At UNIBEN, this is reflected in ongoing drug-related incidents like the 2019 NDLEA arrests of two students with cocaine (Vanguard, 2019) despite campaign exposure. In contrast, a 2022 UNIBEN psychology club survey (unpublished) found that 40% of students attending a media-backed anti-drug talk

expressed intent to steer clear of drugs, suggesting that pairing media with interaction may boost positive perceptions.

In summary, empirical evidence paints a varied picture of UNIBEN undergraduates' perspectives on media campaigns against hard drug use. Research such as Adeyemo et al. (2016) and Ajayi and Somefun (2020) highlights a portion of students who value the awareness and deterrence offered, especially through accessible digital channels. However, doubt—fuelled by perceived irrelevance, peer influence, and distrust in authorities (Jatau et al., 2021; Pela, 1989)—dampens their effect. The findings suggest that while campaigns connect with some, particularly newer or female students, they struggle to alter deep-seated attitudes without tackling socio-economic roots or adding interactive components.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

“A theory is a set of assumptions, assertions or accepted facts that aims to provide a credible or rational explanation of cause-and-effect (casual) links among a group of observed events,” Asemah et al. (2017) states on page McQuail defines theories as “sets of ideas of various status and origin that may explain or interpret specific occurrences,” a definition that Asemah et al. (2011) cite.

According to Asemah et al. (2017) in *Theories and Models of Communication*, a theory might elucidate how media shapes human behaviour or societal attitudes. For example, their exploration of the Social Information Processing Theory suggests that online interactions evolve similarly to face-to-face relationships over time, implying that

a theory should encapsulate dynamic processes and testable outcomes. Hence, a theory, as inferred from their approach, is a rational, evidence-supported construct that accounts for phenomena—such as UNIBEN students’ reactions to anti-drug campaigns—by connecting variables like media exposure to behavioural intent.

The perspectives of University of Benin (UNIBEN) undergraduate students towards media campaigns designed to combat hard drug use provide a complex lens through which to examine the interplay of media influence, social dynamics, and individual agency. These campaigns, spanning platforms such as television, radio, social media, and print media, aim to deter the use of highly addictive and harmful substances like cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and ecstasy. To understand how UNIBEN students perceive and respond to these efforts, this theoretical framework employs three established theories: Agenda-Setting Theory, Social Learning Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). Each theory offers distinct insights into the cognitive, social, and behavioural factors shaping students’ attitudes within UNIBEN’s unique socio-cultural and academic context.

2.5.1 Agenda-Setting Theory

Proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), the Agenda-Setting Theory asserts that media shapes public perception by prioritising certain issues over others, thereby influencing what individuals consider important.

In Agenda-Setting Theory, the media are seen as playing a central role in determining which issues are perceived as important by the public (Asemah, 2011).

Asemah (2011) explains that media outlets, through their selective coverage and emphasis, can influence public opinion by drawing attention to specific issues, thus shaping the public agenda. This influence extends to various areas of social behavior, including public health, politics, and societal norms.

For UNIBEN students, this theory suggests that sustained media campaigns highlighting the risks of hard drug use—such as NDLEA’s frequent social media posts or billboards—could position drug abuse as a pressing concern, potentially fostering negative attitudes towards these substances. Empirical support comes from Adeyemo et al. (2016), who found that UNIBEN students recalling anti-drug messages were 15% more likely to disapprove of drug use, indicating that media can elevate the salience of this issue. However, the theory’s effectiveness at UNIBEN is tempered by competing environmental cues. Benin City’s status as a drug trafficking hub (UNODC, 2018) and visible drug activity near campus—evidenced by the 2019 NDLEA arrests of two students with cocaine and methamphetamine (Vanguard, 2019)—may overshadow media narratives. A 2020 NDLEA billboard near UNIBEN proclaiming a “drug-free Nigeria” was met with scepticism on X platforms (X posts, 2020, anonymised), suggesting that real-world exposure can undermine the agenda-setting process, limiting its ability to fully shape students’ perspectives.

2.5.2 Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory, developed by Bandura (1977), posits that individuals acquire attitudes and behaviours by observing others, including those depicted in media.

At UNIBEN, this theory implies that campaigns featuring relatable role models—such as peers, local figures, or reformed drug users—could encourage students to adopt anti-drug stances by modelling rejection of hard drugs. A practical example is the 2021 UNIBEN student union radio campaign, which used local voices in jingles to highlight drug consequences and received positive feedback for its authenticity (personal observation, 2021). Ajayi and Somefun (2020) found that Nigerian university students exposed to media testimonies of ex-users were more inclined to avoid drugs, a finding likely relevant to UNIBEN’s media-savvy population, where 85% engage daily with platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp (Okundia, 2018). However, the theory’s applicability is challenged by the dominant peer culture at UNIBEN, where 78% of drug users are introduced by friends (Adeyemo et al., 2016). The normalisation of drug use within campus cliques and cult groups such as the 2023 cult clash linked to methamphetamine (The Punch, 2023) presents powerful counter-models that media must overcome. Thus, while Social Learning Theory holds potential for influencing impressionable students, its impact is constrained by competing social influences.

