

## **Impact of Substance Abuse amongst Youth in Uselu Community, Benin City Edo State**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of the study was to examine the impact of substance abuse amongst youth in Uselu community, Benin City. The descriptive survey research design was employed in carrying out this study. The population of the study consisted of the youth residing in Uselu community in Egor Local Government Area, Benin City. The convenience sampling technique was used to select a sample of 706 respondents which were taken as samples for the study. The research instrument was the questionnaire, administered manually to respondents. The data gathered were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study discovered that youths engage in indiscriminate substance abuse due to peer influence, traumatic experiences and coping mechanism. Youths engage in substance abuse in peer groups to appear cool and are pressured to take excessive quantity of drugs. Youths in the community to a large extent abuse drugs in the community with the pretense of avoiding stress, getting high, profitable and for leisure activities. Local authorities get records of youths through contact information for youths referred for substance abuse services, drug screening tests, a report from community programs, court records and discharge summaries from treatment. The types of drugs used majorly by youths in Uselu community are Indian herb, cocaine, tramadol and codeine. The study recommends that awareness campaign to educate youths and their families about the dangers of substance abuse. This should include providing information on the physical, psychological and social consequences of substance abuse. Increased access to substance abuse prevention and treatment services. This could include creating a network of local healthcare providers, schools and community organizations to provide screening and referral services, as well as

offering comprehensive treatment programs and supportive recovery services.

**Keywords: Abuse, Drugs, Peer, substance, Youth,**

### **Background of Study**

The incidences of drug abuse have permanently taken an alarming dimension in recent years (Abubakar, Abubakar, Kaburu, Zayymau, Gabar 2021). The United Nation's division of narcotic drugs recently reported that never before have there been so many young people, even children flirting with drugs and their associated hazards. These have attracted globally attention hence; individuals, international organizations, corporate bodies and government agencies are now making concerted effort to address the menace. This concern is even more called for as the group that constitutes a larger percentage of drug users are the adolescents or youths which happen to be the main pillar of any economy.

Drugs as defined by the International Convention of 1961 for Narcotic Drugs, and of 1971 for psychotropic substances, include all substances and chemicals that should not be used for any purpose other than for medical and scientific research. If used for purpose otherwise, they are called illicit drugs. Moreover, illicit drug use could be culturally defined; drugs are regarded as problematic when the society in which it is used calls it so. This is because a substance termed as drug in one society may be food in another. The United Nation international Drug Control Programme (UNIDCP) asserted that drugs are substances which affect the thinking ability, making one do things irrationally. Any substance, which when taken or introduced into a living organism can modify the state of equilibrium of that organism or one of its functions, is regarded as drug by the World Health Organization (WHO). Adamson, Onifade and Ogunwale (2015) also asserted that drug is any substance that causes a change in a person's body, interest, emotion or perception are termed illegal, depending on the Society's definition as opined by Oimage in 2005.

However, drugs that are often abused are referred to as brain or mind altering drugs, affecting mood and externally observed behavior. The use of such drugs tends to undermine moral restraints and so lead to violent behavior and other

violent acts. Illicit drug use is termed drug abuse. Abuse in other hand is an excessive use of illegal drugs, misuse of prescribed drugs. The use of drugs in manners that deviate from medical norms or socially acceptable pattern within a given society and culture is also referred to as drug abuse. Simply, it is inappropriate use of drugs for the purpose other than its legitimate purpose (Barnett, et al., 2012).

In Nigeria, research efforts into the problem of drug and alcohol abuse started in the late 1950s. Shifts in the pattern and types of drugs abused in the country have been reported and increasing female involvement and multiple drugs use pattern have also been noticed. Factors found to contribute to this changing trend including urbanization. Industrialization and increasing exposure to western life-style, peer pressure, deficient family support and increasing advertisement of such in the mass media etc. survey of both in and out of school adolescents reveal that psychoactive drugs use is a common problem especially for the socially-acceptable drugs like alcohol and cigarette (Bujang, 2021).

