



PERCEIVED HEALTH EFFECTS OF DRUG ABUSE AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN SELECTED SLUM AREAS OF YENAGOA IN BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Drug abuse among youths in slum communities represents a growing public health concern in Nigeria, particularly in rapidly urbanizing areas such as Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. This study assessed the perceived health effects of drug abuse among young adults in selected slum areas of Yenagoa. An analytical cross-sectional research design was adopted, and data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to 424 young adults aged 18-35 years selected through purposive sampling. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, while Chi-square test was used to test the study hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05. The findings revealed respondents demonstrated high awareness of psychological effects such as anxiety (mean = 4.94), mood disorders (mean = 4.02), and concentration problems (mean = 4.14). Similarly, strong agreement was observed regarding social effects, including crime involvement (mean = 4.82) and social isolation (mean = 4.03), as well as physical health effects such as chronic diseases (mean = 4.82) and increased susceptibility to infectious diseases (mean = 4.80). The study concludes that drug abuse among youths in Yenagoa slums is highly prevalent despite strong awareness of its harmful consequences. The findings highlight the need for comprehensive interventions integrating health education, and accessible rehabilitation services to reduce substance abuse among vulnerable youths.

KEYWORDS: Drug abuse, Health effects, Slum, Young Adults.

INTRODUCTION

The impacts of youth drug abuse in the slums of Yenagoa are complex and widespread. Regarding health, long-term substance use is linked to mental illnesses like depression, anxiety, psychosis and a decline in cognitive impairment (Sullivan, 2022). Physiologically, drug abuse leads to liver damage, cardiovascular complications, reduced immunity and accidental overdoses (Chukwuka et al., 2022). Socially, substance abuse is connected to higher crime, cult-related activities, sexual violence, prostitution, school dropout, domestic abuse and the breakdown of family relationships (Ernest et al., 2025).

Many slum areas frequently experience youth violence, armed robberies and fights between rival cult gangs (Badom and Ndeue, 2023). These activities are often driven by the effects of drug abuse. These events do more than just cause psychological trauma to residents; they also reinforce a destructive loop of poverty, insecurity and underdevelopment.

Making the situation worse is the scarcity and poor access to effective prevention and treatment services (Hung, 2024). Although some non-medical programs exist in Yenagoa like community awareness campaigns,

church counseling, peer education, school outreach and some government initiatives, many of these efforts are disconnected, inconsistent, poorly funded and failure to tackle the root social, economic and environmental causes of drug abuse. The stigma linked to drug addiction also stops many young people from seeking help. This results in unaddressed issues that become worse over time. Additionally, the lack of organized rehab centers within the slums themselves leaves affected people with two poor choices: go without treatment or travel far to get help, a trip many lack the resources to do.

Even though the problem is severe, there is a major lack of specific research on drug abuse in the slums of Yenagoa. Most existing studies on Nigerian substance use take a broad, general view, overlooking the unique social, economic, cultural and environmental conditions of these informal communities. Slum areas have specific risk factors, including overcrowding, weak community control, less parental supervision because parents are working, high exposure to criminal cultures and little government support. Without local data that reflects these specific details, policy solutions are often ineffective, too general, or impossible to maintain.

This research is therefore vital for filling this information void. Its first goal is to measure how common substance abuse is among young adults living specifically in the slums of Yenagoa. This will provide crucial initial data needed for creating focused intervention programs. Secondly, the research aims to identify the social, economic and environmental factors that lead to drug use among these young people. These factors could include joblessness, poverty, family breakdown, peer pressure, level of education, exposure to violence, cultural perceptions on drugs and accessibility of substances. Thirdly, the research plans to assess how effective existing non-clinical prevention services are working to reduce drug abuse. These services include community sensitization programs, youth empowerment initiatives, anti-cultism campaigns and local watch groups. Lastly, the research seeks to generate professional recommendations and policy proposals that are evidence-based, culturally appropriate and sustainable.