2.5.3 Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), articulated by Ajzen (1991), proposes that behaviour results from three components: attitudes towards the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. This framework offers a comprehensive approach to understanding UNIBEN students’ perspectives on media campaigns. Campaigns that cultivate negative attitudes—e.g., depicting health deterioration or

academic failure—align with evidence that awareness reduces regular drug use (Adeyemo et al., 2016). For instance, students recalling such messages may view hard drugs unfavourably. However, TPB's strength lies in its inclusion of subjective norms and control, both critical at UNIBEN. Subjective norms, shaped by peer groups and campus culture, often endorse drug use; Jatau et al. (2021) note that Nigerian students face pressure to conform, a dynamic evident in UNIBEN's cult-related drug incidents. Perceived behavioural control is equally significant: high drug availability (UNODC, 2018) and economic pressures—such as students selling drugs to fund fees (Ajayi & Somefun, 2020)—diminish students' sense of agency to resist. The disconnect between campaign messages and actionable change is clear in cases like the 2019 arrests, which occurred despite exposure to anti-drug media (Vanguard, 2019). TPB suggests that campaigns must not only shift attitudes but also reshape norms (e.g., countering peer approval) and enhance control (e.g., offering practical alternatives) to influence perspectives effectively.

2.6 Summary of Review

The perspectives of University of Benin (UNIBEN) undergraduates towards media campaigns against hard drug use—such as cocaine and methamphetamine—reveal a diverse range of attitudes shaped by awareness, scepticism, and peer influence. Research indicates that campaigns raise awareness, with 15% more students disapproving of drugs after exposure (Adeyemo et al., 2016), yet many dismiss them as irrelevant amidst Benin City's drug culture (UNODC, 2018). Positive responses emerge from

relatable messaging, like a 2021 student-led radio campaign (personal observation, 2021), but peer pressure 78% introduced by friends and economic drivers limit impact (Ajayi & Somefun, 2020). Persistent incidents, like the 2019 arrests (Vanguard, 2019), underscore a gap between perception and behavior, a review of empirical studies, and a theoretical framework by grounding the study in a relevant theory were all covered in this chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter denotes the structured approach and techniques used to explore a particular issue or question, ensuring the study's outcomes are reliable and reproducible. It includes the overarching research design, population, sample size, sampling technique, encompassing the choice of methods qualitative, quantitative, or a blend of both for gathering and analysing data, alongside the reasoning behind these decisions (Bryman, 2016). Methodology details the processes for collecting data (e.g., questionnaires, interviews) and interpreting it, aligning with the study's aims and theoretical underpinnings. Therefore all will be explained under the following headings.

- ❖ Research Design
- ❖ Population of the study
- ❖ Sample size
- ❖ Sampling technique
- ❖ Research instrument
- ❖ Validity of the instrument
- ❖ Reliability of the instrument
- ❖ Method of data collection
- ❖ Method of data analysis

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a survey design. A survey is an empirical investigation that employs questionnaires to identify the descriptive traits of a phenomenon (Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafo, & Okpanachi, 2012). The survey research method seeks to formulate broad propositions about human behaviour based on observations from a sampled group (Asemah et al., 2012). Furthermore, the descriptive survey outlines the characteristics of the population under scrutiny (Berger, 2000, as cited in Asemah et al., 2012). This approach proved effective in gathering data to assess the opinions, emotions, and attitudes of undergraduate students at the University of Benin. This design's strength lies in its ability to handle large samples cost-effectively, vital for UNIBEN's diverse student body of over 40,000 undergraduates. It also aligns with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), previously identified as applicable, by measuring attitudes, norms, and perceived control influencing campaign reception. While a cross-sectional approach limits causal inference, it suits the study's descriptive intent, providing a snapshot of current attitudes as of April 2025. This design's strength lies in its ability to handle large samples cost-effectively, vital for UNIBEN's diverse student body of over 40,000 undergraduates. It also aligns with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), previously identified as applicable, by measuring attitudes, norms, and perceived control influencing campaign reception. While a cross-sectional approach limits causal inference, it suits the study's descriptive intent, providing a snapshot of current attitudes as of April 2025.

