

AN EXAMINATION OF THE EFFECTS OF DRUG ABUSE ON SOCIOECONOMIC OUTCOMES AMONG YOUTHS IN BENIN METROPOLIS, EDO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effects of drug abuse on selected socioeconomic outcomes among youths in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria. It focused specifically on academic performance, crime, and unemployment. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and used a structured five-point Likert questionnaire to collect data from respondents drawn from a study population of 657,500, with a sample size of 400 determined through the Taro Yamane formula and selected through simple random sampling. Of the 400 questionnaires administered, 381 were retrieved. Only 365 were valid for analysis. Spearman's rank correlation was used to test the hypotheses with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. The findings revealed significant associations between drug abuse and the three outcomes examined. In particular, drug abuse was significantly associated with poorer academic performance, crime, and unemployment among youths in the study area. The study therefore recommends stronger school-based counselling, sustained public awareness, and youth-focused employment initiatives to reduce the incidence and consequences of drug abuse in Benin Metropolis.

Key words: Drug Abuse, Youths, Academic Performance, Crime, Unemployment, Benin Metropolis

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INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse has become a serious public health and social problem across many societies. Its consequences are wide. Among youths, the effects often extend beyond individual health outcomes to broader educational, economic, and security concerns that affect families, institutions, and communities. In many contexts, substance misuse is linked with school disengagement, deviant behaviour, poor mental health, and weakened labour-market outcomes. These patterns make the issue socially significant. At the global level, evidence continues to show that psychoactive substance misuse imposes substantial social costs on households and communities. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2023) notes that drug abuse contributes to health burdens, social instability, and patterns of risky behaviour. In the Nigerian context, concern has also intensified. Reports have associated youth drug abuse with rising social disorder, declining productivity, and growing exposure to

violence and crime, especially in urban centres where peer pressure, weak social support, and economic vulnerability are more visible.

Benin Metropolis, comprising Oredo, Egor, Ikpoba-Okha, and Ovia North-East Local Government Areas of Edo State, presents an important setting for this inquiry. The area is urban, socially dynamic, and exposed to many of the pressures that shape youth behaviour. Reports and local observations suggest that drug abuse among youths has become increasingly visible in the metropolis. This trend raises concern not only because of its health implications, but also because of its likely effect on schooling, social behaviour, and economic participation. The problem is particularly important because the present study is concerned with three concrete outcomes: academic performance, crime, and unemployment. These are central indicators. Drug abuse may weaken concentration, reduce commitment to learning, and undermine school achievement. It may also increase the likelihood of risky or unlawful conduct. At the same time, substance misuse may both arise from and contribute to unemployment by limiting discipline, employability, and social functioning. The issue is therefore multidimensional.

Despite awareness campaigns and control efforts by government agencies, the problem persists. The interventions are not enough. This continuing pattern raises an important empirical question: how is drug abuse associated with academic performance, crime, and unemployment among youths in Benin Metropolis? It is this question that the present study addresses. By doing so, the study provides evidence that is relevant to policy, prevention, and youth development in the study area and beyond.

Objectives

The broad objective of the study is to examine the effects of drug abuse on selected socioeconomic outcomes among youths in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria. More specifically, the study seeks to:

1. examine the relationship between drug abuse and academic performance among youths in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria;
2. determine the relationship between drug abuse and crime among youths in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria; and
3. investigate the relationship between drug abuse and unemployment among youths in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

- a. What is the nexus between drug abuse and academic performance among youths in Benin metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria?
- b. What is the relationship between drug abuse and crime among youths in Benin metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria?
- c. What is the relationship between drug abuse and unemployment among youths in Benin metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

- H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between drug abuse and academic performance among youths in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria.
- H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between drug abuse and crime among youths in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria.
- H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between drug abuse and unemployment among youths in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Drug Abuse

Drug abuse has been conceptualised from the following perspectives: Ahmed and Harshi (2025) conceptualise drug abuse as the dangerous or damaging use of psychoactive substances, such as illegal drugs and alcohol. It regularly involves utilising a substance in unintended manners, resulting in health, psychological, or social detriment. National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) defines drug abuse as threat to the nation's health, safety, and economic well-being, with consequences that affect individuals, families, and communities (NIDA, 2020). Additionally, Ananya (2025) conceptualises drug abuse or substance abuse as the use of certain chemicals for the purpose of creating pleasurable effects on the brain. Drug abuse is harmful and often come with negative consequences to the abusers and society. Within the context of this study, drug abuse and substance are the same.

