

PREVALANCE AND PATTERN OF SUBSTANCE USE AMONG YOUTH IN BAUCHI NORTHEAST, NIGERIA: A COMMUNITY-BASED CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDYAbubakar Musa,¹ Usman Abba,² Micheal Kamata Yakubu,³ Muhammad Umar Ibrahim.⁴¹Department of Community Medicine, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University/Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Teaching Hospital, Bauchi – Nigeria²Yobe state University Damaturu, Yobe State - Nigeria³Bauchi State Primary Health Care Board, Bauchi State-Nigeria⁴Department of Community Medicine Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Teaching Hospital, Bauchi – Nigeria**Corresponding Author:** Dr. Abubakar Musa**Received:** 03-Oct-2025**Accepted:** 19-Dec-2025**Published:** 31-Dec-2025**Abstract****Background:** Substance use remains a significant public health concern with widespread social, psychological, and economic consequences.**Aim and objectives:** This study aimed to assess the prevalence and pattern of substance use among residents of Dan Amar B community in Bauchi Local Government Area, Bauchi State.**Methods:** A community-based descriptive cross-sectional study design was used. The study population comprised 384 youths, systematic sampling was employed and data were collected using pre- tested semi- structured questionnaire and SPSS version 21.0 was used for data analysis.**Results:** The aged range of the respondents is 15-34 years; the prevalence of substance abuse was 75% among the surveyed youths. Cannabis 28%, tobacco 47%, solvents 11%, sedatives 10% and alcohol 4% were using substances by single users and multiple users. Peer group influence, improved work performance, sex enhancement and attempts to deal with stress were the factors that contributed to substance abuse.**Conclusion:** There is a need to create and sustain awareness on substance use among youth and its consequences in the community.**Keywords:** Prevalence, pattern, substance use, youth, Bauchi.**Cite this article:** Musa A, Abba U, Yakubu MK, Ibrahim MU. Prevalance and pattern of substance use among youth in bauchi northeast, Nigeria: A community-based cross-sectional study. Yob Med J.2025;1(3):19-27

Introduction

Background

Drug and/or substance use has become a global issue, affecting almost every country, town and community. Though the extent and characteristics vary depending on the country or area. It has been estimated that more than 200 million people in all segments of the societies use substance all over the world.¹ This figure is growing by every day due to modern methods of transport and communications that has facilitate the dissemination of substance use. The increase in number of people travelling as compared to the past is also a contributing factor to the increase incidence of substance use globally. A study estimated that the number of substance users among youths in Africa is between 22 and 72 million people with a prevalence rate of 3.8 percent and 12.5 percent while youths in West Africa age 15 and above years is 12.4 percent who had used cannabis. Compared with 4.2 percent and 5.4 percent in East and South Africa respectively.²

A study reported that the prevalence of Nigerian youths who engaged in substance use is about 40% with the South East and some parts of the South West having significant prevalence of substance or drug trafficking as a result of lack of awareness of the general population, especially on the inherent dangers of substance/drug use.³ Previous study in Bauchi town, revealed that substance use among youth 21-25 years was up to 40% many have in one way or the other been on psychoactive substances like marijuana and narcotics which has negative effect following repeated use, and weighing much on individual user, the family, friends and the society at large.⁴

The most commonly used and used substances are alcohol, cannabis and solvents. Drug or substance use and other related problems are becoming more and

more a public health concern. In the Nigerian content cannabis is known by various names, including “pot,” “igbo,” “wee-wee,” “marijuana,” “Ganja,” and “Morocco.” The active ingredient in all these is tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).⁵ It is therefore necessary that the right steps should be taken to stop the prevalence and root causes of substance abuse in Bauchi in particular, and in the Nigerian society at large.