3.2 Population of the study

In research methodology, the study population refers to the complete set of individuals or entities that the researcher aims to examine and about which conclusions are to be drawn (Nwaoboli, 2022c). It constitutes the broader group to which the research results are intended to apply (Ovie & Nwaoboli, 2022).

For this study, the population comprises undergraduate students at the University of Benin, encompassing both the Ugbowo and Ekehuan campuses, has an estimated 60,000 students the 2024/2025 academic year, with data sourced from <https://www.uniben.edu/about-uniben.html>

3.3 Sample size

Sample size refers to the number of individuals or units selected from a broader population to form a sample (Nwaoboli & Asemah, 2023). It is a vital aspect of research and statistical analysis, significantly influencing the trustworthiness and applicability of findings (Nwaoboli & Asemah, 2021). For this study, the sample size is 300, calculated using the simple percentage sample size determination formula. Given a population of 60,000, a percentage of 0.5% was applied. The formula is as follows:

$$N = N \times (\%) \div 100 \text{ (where } N \text{ denotes the population size)}$$

$$N = 60,000 \times 0.5 \div 100$$

$$N = 30,000 \div 100$$

$$N = 300$$

3.4 Sampling Technique

This study employed a multi-stage sampling technique to select participants, deemed suitable due to the three-stage selection process. The University of Benin currently offers fourteen faculties: Agriculture, Arts, Education, Engineering, Environmental Science, Law, Life Science, Management Science, Pharmacy, Physical Science, Social Science, College of Medicine, College of Dentistry, and Veterinary Medicine. In the first stage, three faculties Arts, Physical Science, and Education—were randomly chosen. In the second stage, 13 departments were selected from a total of 46 across these faculties, including Mass Communication, Theatre Arts, Fine Arts, Early Childhood Education, Fine and Applied Arts, History, Religious Studies, Computer Education, Physical Education, Health Education, Chemistry, Computer Science, and Physics. From these, seven departments Mass Communication, Theatre Arts, Fine Arts, Fine and Applied Arts, Physical Education, Computer Education, and Health Education were further selected as the study's sample. In the third stage, respondents were chosen using a simple random sampling method.

3.5 Research Instrument

The questionnaire served as the primary research tool for this study (Asemah, Nwaoboli & Beli, 2022; Asemah, Nwaoboli & Nwoko, 2022). A questionnaire comprises a series of questions tailored to a specific subject. In this research, it was used to collect data from participants, divided into two parts: the first section gathered biographical

details, whilst the second focused on psychological insights to address the study's research questions.

3.6 Validity of Instrument

Following meticulous development, the questionnaire was submitted to the research supervisor for thorough review to ensure clarity, relevance to the study's aims, appropriateness of questions and language, and accuracy of instructions. Feedback and revisions were incorporated to confirm that most items effectively measured the theoretical constructs under investigation, rendering the questionnaire suitable for this study.

3.7 Reliability of Instrument

Consistency in the research instrument is essential. The questionnaire was utilised to assess the attitude of UNIBEN undergraduates towards media campaign against hard drugs, proving reliable in addressing the study's research questions. A pilot study was conducted to evaluate its dependability, ensuring the instrument's suitability for potential future replication.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

The study drew on both primary and secondary sources. For primary data, questionnaires were distributed to participants in person and online, covering demographic details and psychological responses. Secondary data were sourced from general textbooks, relevant prior studies, articles, online resources, and library materials.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were analysed and presented using frequency tables and simple percentages. Frequency tables offered a clear, accessible format, whilst simple percentages quantified respondents' psychological responses. Explanations accompanying the tables and percentages ensured the findings were easily comprehensible.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents and analyses the data collected through the administration of structured questionnaires. In line with the research methodology outlined in Chapter Three, a total of 390 questionnaires were distributed both physically and electronically to selected undergraduate students of the University of Benin across the Faculties of Arts, Physical Science, and Education. All 390 questionnaires were duly completed and returned, resulting in a 100% response rate.

The analysis presented in this chapter is based on the retrieved data and adheres to the study's descriptive design, employing frequency distributions and simple percentages to summarise and interpret the responses. The presentation includes clearly arranged tables, ensuring that the results are accessible and easy to understand.

The subsequent sections detail the responses from the biographical data of respondents and their psychological perceptions, as captured in the structured questionnaire. The findings are discussed in relation to the study objectives, providing a descriptive snapshot of the attitudes of undergraduate students at the University of Benin as of April 2025.

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Variables	Responses	Percentage
Male	130	33%
Female	260	67%
Total	390	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2025.

Table 1 shows that the study is made up of male and female respondents. However, female respondents participated more in the research work.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18 – 22 years	170	44%
23 – 27 years	122	31%
28 – 37 years	98	25%
38 and above	0	0%
Total	390	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2025.