Youths: Youths refer to young people. In Nigeria, youth are young people between the ages of 15-35.

Nexus: This refers to link, connection or relationship between things or people. In the context of this study, it refers to relationship between variables such as drug abuse and youths.

Theoretical Framework

Strain Theory

This study is anchored on R. K. Merton's strain theory (1938). The theory is useful here. It argues that deviant behaviour may arise when socially approved goals are strongly emphasized but legitimate means of attaining them remain unequally distributed. Under such conditions, frustration may build. Some individuals respond by adopting behaviours that fall outside accepted social norms. In the context of this study, youths who face blocked opportunities, weak support systems, unemployment, and social pressure may resort to drug abuse as a form of escape or maladaptive adjustment. The theory therefore helps to explain why structural strain may be connected to substance abuse and related social outcomes in Benin Metropolis.

Empirical Review

Drug Abuse and Academic Performance

Ejodamen and Ogini (2021) examined the perceived effect of drug abuse on academic achievement among some secondary school students in Edo State in computer science, and related subjects. The study adopted descriptive survey and adequately made use of questionnaire. 6 schools gave permission to the researcher to use and a total of 304 responses were analysed. The findings of the study show that majority (97.4%) of students know about the effect of drug abuse on their health and academic performance.

Similarly, Okechukwu, (2017) examined the effects of substance/drug abuse on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Mkar metropolis, Gboko, Benue State. A sample size of 220 secondary school students was selected and administered questionnaires. Their findings revealed that 22.3% of the surveyed population abuse amphetamines like tramadol. The findings also showed that poor academic performance was one of the effects of substance/drug abuse on the students.

Drug Abuse and Crime

Okoru and Ellah (2024) examined the relationship between drug abuse and criminal behavioural pattern among youths in the Niger-Delta. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The study used correlational research design. The population of the study is 45,715,000 youths in the Niger Delta. The sample size for the study is 400 but 350 was used for analysis. Simple random sampling was used to select 4 Niger Delta States out of 9 Niger Delta States. Two self-developed questionnaire titled "Drug Abuse Questionnaire

(DAQ) and Criminal Behavioural Pattern among Youths Questionnaire (CBPYQ)” was used for the study. The questionnaire was validated by experts, and Cronbach method was used to determine reliability index 0.80 for (DAQ) and 0.71 for (CBPYO). Pearson’s Correlation was used to answer and test the research questions and hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings showed a significant positive relationship between the abuser of cannabis, the use of cocaine abuse of heroin and criminal behaviour patterns among youths in the Niger Delta. The study recommends that policy makers should ensure that law enforcement agencies and social services should cooperate to provide support and intervention for youths exhibiting signs of cannabis abuse; and this approach should include counselling and rehabilitation services, which should be accessible to youths at risk of developing criminal behaviour patterns as a result of cannabis use and many others. Similarly,

Ekpenyong and Alika (2024) findings of the impact of drug abuse in Uselu, Benin City, was linked increased involvement in criminal activities. They called for the provision of recreational facilities to reduce drug use among youths. Additionally, Adams and Wright (2023) study confirmed a significant nexus between heroin abuse and criminal behaviour among youths. The study also showed that the heroin abusers were more likely to engage in criminal activities, including theft and violent crimes, as a means to support their addiction.

Drug Abuse and Unemployment

Ayllon and Ferreira-Batisa (2018) investigated the change in the pattern of drug consumption and attitude towards youth unemployment among 28 European countries. The study discovered that drug abuse is positively related to increasing unemployment rates; that 1% increase in regional unemployment has a relationship with 0.7% increase in drug abuse; and that, higher unemployment among youth is caused by bad economy and negative perception of happiness.

Similarly, Wendy (2024) examined the link between drug addiction and unemployment. Wendy find that unemployment rate is significantly associated with substance use treatment admissions; that a unit increase in state unemployment rate was associated with 9% increase in treatment admission for opioids. Wendy compared its findings with similar study from Southeast Michigan and found that a lower household income was associated with marijuana use, and that, a decrease in economic resources was also linked with lower likelihood of initiating marijuana use. Wendy (2024) therefore, concluded that unemployment is a risk factor for substance use disorders.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design and employed a structured five-point Likert questionnaire for data collection. The approach was appropriate. The study population comprised youths resident in Benin Metropolis, namely Oredo, Egor, Ikpoba-Okha, and Ovia North-East Local Government Areas of Edo State, Nigeria. The total population was 657,500 (National Population Estimate, 2019), while a sample size of 400 was derived using the Taro Yamane formula. Simple random sampling was used to ensure that each member of the population had an equal chance of selection. Out of the 400 questionnaires administered, 381 were retrieved. Of these, 365 were considered valid for analysis. The hypotheses were tested using Spearman's rank correlation with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (ρ) measures the strength and direction of monotonic association between two variables. It does not, however, establish causation. In this study, the null hypotheses were tested at the 5 percent level of significance. The interpretation of each result therefore focuses on the direction, strength, and statistical significance of association between drug abuse and the selected socioeconomic outcomes.