Drug abuse among youths in the slum areas of Yenagoa is increasing, yet the true extent of the problem remains unknown. Many young people in these communities face poverty, unemployment and easy access to drugs, but the specific factors driving their substance use have not been clearly identified. Existing non-clinical prevention programs are present, but their effectiveness is unclear and largely unassessed. Without reliable data on the impact of current interventions, efforts to control drug abuse in these slum areas remain inadequate. Hence, this study. The study provided answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the perceived psychological/mental health effects of drug abuse among young adults in Yenagoa?
2. What are the perceived social health effects of drug abuse among young adults in Yenagoa?
3. What are the perceived physical health effects of drug abuse among young adults in Yenagoa?

METHODOLOGY

The methods used for the study were discussed below:

Area of the Study: The study area is the slum areas in Yenagoa. Yenagoa is located at the North-Eastern portion of Bayelsa State at the confluence of the Epie and Ekole creeks, the latter being a major tributary of Nun River.

Research Design: The research design adopted in this study is an analytical cross-sectional study. This research design was adopted because it allows for the collection and analysis of data from a given population (young adults) at a particular point in time and reporting the situation as it without manipulating any variable, which is the main focus of this study.

Target Population: The target population was estimated to be of 11,235 young adults in Yenagoa slum areas.

Sample and Sampling Techniques: The sample size for this study is 424; which was determined using the Cochran formula for calculating sample size: $n = z^2 pq / e^2$. Where, n = Cochran's sample size, e = desired level of precision (margin of error) which is 0.05, p = estimated (proportion) of the population who had abused drug, q = estimated (proportion) of the population who had not abuse drug, and z = z value for 95% confidence level which is 1.96. Since the exact proportion of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa who abuse substance is not known, p was taken to be 50%, which is 0.5 while $q = 1 - p = 0.5$. Adding 10% non-compliance rate, that is, $38 + 384 = 424$. The purposive sampling technique was adopted.

Instrument for Data Collection: The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled: 'Substance Abuse Questionnaire' (SAQ). The instrument has a reliability index of 0.71 which certify the instrument reliable for use.

Methods of Data Collection: The administration of the instrument was done by a face-to-face delivery of the questionnaire to the participants. The respondents were encouraged to ask question on items that they do not understand in the instrument. No respondents was forced as they were given options either to accept or decline participation. The questionnaire administered were retrieved after they were completely filled.

Method of Data Analysis: The collected data was analyzed using a combination of frequency tables, percentage calculations and mean score analyses to summarize and interpret the information. Additionally, a

nonparametric statistical test, specifically the Chi-square test, was employed to test the formulated hypotheses. This analysis was conducted using R statistical software (R Development Core Team).

Ethical Consideration: Rights and confidentiality of subjects as regards personal data will be maintained and respondents will not be forced to participate. The written consent of the respondents will be sought before being included as study participants. A good rapport will be established and maintained with respondents in order to facilitate their willingness and readiness to participate in the research work. Also, ethical approval to conduct the study will be obtained from the ethical committee of the institution.

RESULTS

The results of the study were presented below:

The perception of the psychological health effects

Some psychological health effects were studied and from Table 1 most respondents (94.13%) believed that most

people who use substances experience anxiety and a mean value of 4.94 indicate that the respondents strongly agree to this. Most respondents (84.65%) believed that most people who use substances have mood disorders and a mean value of 4.02 indicate that the respondents agree to this. Most respondents (93.91%) believed that most people who use substances experience conduct disorder and a mean value of 4.03 indicate that the respondents agree to this. Again, most respondents (93.91%) who use substances have issue concentrating and a mean value of 4.14 indicate that the respondents agree to this. Lastly, most respondents (84.88%) who use substances are hyperactive and a mean value of 4.05 indicate that the respondents agree to this. An overall mean of 4.24 means the respondents agree that there are psychological effects of drug abuse.

Table 1: Perception of Psychological Health Effects.