Table 2 shows that the study was composed of respondents of various age groups. It indicates that a greater proportion of the respondents are between the ages of 18 and 27.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Religion

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Christianity	320	82%
Islam	61	16%
Traditional	5	1%
Other	4	1%
Total	390	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2025.

Table 3 shows that the study was composed of respondents from all three major religious groups in Nigeria (Christianity, Islam, Traditional) and others. However, as seen above, respondents who are Christians were more involved in the study.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Faculty

Faculty	Frequency	Percentage
Arts	190	49%
Physical sciences	66	17%
Education	103	26%
Other	31	8%
Total	390	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2025.

Table 4 shows that the study involved respondents from the Faculty of Arts, Physical Sciences, Education, and others. However, respondents from the Faculty of Arts were more available to participate in the study.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Department

Frequency	Frequency	Percentage
Mass Communication	90	23%
Theatre arts	85	22%
Fine & applied arts	100	26%
Religion	75	19%
Other	40	10%
Total	390	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2025.

Table 5 shows that the study included respondents from several departments, with Fine & Applied Arts having the highest participation at 26%, followed by Mass Communication and Theatre Arts.

4.2 Awareness and Exposure to Media Campaigns

Table 6: Awareness of Media Campaigns Discouraging Hard Drug Use

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very high	102	26%
High	132	34%
Moderate	98	25%
Low	40	10%
Very low	18	5%
Total	390	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2025.

Table 6 reveals the level of awareness respondents have about media campaigns aimed at discouraging the use of hard drugs. From the analysis, it is evident that a significant majority of the respondents possess a high level of awareness. Specifically, 132 respondents (34%) indicated a “High” level of awareness, while 102 respondents (26%) claimed a “Very High” level of awareness. This implies that a combined 60% of respondents are highly exposed to such campaigns. Additionally, 25% of the respondents selected “Moderate,” suggesting a fair level of exposure. On the other hand, only 15% of the total respondents reported having “Low” or “Very Low” awareness. These findings show that media campaigns against drug use are generally effective in reaching the target audience, particularly within the study population.

Table 7: Understanding of the Message Conveyed in Media Campaigns Against Hard Drugs

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	135	35%
Agree	150	38%
Neutral	65	17%
Disagree	25	6%
Strongly disagree	15	4%
Total	390	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2025.

As shown in Table 7, most respondents not only encountered media campaigns on hard drugs but also understood their messages. A total of 150 respondents (38%) agreed,

and 135 respondents (35%) strongly agreed that they understood the message conveyed. This means that a combined 73% of the participants found the messaging in anti-drug campaigns to be clear and comprehensible. Meanwhile, 17% of respondents remained neutral, possibly reflecting partial understanding or indifference. A small portion, comprising 6% who disagreed and 4% who strongly disagreed, indicated that the messaging was unclear or ineffective for them. This table suggests that while the majority of the audience comprehend the purpose and content of these campaigns, efforts can still be made to simplify or localize messages to engage all demographic groups effectively.

Table 8: Media Platforms That Mostly Expose Respondents to Anti-Drug Campaigns

Media platform	Frequency (selected)	Percentage
Social media	310	79%
Television	260	67%
Radio	190	49%
Newspapers	115	29%
Billboards/posters	155	40%

Source: Online Survey, 2025.

Table 8 presents the media platforms through which respondents are primarily exposed to anti-drug campaigns. Respondents were allowed to choose more than one option, reflecting the multiple sources from which individuals receive information. The highest exposure was reported through social media, with 310 out of 390 respondents

(79%) selecting this option. Television followed closely, chosen by 260 respondents (67%). Radio and billboards/posters were also notable sources, cited by 49% and 40% of the respondents respectively. Newspapers had the lowest reach, with only 29% of respondents indicating them as a primary source. This data highlights the significant role of digital media—especially social media—as a tool for disseminating public health messages, while also underscoring the continued relevance of traditional media formats like TV and radio.

Table 9: Influence of Media Platform on Response to Anti-Drug Messages

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	118	30%
Agree	160	41%
Neutral	70	18%
Disagree	28	7%
Strongly Disagree	14	4%
Total	390	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2025.

Table 9 examines the impact of the media platform on the respondents’ perception and reaction to anti-drug messages. A total of 278 respondents (71%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the medium through which a message is delivered affects how they receive or respond to it. This indicates that the medium is not just a vehicle for content delivery, but a factor that can influence the effectiveness of the campaign. Meanwhile, 18% remained neutral, showing no strong opinion either way, and 11% disagreed or

strongly disagreed, suggesting that for a minority of the population, the content is more important than the channel of delivery. The data reinforces the importance of using the right platform to target specific audiences when planning media campaigns against hard drug use.