Evidence shows that an upsurge in use of psychoactive substance in Nigeria has been characterized by an increase in the mental disorders, criminal acts and cult activities in both the higher institutions of disorders, criminal acts and cult activities in both the higher institution of learning, the high rate of road traffic accidents, increased violence and criminal behaviour are also partly attribute to alcohol and drug abuse (Coker, Stefanovics & Rosenheck, 2016). The resultant loss to the nation on account of these problems afflicting her youth cannot be quantified in material terms. There is also scanty data on patterns of drug abuse in special groups in the community due to increase information on the use of drugs among Nigeria Youths.

Given the availability, consequence and increase use of drug in Nigeria, several anti-agencies such as the NDLEA have swung into action to curb the menace. Despite this development, it is noticed imminent to evaluate the incidence of drugs and substance use among Youths especially in communities. It is against this backdrop that the current study was undertaken (Ediomo-Ubong, Isidore & Okokon, 2017).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The physical, psychological, social and economic Consequences of drug related problems among youth are becoming more obvious and disturbing. Youths who persistently abuse substances often experience an array of problems including work difficulties, health related problems (including mental health), poor family relationships and involvement in social vices such as stealing, bullying, secret cult activities. All these have negative consequences on family member, community and the entire society at large (Coker, Stefanovics & Rosenheck, 2016; Farren, et al., 2015). While the law enforcement agencies are catching-up with many drug abusers, many are yet to be caught and/or rehabilitated. It is logical therefore to think that if this problem. of substance abuse persist among Youths, it may be difficult for such group to obtain a good and healthy life. There is also the tendency for increase in anti-social tendencies and behavioural problems among Youths in and outside the Community (Gobir, et al., 2017).

Illicit drug use is injurious to both individuals and the society, crimes, spreading diseases, killing our youths and future leaders. Today, there are millions of drug users around the world and no country alone can stem the drug trade within its borders. No country is immune and no person really is. Many schools of thought have it that the proliferation of drugs in Nigeria is poised to the fact that strict laws are either not in place for would-be abusers or are not well implemented by the relevant agencies. In Nigeria, the offenders are either arrested by the police or by the NDLEA and later freed on bail. In October 2013, Vanguard reported that a Nigerian teenager was convicted and sentenced to death for drug-related offence in faraway Indonesia: the list is endless. While several others are languishing in prisons abroad, others are aspiring to become abusers; this unfortunate, anti-social behaviour therefore, calls for some intellectual effort to be made to empirically examine the incidences of drug abuse among youths (Hoggatt, et al., 2015; Jainal, 2019).

Hence, it is high time a study of this nature was conducted on the incidence of drug use from where it is widely perceived to emanate from the community. This is with the view of suggesting possible way of curbing and preventing substance abuse among this vulnerable but very significant group of people in the society. The problem of this study is therefore predicated upon the need to evaluate the

incidence of drug use among youths in Uselu, Benin City. To this extent, attempt shall be made to furnish answers to the following objectives as stated below;

### **Research Objectives**

The main aim of this study was to investigate the impact of Substance Abuse amongst youths in Uselu Community. The specific objectives were to;

- 1) find out how youths engage in indiscriminate drug use in Uselu Community.
- 2) investigate how youths in Uselu engage in peer Substance abuse.

### **Literature Review**

The United Nations International Drug Central Programme (UNDCP) defined drug as substances which when taken in their natural or synthetic form affects the organism by altering its mood or behaviour. Drug can be licit (legal) or illicit (illegal). While licit drugs are those drugs that are deemed to be safe, effective and given under the directions of a physician for medical purpose only. Illicit drugs on the other hand are substances whose manufacture, sale, distribution, purchase or possession is prohibited by law (Witkiewitz, Litten & Leggio, 2019). Drug is said to be abused when it is taken without medical justification (United Nations International Drugs Control Programme). The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) USA, defined drug abuse as drug use that results in the physical, mental, emotional and social impairment of the user (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017).

Youths, especially those in universities, tend to see the drug user as one who is tough, bold and strong. Many young men have been known to use drugs at instance of peers, environmental influence or Nurture. Youths who usually feel inadequate have been known to use drugs to achieve social acceptance. Namadi (2016) stated that Nigerian University youths under the influence of Indian hemp shed all inhibitions and produce behaviour that is inconsistent with school discipline. He went further to observe that the increasing incidence of drug abuse among youths is a contributory factor in the ugly confrontation between local community authorities and youths (Ohuabunwa, 2019).