Hypothesis One

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between drug abuse and academic performance among youths in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Test of hypothesis One

Variables	Spearman's rho	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Drug abuse and academic performance	-0.642	.001	Reject H ₀₁	Significant association

Source: Author's compilation from SPSS output.

The result shows a statistically significant negative association between drug abuse and academic performance (coefficient -0.642 with a p-value of .001). The association is fairly strong. This means that higher levels of drug abuse tend to occur alongside lower levels of academic performance among youths in Benin Metropolis. The coefficient (-0.642) does not imply percentage decrease or direct causation. It simply indicates the direction and strength of the relationship observed in the data. On the basis of the significant p-value, the null

hypothesis is rejected. The finding is consistent with the view that substance misuse is associated with poorer educational outcomes among young people. The finding is in line with the works of Ejodamen and Ogini (2021), and that of Okechukwu, (2017) that showed that poor academic performance was one of the effects of substance/drug abuse.

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between drug abuse and crime among youths in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Test of hypothesis Two

Variables	Spearman's rho	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Drug abuse and crime	-0.671	.001	Reject H02	Significant association

Source: Author's compilation from SPSS output.

The result indicates a statistically significant association between drug abuse and crime among youths in Benin Metropolis (Spearman's rho is -0.671 and the p-value is .001). Since the null hypothesis was rejected, it can be inferred that drug abuse is closely associated with criminal behaviour. The strength of the correlation is notable. It implies that higher involvement in drug abuse may heighten the tendency toward crime, social disorder, and deviant conduct. This result reinforces the view that drug abuse poses not only a health risk, but also a major social and security challenge. The finding agrees with the works of Okoru and Ellah (2024), and that of Adams and Wright (2023) whose study confirmed that there is a significant nexus between drugs abusers and crimes.

Hypothesis Three

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between drug abuse and unemployment among youths in Benin Metropolis, Edo State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Test of hypothesis Three

Variables	Spearman's rho	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Drug abuse and unemployment	-0.521	.001	Reject H03	Significant association

Source: Author's compilation from SPSS output.

The result shows a statistically significant association between drug abuse and unemployment among youths in the study area (Spearman's rho of -0.521 with a p-value of .001). The null hypothesis H03 was therefore rejected. The implication is clear. Drug abuse significantly associated with youths' employability and labour market outcomes. To a considerable extent,

increased drug abuse may reduce work readiness, productivity, skill acquisition, and job retention. This finding points to the broader socioeconomic cost of substance abuse, especially in a context where youth unemployment is already a pressing development concern. The finding agrees with the works of (Ayllon and Ferreira-Batista (2018), and that of Wendy (2024) that believes that unemployment is a risk factor for drug abuse.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study adds to the literature on youth drug abuse in Nigeria by showing that drug abuse is significantly associated with three important outcomes in Benin Metropolis: academic performance, crime, and unemployment. That contribution is clear. The study matters because it moves the discussion beyond general concern about substance misuse and provides empirical evidence on the social domains through which the problem affects young people in an urban Nigerian setting. The findings imply that drug abuse is not merely a personal health issue. It is also an educational, economic, and social development concern. Addressing it therefore requires coordinated responses that combine prevention, counselling, public education, and youth empowerment.

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

- a. Educational institutions in Benin Metropolis should strengthen school-based counselling, early screening, and orientation programmes aimed at reducing drug abuse and protecting students' academic performance. These interventions should be practical. They should begin early and be sustained throughout the period of study.
- b. Government and relevant agencies, including the National Orientation Agency and drug control institutions, should sustain public awareness campaigns that emphasize the connection between drug abuse and crime. The message should be clear. Such campaigns should be community-based, youth-sensitive, and consistent enough to influence behaviour over time.
- c. Youth-focused employment and skills-development programmes should be expanded in order to reduce idleness, improve employability, and address the socioeconomic conditions that may heighten vulnerability to drug abuse. Jobs matter. Productive engagement can serve as both prevention and social protection for young people in the study area.

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