Drug/substance abuse is the use of any substance to alter the state of the body or mind for purposes other than medically warranted. Drug use usually stems from the aspiration to enhance mental, physical, or social performance, often driven by the inordinate desire to excel and to get self-satisfaction.⁶ A study Posits drug abuse as any substance other than a good which alters the body's function.⁷ On the other hand, drugs are chemical substances which interacts with our body system to modify the physiological and biological processes of the body.⁸

Moreover, groups study on drug use. It is reported that people are most likely to begin using drugs when they reach young adulthood. Almost 70% of the students of higher learning have taken alcohol, half of them have taken illegal drugs, about 40% have smoked cigarettes and more than 20% use a prescription drug for non-medical purposes.⁹ Some of the reasons youths abuse these substances includes the desire for new experiences, to perform better in school, attempting to deal with problems and simple peer group influence. Other factors includes; the availability of drugs within neighbourhood community, school and family environment which in turn increases the likelihood for adolescent youths to become addicted.¹⁰

Youths are “biologically” wired to seek new experiences and take risks, as well as to carve out their-own identity. Trying drugs may fulfil all normal developmental derives

but in an unhealthy way that may have—a serious long-term consequences.¹¹

Youths sometimes inherit genetic vulnerability and personality traits like poor impulse control or a high need for excitement to predispose mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and beliefs that such drugs are “cool” or harmless, which makes it more likely for them to become drug abusers.¹²

Drug use, therefore, can develop into addiction (drug addict) and other substance use behaviour like unsafe sex, and reckless driving in the individual and community leading to intoxicated and violence. It can also cause serious social and health risks like school failure, loss of interest in other healthy activities, impaired memory, increased risk of infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, via risky sexual behaviour or sharing of contaminated instruments and injection equipment. Others include problems with family and other relations, psychological disorders and may result in high morbidity and mortality rates among youths.¹³

Substance use/misuse are the major serious issues of public health important that contributed to significant medical, psychological and legal consequences later in life. Though it can be challenging to prevent and treat substance misuse among youths, scientists have discovered some strategies that are effective among the high-risk population.¹⁴

Substance use as it includes helpful medicine elements which bring cure to illness, but today not all youths in the communities adhered or restricted to what the drug is made for. Substance use among our youths has reached an alarming dimension, it has continued to cause serious problem to the youths and the society at large. If care is not taken about them other disastrous complications may arise from the widespread practice of self-medication and reckless misuse of substances which may lead to an alarming deterioration of virtually all human diseases including

psychological syndrome which need expert treatment and long-term rehabilitative management.

Substance use by youths in Dan Amar B community is not different from other countries /societies, but it varies according to proximity, accessibility, availability and affordability of the substances used. As a result, many of the youths have become HIV positive, developed liver diseases, drop out of school and have found themselves in activities like stealing, raping of girls and women, fighting with dangerous weapons and even committing suicide. It has reached a point where they neither fear nor have respected for parents and elders in the communities. One can see them grouping themselves in broad day-light (In the cause of the act of terrorism), and after they become intoxicated, they walk around angrily” like a hungry lion looking for souls to devour”.

This study aims to investigate the prevalence and pattern of substance or drugs use and its implications to the youths (users), family and the society at large so as to bridge the existing gap of knowledge about the menace of substance abuse in Dan Amar B ward in Bauchi LGA, Bauchi State.

Methodology

Study area

The area of study is Dan Amar B community, which has a total population of 100594 with 22131 (22%) of the youth (15-35) years and is located in the southern part of Bauchi Metropolis in Bauchi Local Government Area of Bauchi State, it shared boundaries with Dan Amar A, Dan’iya, Tirwun and Makama B in the north, south, east and west respectively. The popular settlements that form the Dan Amar B communities includes: Bakaro, Kandahar, Karofin Madaki, Unguwar Bauchi, Unguwar Shagari and Unguwar Mahaukata among few others.

The major tribes in the area are Hausa and Fulani, and practice Islam as their major

religion and observe festivities like Sallah and hawan dubar, which promote unity and social interactions, especially among the youth. The majority of people in the area are self-reliant as they mainly depend on business and farming to earn a living.

Study design

A community-based descriptive cross-sectional study was employed.

Study Population

The target population were youths 15-35 years who were residing in the study area for at least six months and used one form of drug or the other, were included, and those who were too sick or mentally incapacitated were excluded.