Joseph, et al. (2019), Lawal and Aliyu (2020), Mamman, Ahmad and Lim (2014), Namadi (2016), National Institute on Drug Abuse (2013) in their research work indicated that the problem of substance abuse knows no boundaries or social class. It impedes the development of any society as it is a threat to life, health, dignity and prosperity of all individuals. Kellerman (2021) in their research on the effect of substance abuse on work performance of some working class youth drug abusers in Ibadan found that the misuse of marijuana had reached an epidemic level in the present Nigerian society, and that substance abuse could lead to reduced career achievement or even halt one's entire career process. Adamson, Onifade and Ogunwale (2015), Bujang (2021), Barnett, et al. (2012) in their studies dwelled extensively on reasons youths use drugs include drowning away hurtful memories, social recognition and initiation of peers.

### **Adults Use of Narcotic Drugs and its Consequences**

Pain is one of the most common reasons people seek medical treatment. Doctors can prescribe several different drugs to relieve pain. The most potent pain-relieving drugs are narcotics. In the United States, narcotics are widely prescribed to treat painful conditions. Narcotics are often prescribed in conjunction with other less potent drugs (such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications) or as a pill that has a combination of a narcotic with either acetaminophen (for example, Tylenol) or aspirin (Arthritis Pain, Aspergum Cherry, Aspergum Original, Aspirin-Low, Aspirin Lite Coat, Aspirin Low Strength, Bayer Aspirin, Bayer Aspirin Regimen, Bayer Children's Aspirin, Bufferin, Bufferin Arthritis Strength, Easprin, Ecotrin, Empirin, Fasprin, Genacote, Halfprin, Norwich Aspirin, St. Joseph Aspirin, St. Joseph Aspirin Adult Chewable, Stan back Analgesic, Tri-Buffered Aspirin, Zorprin) (Ashraf, 2016).

Acetaminophen is also commonly found in many different products that are available as over-the-counter (OTC) medications. With the public often using OTC products that contain acetaminophen as well as prescription narcotics that also have acetaminophen, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have become concerned about dangerous interactions from combining these medications. There is not just the potential for narcotic abuse but the concern that patients are accidentally ingesting too much acetaminophen from combining these products with the potential for severe liver damage or even death (Yunusa, et al., 2017).

The use of prescription pain relievers without a doctor's prescription only for the experience or the feeling it causes is often called "non-medical" use. Narcotic use is considered abuse when people use narcotics to seek feelings of well-being apart from the narcotic's pain-relief applications. The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHSA) report that after marijuana, nonmedical use of painkillers is the second most common form of illicit drug use in the United States. According to SAMHSA, 21% of people age 12 and older (5.2 million individuals) reported using prescription pain relievers non medically in 2007. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency suggests that the number of people abusing any prescription drugs is even higher at 7 million individuals (Oshodi, Aina & Onajole, 2012; Yuma-Guerero, et al., 2012).

### **Youths Engagement in Indiscriminate Drug Abuse**

Sumaina (2016) recalled that the use of illegal drugs was once unheard in Nigeria. With the upsurge in the illicit use of cocaine in the U.S. and Europe in the 1980s, drugs use became more common. The problem rather became obvious as Nigeria became a stop for illegal drugs that were being transported to Europe from Latin America. As a result, local gangs began to sell drugs to Nigerians. Marijuana, which is locally known as igbo or indian hemp, became the most common drug of choice as time went on. Consequently in Nigeria, 16,000kg (about 35,274 pounds) of weed and 15.6kg (about 34, 39 pounds) of cocaine were seized in 1999. The number of seizures jumped to 272,00kg (599,657 pounds) of cannabis and 54kg (119 pounds) of cocaine in the year 2000. Little wonder, by 2007, Nigeria had risen up to the fourth country with the largest rate of marijuana seizures, after the United States, Mexico and Bolivia (retrieved from <http://www.chow.com>. 20/04/2012).