Variables	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	SD
People who use substances experience anxiety	417(94.13%)	26(5.86%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.94	0.05
People who use substances have mood disorders	67(15.1%)	375(84.65%)	1(0.23%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.02	0.02
People who use substances experience conduct disorder	9(2.03%)	433(97.74%)	1(0.23%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.03	0.06
People who use substances have issue concentrating	20(4.51%)	416(93.91%)	7(1.58%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.14	0.13
People who use substances are hyperactive	65(14.67%)	376(84.88%)	2(0.45%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.05	0.05
Overall mean						4.24	

The perception of the social health effects

Some social health effects were studied and from Table 2 most respondents (94.36%) believed that people who abuse substances have multiple sexual partners and a mean value of 4.05 indicate that the respondents agree to this. Most respondents (79.0%) believed that most people who abuse substances have sex earlier in life and a mean value of 4.19 indicate that the respondents agree to this. Most respondents (95.03%) believed that most students who abuse substance have weak family relationship and a mean value of 4.04 indicate that the respondents agree to this. Again, most respondents (83.75%) think that students who abuse substance are vulnerable to abusive relationships and a mean value of 4.14 indicate that the respondents agree to this. Most respondents (83.07%) think that substance make students to commit crime and a mean value of 4.82 indicate that the respondents strongly agree to this. Most respondents (93.91%) think

that substances make students to misbehave in school and a mean value of 4.04 indicate that the respondents strongly agree to this. Most respondents (95.26%) think that substance abuse can lead to isolation from the society and a mean value of 4.03 indicate that the respondents strongly agree to this. Lastly, most respondents (92.33%) think that students who abuse substance find it difficult raising a family and a mean value of 4.08 indicate that the respondents agree to this. An overall mean of 4.17 means the respondents agree that there are social effects of drug abuse.

Table 2: Perception of Social Health Effects.

Variables	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	SD
People who abuse substances have multiple sexual partners	23(5.19%)	418(94.36%)	2(0.45%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.05	0.05
People who abuse substances have sex earlier in life	89(20.09%)	350(79.0%)	4(0.9%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.19	0.17
Students who abuse substance have weak family relationship	19(4.29%)	421(95.03%)	3(0.68%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.04	0.04
Students who abuse substance are vulnerable to abusive relationships	68(15.35%)	371(83.75%)	7(1.58%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.14	0.14
Substance make students to commit crime	368(83.07%)	72(16.25%)	3(0.68%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.82	0.16
Substances make students to misbehave in school	23(5.19%)	416(93.91%)	4(0.9%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.04	0.06
Substance abuse can lead to isolation from the society	18(4.06%)	422(95.26%)	3(0.68%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.03	0.05
Students who abuse substance find it difficult raising a family.	34(7.67%)	409(92.33%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.08	0.07
Overall mean						4.17	

The perception of the physical health effects

Some physical health effects were studied and from Table 3 most respondents (84.42%) believed that substance abuse is linked with unwanted pregnancy and a mean value of 4.15 indicate that the respondents agree to this. Most respondents (82.62%) believed that substance abuse is linked with obstetric complications and a mean value of 4.16 indicate that the respondents agree to this. Most respondents (82.17%) believed that substance abuse causes chronic disease conditions like cardiovascular or respiratory issues and a mean value of 4.82 indicate that the respondents strongly agree to this. Most respondents (82.1%) believed that substance abuse causes chronic disease conditions like cardiovascular or respiratory issues and a mean value of 4.82 indicate that the respondents strongly agree to this.

Again, most respondents (83.33%) think that substance abuse can lead to malnutrition and a mean value of 4.16 indicate that the respondents agree to this. Most respondents (83.52%) think that substance make students to commit crime and a mean value of 4.82 indicate that the respondents strongly agree to this. Lastly, most respondents (80.36%) think that Substance abuse can increase susceptibility to infectious diseases like tuberculosis, hepatitis and HIV/AIDS and a mean value of 4.80 indicate that the respondents agree to this. An overall mean of 4.48 means the respondents strongly agree that there are physical effects of drug abuse.

Table 3: Perception of Physical Health Effects.