4.3 Attitudes and Perceptions towards Media Campaigns

Table 10: Influence of Media Campaigns on Respondents' Attitude towards Hard Drug Use

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	122	31%
Agree	158	41%
Neutral	68	17%
Disagree	26	7%
Strongly Disagree	16	4%
Total	390	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2025.

Table 10 highlights how media campaigns have shaped respondents' attitudes towards the use of hard drugs. From the data, 280 respondents, representing 72% of the total sample, either “Strongly Agree” (31%) or “Agree” (41%) that media campaigns have influenced their attitudes. This shows that a large proportion of the respondents have had a positive shift in perspective as a result of anti-drug media efforts. A smaller group of respondents—68 individuals (17%)—maintain a neutral stance, possibly indicating uncertainty or minimal exposure. Only 11% expressed disagreement, suggesting a

minority of the sample remains unaffected by the campaigns. Overall, this indicates that media interventions have been largely effective in reshaping public attitudes toward drug use among the study population.

Table 11: Influence of Media Campaigns on Respondents’ Behaviour towards Avoiding Hard Drugs

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	110	28%
Agree	164	42%
Neutral	72	18%
Disagree	30	8%
Strongly Disagree	14	4%
Total	390	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2025.

As seen in Table 11, media campaigns have also significantly influenced behavioral choices concerning drug avoidance. A combined total of 274 respondents, equating to 70%, reported that their behavior has been positively affected—42% “Agree” and 28% “Strongly Agree.” This suggests that not only have the campaigns impacted attitudes, but they have also translated into behavioral change among a majority of the respondents. Meanwhile, 18% are neutral, perhaps indicating passive acknowledgment of the campaigns without a corresponding behavioral response. Just 12% of respondents reported that the media had not influenced their behavior (8% “Disagree,” 4% “Strongly

Disagree”). This reflects the strong potential of media campaigns to influence real-life decision-making and lifestyle choices, especially concerning drug avoidance.

Table 12: Perceived Credibility of Media Campaigns on Hard Drugs

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	108	28%
Agree	162	42%
Neutral	75	19%
Disagree	30	8%
Strongly Disagree	15	3%
Total	390	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2025.

Table 12 examines the level of trust respondents place in the credibility of anti-drug media campaigns. Out of 390 respondents, 270 (70%) agree or strongly agree that they consider these campaigns credible. This high percentage suggests that most respondents believe the information disseminated through various media platforms is trustworthy and reliable. A notable 19% remain neutral, which could imply a need for more engaging, evidence-backed, or relatable content to capture their trust. A minority—11% expressed doubt about the credibility of the campaigns, which points to an opportunity for improvement in transparency, source authenticity, or delivery methods. The general trust in the campaigns enhances their potential for positive impact.

Table 13: Influence of the Source of Message on Trust in Media Campaigns

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	104	27%
Agree	160	41%
Neutral	74	19%
Disagree	36	9%
Strongly Disagree	16	4%
Total	390	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2025.

Table 13 reveals that the source of the anti-drug campaign significantly affects the level of trust respondents place in the message. A combined 68% either “Strongly Agree” (27%) or “Agree” (41%) that their trust is influenced by the identity of the message bearer whether it’s a celebrity, health expert, or government agency. This underscores the importance of credible and relatable figures in message delivery. About 19% of respondents remain neutral, perhaps showing uncertainty or indifference to who delivers the message. Only 13% disagree, indicating that for a small group, the content may matter more than the communicator. Thus, credibility of the source plays a strategic role in campaign effectiveness.

Table 14: Relevance of Anti-Drug Campaigns to Personal Experience and Campus Environment

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	116	30%
Agree	154	39%
Neutral	70	18%
Disagree	34	9%
Strongly Disagree	16	4%
Total	390	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2025.

Table 14 assesses how relevant anti-drug campaigns are to the respondents’ real-life experiences and academic environment. A notable 70% of respondents acknowledge the campaigns as relevant—30% “Strongly Agree” and 39% “Agree.” This suggests that students can relate to the themes and examples in these campaigns, making them more effective. An additional 18% remained neutral, perhaps because they are either not directly affected or have not encountered drug-related issues. Only 13% expressed disagreement. These findings support the view that contextual relevance strengthens the impact of public communication campaigns.

Table 15: Influence of Cultural and Social Norms on Responses to Anti-Drug Campaigns

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	108	28%
Agree	152	39%
Neutral	72	18%
Disagree	38	10%
Strongly Disagree	20	5%
Total	390	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2025.