Sample size determination

The sample size of this study was determined using Leslie Fischer's formula:

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{d^2}$$

Where n = minimum sample size, z = percentage point of the standard normal distribution curve, which defines a 95% confidence interval, p = prevalence of substance use from the previous study was 52%, q = complimentary probability = $(1-p)$ = $1-0.52=0.48$ and d = degree of precision = 0.05. Therefore, the minimum sample size was = 384

Sampling technique

A systematic random sampling technique was employed. The list of eligible youths in Dan Amar B obtained, the sampling interval was $2763/384 = 7$, the first respondent was selected randomly using simple random sampling by balloting and every k th person on the list was selected until the desired sample size was exhausted.

Data collection method

A pre-tested semi-structured, interviewer-administered adapted questionnaire was used. Trained research assistants collected the data over two weeks. Respondents were interviewed in a private area to ensure confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Data were entered into an Excel spread sheet, checked for errors and analysed using SPSS version 21.0, frequencies, percentages, and charts were used for descriptive statistics.

Ethical consideration

Ethical approval was obtained from the Bauchi State Ministry of Health Research Ethics Committee, and permission was secured from the village head of Dan Amar B, Bauchi and all principles governing the research and Helsinki declaration were observed.

Results

Table 1: Demographic information of the respondents

Variables	Frequency (n=384)	Percentage (%)
Age		
15-19	85	22.5
20-24	123	32
25-29	105	27.5
30-34	71	18
Sex		
Male	290	75.5
Female	94	24.5
Educational Level		
Primary	96	25.0
Secondary	98	25.5
Tertiary	19	5.0
Illiterates	171	44.5
Marital status		
Single	106	27.6
Married	138	35.9
Divorce	115	30.0
Widow	25	6.5

The table above shows that the majority of the respondents, both single and multiple substance users, were between the ages of 20-24 years, 123 (32%) and 25-29 years, 105 (27%), respectively. Respondents between the ages of 15-19 years form 85 (22%) of the total respondents, while those between the ages of 30-34 years were the minority, comprising 71 (19%) of the respondents. The table also shows that 290 (75.5%) of the respondents were males, while 94 (24.5%) were females. And in respect of the educational level 96 (25.0%) of the respondents attended primary school, 98 (25.5%) attended secondary, 19 (5%) attended tertiary institutions, while 171 (44.5%) of the respondents were illiterate.

The data also indicate that youths in Dan Amar B communities abuse both single substances irrespective of age, gender or educational level.

Prevalence of substance use among youth

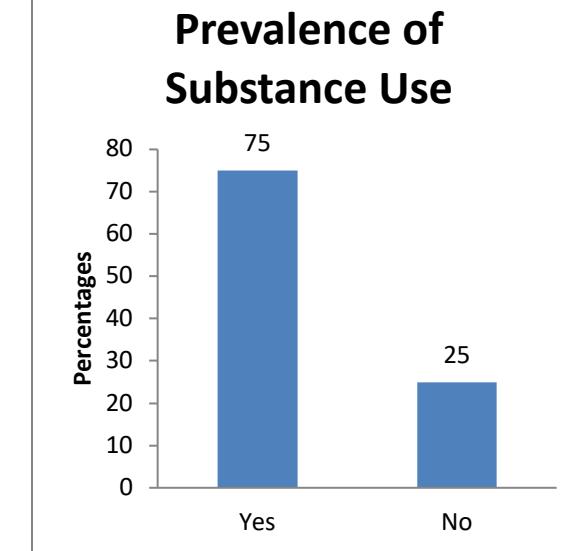


Figure 1: Prevalence of substance use among youth

The figure above shows the prevalence of substance use among youth was 75%

Table 2: Substance use among youth

Variables	Frequency (n=384)	Percentage (%)
Ever used a substance for a non-medical reason		
Yes	288	75
No	96	25
Use more than one substance at a time		
Yes	284	74
No	100	26
Frequency of substance use		
Daily	184	65
Weekly	70	25
monthly	20	7
occasionally	10	4
At what age do you first start using substances		
Less than 15years	70	25
15-19	75	26
20-24	64	26
25years and above		23

Table 2, above, shows that majority of the

respondents 288 (75%) have used substances at one time or another, with a still higher number, 284 (24%), still currently on the act. An equal number of the respondents 75 (52%) of the ages 15-19 and 20-24, started using substances for the time respectively. Some started before the age of 15 years while others were 25 years and above. The data also reveals that some of the youth use these substances weekly, monthly and occasionally, while significant numbers, 284 (64%), were reported to use the substance regularly which pointed that substance abuse is a regular habit among youth in Dan Amar B communities.