Variables	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	SD
Substance abuse is linked with unwanted pregnancy	68(15.35%)	374(84.42%)	1(0.23%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.15	0.13
Substance abuse is linked with obstetric complications	75(16.93%)	366(82.62%)	2(0.45%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.16	0.14
Substance abuse causes chronic disease conditions like cardiovascular or respiratory issues.	364(82.17%)	78(17.61%)	1(0.23%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.82	0.15
Substance abuse can lead to malnutrition	73(16.48%)	369(83.3%)	1(0.23%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.16	0.14
Substance abuse can lead to drug overdose	370(83.52%)	68(15.35%)	5(1.13%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.82	0.14
Substance abuse can increase susceptibility to infectious diseases like tuberculosis, hepatitis and HIV/AIDS.	356(80.36%)	85(19.19%)	2(0.45%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.80	0.16
Overall mean						4.48	

Test of Hypotheses**Table 4: Chi-Square Test of Psychological Effects by Gender.**

Variables	Chi square value	Degree of freedom	P value	Remarks
People who use substances experience anxiety	0.002	1	0.961	No significant relationship
People who use substances have mood disorders	0.633	2	0.729	No significant relationship
People who use substances experience conduct disorder	0.188	2	0.91	No significant relationship
People who use substances have issue concentrating	0.529	2	0.768	No significant relationship
People who use substances are hyperactive	27.27	2	0.000	Significant relationship

Table 4 shows the Chi square test results of general perception of psychological effects among the different gender of young adults. A p-value of 0.961 implies that there is no statistically significant relationship in the general perception that people who use substances experience anxiety and the gender of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa. A p-value of 0.729 implies that there is no statistically significant relationship in the general perception that people who use substances have mood disorders and the gender of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa. A p-value of 0.91 implies that there is no statistically significant relationship in the

general perception that people who use substances experience conduct disorder and the gender of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa. A p-value of 0.768 implies that there is no statistically significant relationship in the general perception that people who use substances have issue concentrating and the gender of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa. A p-value of 0.000 implies that there is statistically significant relationship in the general perception that people who use substances are hyperactive and the gender of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa.

Table 5: Chi-Square Test of Social Effects by Gender.

Variables	Chi square value	Degree of freedom	P value	Remarks
People who abuse substances have multiple sexual partners	0.487	2	0.784	No Significant relationship
People who abuse substances have sex earlier in life	12.514	2	0.002	Significant relationship
Students who abuse substance have weak family relationship	1.385	2	0.5004	No significant relationship
Students who abuse substance are vulnerable to abusive relationships	12.253	2	0.002	Significant relationship
Substance make students to commit crime	0.145	2	0.93	No Significant relationship
Substances make students to misbehave in school	12.594	2	0.002	Significant relationship
Substance abuse can lead to isolation from the society	0.405	2	0.817	No Significant relationship
Students who abuse substance find it difficult raising a family.	0.023	1	0.8786	No Significant relationship

Table 5 shows the Chi square test results of general perception of social effects among the different gender of young adults. A p-value of 0.784 implies that there is no statistically significant relationship in the general perception that people who abuse substances have multiple sexual partners and the gender of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa. A p-value of 0.002 implies that there is statistically significant relationship in the general perception that people who abuse substances have sex earlier in life and the gender of young adults in

the slum areas of Yenagoa. A p-value of 0.5004 implies that there is no statistically significant relationship in the general perception that Students who abuse substance have weak family relationship and the gender of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa. A p-value of 0.002 implies that there is statistically significant relationship in the general perception that students who abuse substance are vulnerable to abusive relationships and the gender of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa. A p-value of 0.93 implies that there is no statistically

significant relationship in the general perception that substance make students to commit crime and the gender of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa. A p-value of 0.002 implies that there is statistically significant relationship in the general perception that substances make students to misbehave in school and the gender of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa. A p-value of 0.817 implies that there is no statistically significant

relationship in the general perception that substance abuse can lead to isolation from the society and the gender of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa. A p-value of 0.8786 implies that there is no statistically significant relationship in the general perception that students who abuse substance find it difficult raising a family and the gender of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa.

Table 6: Chi-Square Test of Physical Effects by Gender.