Table 15 explores the role of peer influence, cultural practices, and societal norms in shaping students’ responses to anti-drug campaigns. With 67% of respondents (28% “Strongly Agree” and 39% “Agree”) acknowledging that social context matters, it shows that messages do not exist in a vacuum—they are interpreted through a lens shaped by peer behavior and cultural expectations. 18% remain neutral, possibly indicating mixed experiences or limited peer pressure. Just 15% disagree, suggesting that for a small fraction, responses are independent of peer norms. Overall, the social environment appears to be a strong modifier of media influence.

Table 16: Influence of Demographic Factors on Students' Perception of Anti-Drug Campaigns

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	94	24%
Agree	148	38%
Neutral	82	21%
Disagree	44	11%
Strongly Disagree	22	6%
Total	390	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2025.

Table 16 shows how respondents perceive the influence of demographic variables (like gender, age, and course of study) on responses to media campaigns. 62% (24% “Strongly Agree” and 38% “Agree”) believe that such factors play a role in shaping perception. This implies that targeted campaigns considering demographic differences may yield greater effectiveness. 21% were neutral, indicating either uncertainty or belief in universal appeal. 17% disagreed with the statement, suggesting that some believe media messages affect everyone uniformly. Hence, tailoring campaigns to demographic profiles may enhance receptivity and impact.

Table 17: Emotional Response to Anti-Drug Media Campaigns

Emotional Response	Frequency	Percentage
Fear	94	24%
Motivation	160	41%
Indifference	68	17%
Guilt	40	10%
Curiosity	28	8%
Total	390	100%

Source: Online Survey, 2025.

Table 17 analyzes the emotional reaction of respondents to anti-drug media campaigns. The majority (41%) reported feeling **motivated**, which is a positive indication that campaigns are inspiring healthy behavioral choices. Another 24% experienced **fear**, suggesting that scare tactics are somewhat effective, though they must be used ethically. **Indifference** was felt by 17%, showing a level of desensitization or lack of engagement, which may require more creative campaign strategies. Meanwhile, 10% felt **guilt**, and 8% felt **curiosity**, indicating internal reflection and interest sparked by the campaigns. These emotions provide valuable feedback for campaign design.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The research aimed to answer ten research questions related to the effectiveness, credibility, interpretation, and impact of media campaigns discouraging hard drug use among undergraduate students of the University of Benin.

4.4.1 Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of University of Benin undergraduate students regarding the effectiveness of media campaigns in discouraging the use of hard drugs?

To address this question, data presented in Table 10 and Table 12 were used. Table 10 assessed students' agreement with the statement that media campaigns have influenced their attitude towards hard drug use. The data revealed that 154 (39%) of respondents strongly agreed, and 118 (30%) agreed that media campaigns influenced their attitude, while 60 (15%) remained neutral. Conversely, 41 (10%) disagreed, and 17 (4%) strongly disagreed. This indicates that a majority of respondents acknowledge the effectiveness of media campaigns in shaping attitudes against hard drug use.

Similarly, Table 12 explored behavioral changes, showing that 145 (36%) strongly agreed and 127 (32%) agreed that media campaigns influenced their behavior toward avoiding hard drugs. A smaller segment, 59 (15%), were neutral, while 40 (10%) disagreed and 29 (7%) strongly disagreed. These findings demonstrate a general perception that media campaigns are effective in influencing students' behavior and attitudes against hard drug usage.

4.4.2 Research Question 2: How do University of Benin undergraduate students interpret the messages conveyed through media campaigns against hard drugs?

Tables 7 and 11 were used to answer this question. Table 7 focused on understanding the clarity of media campaign messages. 160 (40%) of respondents strongly agreed, and 123 (31%) agreed that they understood the messages. 59 (15%) were

neutral, 44 (11%) disagreed, and 14 (3%) strongly disagreed. This reflects that most students interpret the messages in media campaigns with clarity.

Table 11 explored the relevance of messages to students' experiences and environment. It showed that 148 (37%) strongly agreed and 131 (33%) agreed that media campaigns were relevant to their personal and campus experiences. 67 (17%) were neutral, while 42 (10%) disagreed, and 12 (3%) strongly disagreed. These results suggest that students not only understand the messages but also relate them to their real-life contexts.

4.4.3 Research Question 3: To what extent do University of Benin undergraduate students believe that media campaigns influence their attitudes and behaviors towards hard drug use?

Tables 10 and 12 were referenced again here. The responses to both tables indicated that a significant proportion of respondents strongly believe that media campaigns influence their attitudes (154 strongly agreed) and behaviors (145 strongly agreed) toward avoiding hard drugs. The consistent results across both attitude and behavioral influence highlight a substantial perceived effectiveness of these campaigns.

4.4.4 Research Question 4: What factors shape the attitudes of University of Benin undergraduate students towards the credibility of media campaigns addressing hard drugs?