Drugs problem is a thorn in the flesh for the Nigerian society, yet is in this condition that youths and young adults live and socialize in Uselu community (Onyechi et al., 2017). People indulge in abuse for different reasons resulting in different various effects ranging from mild affection to complex ones and extreme cases, death. NDLEA has been running faster than they could catch up with the medicine to ailment which the problem of drug abuse/addiction has caused our society and institutions of learning, but the bid to achieve this appears to be futile (Omage 2005). The problem of illicit drug use in Nigeria has assumed a wider

dimension. It has moved from mere consumption to sales for money. This leads to shady business like drug trafficking. The NDLEA statistical data compiled over the years show that in 1996 alone, Over 80% drug users are 16-30 years of age, 75% of those arrested as traffickers are 16-45 years (Ohuabunwa, 2019). In 1997, over 97% drug users interviewed were between ages 11-40. With the above, it is therefore imperative for every patriotic and well-meaning Nigerian to join hands to address this problem because the largest population are the youth and adolescent who once hooked to drugs, will turn out a chaotic Nigeria in future (Memon, et al., 2020).

With a youthful exuberance, youths (16-35 years) commonly experiment with drugs. At this biological epoch, they try so many new things. Consequently, illicit use of substances for many reasons, including curiosity to feel high, because it feels good i.e., as status symbol, to reduce stress, or to feel grown up. Specifically, the use of alcohol like in drinks and tobacco like in cigarette, at an early age amplifies the risk of using other drugs later (Mafia & Qasir, 2020). Lorenzo, et al. (2021) associated this to two cardinal influences; from parents who stand as role models, yet illicitly use drugs and from peer groups where such is practiced. One of WHO and World Heart Foundation's data, pointed out that in Nigeria, 22.1% of students between 16 to 21 years use tobacco. This was higher than those of South Africa (19.4%), Kenya (16.2%) and Ghana (15.1%). It is not so apparent whether the Nigerian government is proactive enough in efforts to stem the horrible tide. The fear is that youths are lured into early Cardio Vascular Diseases (CVD), lung cancer and other tobacco related diseases which are death related (Lawal & Aliyu, 2020).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Research has shown that in order to prevent substance abuse, two things must be taken into consideration: factors that increase the risk of developing the problem must be identified, and ways to reduce the impact of these factors must be developed. This theory maintains that peer pressure and risk factors are those factors that encourage drug use. Factors that make people less likely to abuse drugs are called protective factors. The key to health and healthy families is increasing the protective factors. According to Fareo (2012). If many risk factors are present in a person's life, that person is more likely to begin, intensity and



continue the use of drugs. He identified risk factors as including: stress (which could be due to or home environment, and youth developmental changes), the normalization of substance use which could be seen in terms of legal it and law enforcement; the availability and cost of drugs; and advertising, sponsorship and promotion through media, as well as cultural value attached to various drugs (Lawal & Aliyu, 2020).

The more productive factors that are present, the less likely a person is to become involved with drugs. Productive factors are identified as; attachment to people such as family members and peers; and institutions such as religion and school; physical and performance capabilities that help people succeed in life; the availability of resources, within the person or the environment, that help people meet their emotional and physical needs; positive role models; and antidrug campaigns along with guidance and counselling services. It is easier to understand the drug problem if risk and protection factors are considered at same time. Probability of drug abuse is determined by these factors and this framework is useful as a way of planning interventions to prevent or treat problems related to drugs. It is important to note that the factors listed above are not exhaustive (Gobir, et al., 2017). The presence of risk and protective factors is context dependent and the proportions of their contribution depend on their intensity in given situations. Thus, it was important to examine the factors propagating the impact of drug abuse among youths in Uselu Community.

### **Methodology**

In conducting the study on the impact of substance abuse amongst youths in Uselu Community. The study employed the survey research design. This is occasioned by the suitability of this research design in addressing studies of this nature. This design is adopted and considered appropriate because it facilitates the collection of original data from the respondent. As at the time of this study youth in Uselu community does not have defined population documented by the government gazette. The study was conducted using a sample size of 706 youths randomly selected from Uselu Community.