Variables	Chi square value	Degree of freedom	P-value	Remarks
Substance abuse is linked with unwanted pregnancy	1.991	2	0.30	No Significant relationship
Substance abuse is linked with obstetric complications	0.407	2	0.812	No Significant relationship
Substance abuse causes chronic disease conditions like cardiovascular or respiratory issues.	0.167	2	0.92	No Significant relationship
Substance abuse can lead to malnutrition	0.114	2	0.945	No Significant relationship
Substance abuse can lead to drug overdose	0.151	2	0.928	No Significant relationship
Substance abuse can increase susceptibility to infectious diseases like tuberculosis, hepatitis and HIV/AIDS.	1.991	2	0.37	No Significant relationship

Table 6 shows the Chi square test results of general perception of physical effects among the different gender of young adults. A p-value of 0.37 implies that there is no statistically significant relationship in the general perception that substance abuse is linked with unwanted pregnancy and the gender of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa. A p-value of 0.812 implies that there is no statistically significant relationship in the general perception that substance abuse is linked with obstetric complications and the gender of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa. A p-value of 0.92 implies that there is no statistically significant relationship in the general perception that substance abuse causes chronic disease conditions like cardiovascular or respiratory issues. and the gender of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa. A p-value of 0.945 implies that there is no statistically significant relationship in the general perception that Substance abuse can lead to malnutrition and the gender of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa. A p-value of 0.928 implies that there is no statistically significant relationship in the general perception that Substance abuse can lead to drug overdose and the gender of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa. A p-value of 0.37 implies that there is no statistically significant relationship in the general perception that Substance abuse can increase susceptibility to infectious diseases like tuberculosis, hepatitis and HIV/AIDS and the gender of young adults in the slum areas of Yenagoa.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study were discussed below:

Despite the high prevalence of misuse, respondents demonstrated strong awareness of the psychological consequences of drug abuse. High agreement levels were observed for anxiety, mood disorders, conduct disorder, concentration problems and hyperactivity. This indicates that participants recognize the mental health implications of substance use. Such findings are consistent with research demonstrating that awareness of psychological harm is relatively high among young populations (Clayton et al., 2023). However, awareness alone does not necessarily deter behaviour. Health belief models suggest that even when individuals perceive risks, behaviour persists if perceived benefits outweigh perceived threats (Gwenhure, 2025). In this study, the coexistence of high awareness and high prevalence suggests a disconnect between knowledge and behavioural control.

The perception of social health effects was similarly pronounced. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that substance abuse contributes to early sexual activity, multiple sexual partnerships, family instability, vulnerability to abusive relationships, crime involvement and social isolation. The particularly strong agreement regarding crime reflects the widely documented association between substance misuse and criminal behaviour (Blaauw, 2025). In slum settings characterized by unemployment and limited law enforcement presence, drug-related activities may become intertwined with survival strategies (Miriam, 2025). Social

disorganization theory posits that weakened community structures and informal social controls increase the likelihood of deviant behaviours, including drug misuse (Opoku-Ware et al., 2022). The findings therefore support broader sociological explanations linking environmental instability to substance abuse patterns.

The physical health implications identified in this study further underscore the seriousness of the issue. Respondents strongly agreed that drug abuse leads to chronic diseases, drug overdose, malnutrition, obstetric complications and increased susceptibility to infectious diseases. These perceptions align with biomedical evidence linking substance misuse to cardiovascular disorders, liver disease, compromised immunity and heightened vulnerability to communicable infections (Hamler et al., 2024). The significant association between age and perception of certain physical consequences suggests that older respondents may possess greater experiential or observational knowledge of long-term health outcomes. Similarly, the association between educational level and perception of infectious disease risk suggests that education enhances health literacy, consistent with previous research (Jung & Song, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that drug abuse is associated with significant mental health challenges, social instability and serious physical health risks, including chronic diseases and susceptibility to infectious illnesses. Despite recognition of these harmful effects, permissive attitudes and environmental influences such as peer pressure and accessibility of drugs continue to sustain substance misuse.

Recommendations

To effectively address drug abuse among youths in the slum areas of Yenagoa, there is a need accessible and affordable counselling and rehabilitation services to be established within or near slum communities to promote early intervention. Additionally, community leaders and religious institutions should be actively engaged in prevention efforts, while stricter regulation and monitoring of controlled substances, particularly tramadol, should be enforced to reduce accessibility. A coordinated, multi-sectoral approach is essential for sustainable impact.

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