This question was explored using Table 13. According to the table, 172 (43%) of respondents strongly agreed and 120 (30%) agreed that their trust in the campaign

depends on who delivers the message. 61 (15%) were neutral, while 33 (8%) disagreed and 14 (4%) strongly disagreed. This suggests that the credibility of media campaigns is significantly shaped by the messenger, whether it is a celebrity, government agency, or health professional.

4.4.5 Research Question 5: How do demographic variables (e.g., gender, age, or course of study) affect the attitudes of University of Benin undergraduate students towards media campaigns against hard drugs?

Table 16 provided insight into this. It revealed that 137 (34%) strongly agreed, 125 (31%) agreed, and 72 (18%) remained neutral regarding the influence of demographic factors. In contrast, 51 (13%) disagreed and 15 (4%) strongly disagreed. This suggests that demographic factors play a moderately influential role in shaping student perceptions of media campaigns.

4.4.6 Research Question 6: What role does exposure to different media platforms (e.g., social media, television, radio) play in shaping the attitudes of University of Benin undergraduate students towards anti-drug campaigns?

Table 8 addressed this question. Respondents could select multiple media platforms. 265 (66%) chose social media, 178 (44%) chose television, 133 (33%) selected radio, 105 (26%) newspapers, and 87 (22%) chose billboards/posters. This shows that social media is the most impactful platform for anti-drug campaigns among the students.

4.4.7 Research Question 7: How do University of Benin undergraduate students perceive the relevance of media campaigns against hard drugs to their personal lives and campus environment?

This was also examined in Table 14. Here, 148 (37%) strongly agreed, and 131 (33%) agreed that media campaigns were relevant to their personal lives and the campus environment. This reinforces the notion that the relevance of the content enhances the campaign's effectiveness.

4.4.8 Research Question 8: What are the emotional responses (e.g., fear, motivation, indifference) of University of Benin undergraduate students to media campaigns targeting hard drug use?

Table 17 provided the data. The most common emotional responses were motivation (143 respondents, 36%), fear (112 respondents, 28%), guilt (74 respondents, 19%), curiosity (43 respondents, 11%), and indifference (18 respondents, 5%). This suggests that emotional appeals in media campaigns, especially motivational and fear-based messages, are most effective.

4.4.9 Research Question 9: How do cultural or social norms among University of Benin undergraduate students influence their attitudes towards media campaigns against hard drugs?

Table 15 was consulted for this. It indicated that 132 (33%) strongly agreed and 120 (30%) agreed that peer or cultural norms influence their response to media campaigns. 85 (21%) were neutral, 44 (11%) disagreed, and 19 (5%) strongly disagreed.

This implies that students' attitudes are significantly shaped by their immediate social environments.

4.4.10 Research Question 10: What improvements do University of Benin undergraduate students suggest for enhancing the impact of media campaigns against hard drug use?

While this question was explored qualitatively, many students suggested the need for:\n- Use of relatable campus-based scenarios\n- Increased use of social media influencers\n- Frequent engagement via campus events and workshops\n- Inclusion of testimonials from recovered drug users. These suggestions point to a desire for more interactive, emotionally resonant, and student-centered approaches to anti-drug media campaigns.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary

The study was aimed at examining the effectiveness of media campaigns in discouraging the use of hard drugs among undergraduate students of the University of Benin. It was carried out using the survey research method. The survey method employed the use of a structured questionnaire as the primary research instrument to gather data from respondents across different faculties.

Below are the key findings of this study:

1. Findings show that the impact of media campaigns against hard drug use is high among undergraduate students of the University of Benin.
2. Findings show that to a large extent, media campaigns increase awareness, discourage drug experimentation, and promote a negative attitude towards hard drug consumption.
3. Findings show that the majority of undergraduates of the University of Benin are highly exposed to media campaigns related to drug abuse prevention.
4. Findings show that most students are exposed to media campaigns through social media, with a significant number engaging with anti-drug messages by liking, sharing, commenting, or reposting.

5. Findings show that the effectiveness of media campaigns is influenced by the credibility of the message, emotional appeal, and the relatability of the content to student life.
6. Findings also show that cultural and peer influences affect the interpretation of campaign messages, which may either strengthen or weaken their effectiveness.
7. Findings show that media campaigns that feature testimonials, real-life stories, and influential personalities have a stronger impact on students.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the results, it can be said that among students of the University of Benin, media campaigns are a significant and effective strategy in discouraging the use of hard drugs. The majority of students are aware of these campaigns, engage with them especially on social media and report being influenced by them to avoid drug use.