The demographic data of respondents included in the study are sex, marital status, years of work experience, and educational qualification were measured by requesting respondents to fill out the questionnaire in response to their bio-data.

**Table 1: Demographic Data of Respondents**

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>		
18-25	119	36.0
26-35	111	33.5
36 years & Above	101	30.5
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	165	49.8
Female	166	50.2
<b>Religion</b>		
Christian	210	63.4
Muslim	75	22.7
Others	46	13.9
<b>Ethnic Group</b>		
Igbo	53	16.0
Yoruba	55	16.6
Hausa	54	16.3
Edo	104	31.4

**Source: Field Work 2023**

Table: 1 shows the demographics of respondents based on some criteria identified. The demographic age showed that 36% of the respondents are of the age range of 18-25 years, of which 26-35 years made up 34%, while 31% are 36 years and above which is a fair distribution of the age demographic of respondents.

The demographic Gender shows that 49.8% of respondents sampled are male, while 50.2% are female respectively. This shows a slight distribution for the gender

of respondents and the observation observed is the high number which was found to be males.

The demographic of religion shows that 63% of respondents are Christians, and 23% of respondents Muslim. While 14% of respondents were found to be of other religion.

The demographic of Ethnic Group shows that 16% of respondents were Igbo, and 17% of respondents are Yoruba, 16% of respondents were Hausa and from the observation the Edo's had a wide distribution of 31% which has the highest population.20% beloned to other ethnic groups not captured in the study.

**Research Objective One:** To find out how youths engage in indiscriminate substance abuse in Uselu Community.

**Table 2:** Responses Youths Engagement in Substance Abuse

Items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
They engage in drug use due to peer pressure	3.4755	.65898	Agree
Use of drugs without a doctor's prescription is substance abuse	3.6084	.66114	Agree
Youth in my community engage in illicit substance use	3.3566	.81712	Agree
They engage to cope with traumatic experiences	3.0979	1.02994	Agree
They engage in to avoid life challenges	3.6434	.64356	Agree
Weighted Average	<b>3.4</b>		

**Source:** Field Work 2023

**Decision:**

**2.5 & above = Agree**

**Below 2.5 = Disagree**

Table.2 shows the responses based on the engagement of youths in the use of substance in Uselu community. It was agreed that the engagement in drug use due to peer pressure will continue to rise over time as many youth keep giving in to peer pressure. It was agreed also that uses of drugs without doctor's prescription is considered substance abuse. Respondents agreed that youths in the community

engage in illicit substance abuse. Among the reasons given for the use of drugs is to cope with traumatic experiences. It was also agreed that the use of drugs is for youths to avoid life challenges.

The overall mean of 3.4 indicate that youths engage in indiscriminate substance abuse due to peer pressure, traumatic experiences and coping mechanism.

**Research Objective Two:** Investigate how youths in Uselu community engage in peer group substance abuse.

**Table 3:** Youths engagement in substance abuse

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
1.	Youths use drugs to be popular with their peers	1.5035	.72066	Disagree
2.	They use drugs to appear cool	3.6853	.58646	Agree
3.	Youths are pressured to take an excessive quantity of drugs	3.3706	.90910	Agree
4.	Youths in a group get shunned if they do not partake in the group use of drugs	2.0140	1.09407	Disagree
5.	Youths think substance abuse in groups validate their behaviour	2.1944	.71442	Agree
	Weighted Average	<b>2.4</b>		

Source: Field Work 2023

**Decision:**

**2.5 & above = Agree**

**Below 2.5 = Disagree**

Table.3 disagreed that youths take drugs to be popular with their peers. But in terms of appearing cool, it was agreed that youths take drugs because of that. The table shows that youths are pressured to take an excessive quantity of drugs. Youths do not get shunned in a group if they do not partake in drugs but they think substance abuse validate their behaviour in a group.