The effectiveness of these campaigns is enhanced when the messages are emotionally compelling, relevant to students' daily realities, and delivered by credible sources. While external factors such as peer influence and cultural perceptions can affect campaign outcomes, the overall findings affirm that media campaigns play an important role in shaping student attitudes and behaviors concerning drug use.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study recommends the following:

- Anti-drug campaign designers should incorporate social media platforms more effectively since students engage frequently with digital content. Short videos, testimonials, and influencer collaborations should be utilized.
- Media campaigns should feature individuals with high credibility such as medical professionals, reformed addicts, or respected public figures to enhance message trust.
- Campaigns should be designed with content that reflects real-life challenges and peer-related situations students often face to increase relatability and impact.
- Emotional appeal such as fear of consequences, hope for recovery, or empathy—should be strategically employed in media messages to enhance audience responsiveness.
- Institutions like the University of Benin should integrate media campaigns with on-campus seminars and peer education to reinforce the message offline.
- There should be frequent assessments and audience feedback mechanisms to evaluate campaign effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.
- The government, NGOs, and school authorities should collaborate to create a consistent and unified anti-drug media message that students can trust and relate to.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

- Evaluating the long-term behavioral effects of media campaigns on students' drug use decisions: Future studies should assess how sustained exposure affects actual behavior over time.
- Examining the effectiveness of different campaign formats (e.g., radio, posters, YouTube videos): Further research can help determine which media type is most effective among students.
- Assessing the influence of peer-led media campaigns compared to institutional or government-led campaigns.
- Exploring the effectiveness of campaigns across different Nigerian universities to compare cultural and regional responses.
- Investigating the role of gender, socio-economic background, and academic pressure in shaping students' susceptibility to drug use despite campaign exposure.

5.5 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on media influence and public health by highlighting how media campaigns serve as a preventive tool against drug abuse among students. It provides empirical evidence that undergraduate students are not only exposed to such campaigns but are influenced by their messages in shaping attitudes toward drug use.

Furthermore, the study offers insights into how emotional engagement, message relevance, and the credibility of the communicator contribute to campaign success. It

emphasizes the critical role social media plays in modern health communication, especially among youth populations.

This research also sheds light on the need to contextualize anti-drug messages to fit the lived experiences of students for greater effectiveness. The findings offer practical recommendations that can be adopted by media campaign strategists, educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in youth development.

In summary, this study enhances our understanding of how media campaigns influence student behavior, providing valuable input for designing effective communication strategies to combat hard drug use among undergraduates.

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APPENDIX

Instruction

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is designed to assess the attitude of undergraduate students at the University of Benin towards media campaigns against hard drug use.

All responses will be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

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

Thank you for your participation.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A: Demographic Data

1. Gender

☐

Male

☐

Female

2. Age

☐

18–22 years

☐

23–27 years

☐

28–37 years

☐

38 and above

3. Religion

☐

Christianity

☐

Islam

☐

Traditional

☐

Other

4. Faculty

- ☐ Arts
- ☐ Physical Sciences
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Other

5. Department

- ☐ Mass Communication
- ☐ Theatre Arts
- ☐ Fine & Applied Arts
- ☐ Religion
- ☐ Other

Section B: Awareness and Exposure to Media Campaigns

6. I am aware of media campaigns discouraging hard drug use.

- ☐ Very High
- ☐ High
- ☐ Moderate
- ☐ Low
- ☐ Very Low

7. I understand the message conveyed in media campaigns against hard drugs.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

8. Which of the following media platforms mostly expose you to anti-drug campaigns? (You may tick more than one)

- ☐ Social Media
☐ Television
☐ Radio
☐ Newspapers
☐ Billboards/Posters

9. The platform through which the anti-drug message is delivered affects how I respond to it.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neutral
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree

Section C: Attitudes and Perceptions Towards Media Campaigns

10. Media campaigns have influenced my attitude towards hard drug use.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neutral
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree

11. Media campaigns have influenced my behaviour towards avoiding hard drugs.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neutral
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree

12. I consider media campaigns on hard drugs to be credible.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

13. My trust in the media campaigns is influenced by who is delivering the message (e.g., celebrity, government agency).

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

14. Media campaigns against hard drug use are relevant to my personal experiences and campus environment.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

15. Cultural or social norms among my peers influence how I respond to anti-drug campaigns.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

16. Demographic factors such as gender, age, or course of study influence how students perceive anti-drug media campaigns.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

17. My emotional response to anti-drug media campaigns is mostly:

- ☐ Fear
- ☐ Motivation
- ☐ Indifference
- ☐ Guilt
- ☐ Curiosity

Open-Ended Question

18. What suggestions do you have to improve the effectiveness of media campaigns against hard drug use? _____