The overall weighted average shows that youths engage in substance abuse in peer groups to appear cool and are pressured to take excessive quantity of drugs.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Youths was found to engage in indiscriminate substance abuse due to peer pressure, traumatic experiences and coping mechanism. In relation to this, it was agreed by Oshodi, et al. (2012) that substance abuse among Nigerian youths is a growing concern due to the various factors that contribute to its occurrence. Peer pressure, traumatic experiences and coping mechanisms are some of the leading causes of substance abuse among Nigerian youths. Peer pressure is a major factor in driving Nigerian youths to use substances. Young people are particularly vulnerable to the influence of their peers, and the need to fit in can lead to experimentation with drugs, alcohol and other substances. This can lead to a cycle of substance abuse and addiction (Staff, 2012). Sumaina (2016) stated that traumatic experiences can also lead to substance abuse in Nigerian youths. Experiences such as violence, poverty, neglect and abuse can lead to feelings of depression, anxiety and hopelessness, which can be difficult to cope with. These feelings can be temporarily relieved through the use of substances, which can quickly lead to addiction. Faronbi (2018) enumerated that coping mechanisms can be a contributing factor to substance abuse among Nigerian youths. Many young people may turn to substances as a way of self-medicating and relieving their emotional distress. This can become a dangerous pattern of substance abuse, as the individual may become dependent on substances to cope with life's difficulties.

Youths engage in substance abuse in peer groups to appear cool and are pressured to take excessive quantity of drugs. In discussing this finding further, Oluyomi, et al. (2019) explained that substance abuse can be a dangerous and destructive behaviour, and peer pressure can make it even more difficult to resist. It's important for young people to be aware of the risks associated with substance abuse and to understand how peer pressure can make it harder to say no. Encouraging positive relationships, developing strong self-esteem, and providing support can help young people make healthy choices and resist peer pressure. It can also help to provide resources and education about the risks of substance abuse and to discuss ways to navigate peer pressure (Gotsang, Mashalla, & Seloilwe, 2017).

Youths in the community to a large extent abuse drugs in the community with the pretense of avoiding stress, getting high, profitable and for leisure activities. Oluremi (2012) agreed that there are several ways to curb drug abuse in the community. The first is to raise awareness about the dangers of drug use. Community members should be educated on the risks associated with drug abuse and the potential consequences of their actions. It is also important to create an environment in which drug use is not accepted or tolerated. This can be done through public campaigns, community meetings, and educational programs. Parents should also be involved in educating their children about the dangers of drug abuse and providing an environment that is free from peer pressure. Finally, the government should provide resources and support to local initiatives, such as drug rehabilitation centers, that can help those struggling with addiction (Attah, Baba & Audu, 2016).

### **Conclusion**

Substance Abuse among youths in Uselu Community can have devastating consequences on the physical and mental health of those affected, as well as their social and economic well-being. It is essential that effective prevention and intervention strategies are put in place to address the issue and reduce its prevalence in the community. Developing comprehensive support systems for at-risk youth, providing access to quality education, and increasing awareness of the consequences of substance abuse are essential steps in preventing and reducing the prevalence of this problem.

The findings show that substance abuse is a serious issue that affects youths and that there are underlying issues which contribute to their abuse of drugs. Furthermore, substance abuse has a devastating impact on the economy, as it affects productivity, costs associated with health care and criminal justice, and reduces government tax revenues. To effectively combat this problem, a comprehensive and coordinated approach must be taken to address the underlying factors associated with substance abuse among youths, including poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, and access to drugs and alcohol. The study shows why it is essential that the Nigerian government takes further action to address this problem, such as providing more access to prevention and treatment services, and increasing public awareness campaigns. It is also

important that the government works with communities to ensure that substance abuse is addressed in a holistic manner.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings:

- Awareness campaign to educate youths and their families about the dangers of substance abuse. This should include providing information on the physical, psychological and social consequences of substance abuse.
- Increased access to substance abuse prevention and treatment services. This could include creating a network of local healthcare providers, schools and community organizations to provide screening and referral services, as well as offering comprehensive treatment programs and supportive recovery services.
- Develop and implement evidence-based substance abuse prevention programs. These programs should focus on risk and protective factors, such as access to drugs, social norms around substance abuse, self-control and problem-solving skills.

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