Table 3: Types of substance commonly used by youth

Variables	Frequency (n = 384)	Percentage (%)
Cannabis(marijuana, wee-wee)	106	28
Alcohol	15	4
Tobacco (cigarette)	182	47
Solvent	43	11
Sedatives	38	10

The table above shows that the majority of the respondents, 182(47%) agreed that tobacco is the most common substance used by the youth in Dan Amar B community followed by Cannabis with 106 (28%), Solvents 43(11%), Sedatives 38 (10%) while Alcohol has the least percentage of 15 (4%)

Table 4: Reasons for youth involvement in substance use

Variables	Frequency (n=384)	Percentage (%)
Curiosity about the substance	60	16
Peer group influence	108	28
To deal with stress	39	10
To improve work performance	48	13
Self-medication	39	10
Sexual enhancement	30	8
Family background	25	7
Social media influence	20	5
Others (specify)	15	4
Risk factors for substance use		
Genetic factor	74	19
Mental illness	45	12
Trauma	55	14
Environmental factor	85	22
Peer pressure	105	27
Others;(e.g divorce, frequent argument at home)	20	5
Effects of substance use on the individual		
family and society	65	17
Neglect family	80	21
Turn to theft	84	22
Violent behaviour	45	12
Prostitution	50	13
Contact diseases like HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, etc	40	10
Others (e.g school withdrawal, feeling guilty)	20	5
Awareness about the dangers associated with substance use		
Yes	180	47
No	204	53
Willingness to quit use of substance		
Yes	166	43
No	218	57
Able to quit abuse of substance		
Yes	109	28
No	275	72

Table 4 above shows that peer group influence, curiosity about the substance, and improved work performance were the major reasons for substance use among youth in Dan Amar B Communities, with a responses of 108(28%), 60 (16%) and 48 (13%), respectively. Other reasons include stress and self-medication 39 (10% each). Sex enhancement 30 (8%), while a few respondents agreed that family history of substance use, social media are reasons for substance use and high-risk groups include: peer pressure, which still recorded the highest 105 (27%), followed by environment 85 (22%) and genetic 85 (12%). Other factors include mental illness, trauma, divorce, frequent family arguments, etc.

In the area of issues experienced by individuals, families and or society in relation to substance use, violent behaviour forms the highest percentage of 84 (22%) followed by turning to theft 80 (21%), neglect of family 65(17%). Acquisition of disease (like HIV/AIDS) has 50 (13%), prostitution 45 (12%), while others, like school withdrawal, have the least percentage.

The data further revealed that more than half of the respondents, 288 (75%), are unwilling to stop the use of substance. Also, a significant number, 204 (53%) reported lacking knowledge on dangers (complications) of substance use, which calls for a more intensive educational campaign.

Discussion

The study was aimed at finding the prevalence and pattern of substance use among youths in Dan Amar B communities in Bauchi Local Government Area, Bauchi State. The respondents were youth between the ages of 15-34 years who are more likely to be involved in risky behaviours like use of substances and other forms of negative behaviours. This is consistent with similar studies conducted in urban and semi-urban areas in Nigeria. For instance, Sambo reported a prevalence of 41.2% among urban school adolescents in Lagos¹ while

Muhammad found a 37% prevalence among youth in Sokoto metropolis.² Based on gender classification, the majority of the respondents, 290 (76%), were male, while 94 (24%) were female, and the male gender were found to use substances almost thrice the female opponent which the finding support earlier research. For example, Atoyebi and Atoyebi reported males were more likely to engage in substance use due to societal expectations and risk-taking behaviour. Similarly, Lawal reported that unemployment and peer pressure were strong predictors of drug use among students in Kano.⁶ In education aspect the data reveals that majority of the respondents 171 (46%) were illiterate, followed by secondary with 98 (26%), primary 96 (25%) and only 19 (5%) attended tertiary education which shows that the high level of illiteracy/low level of education of the youth is a contributory factor for use of substance this finding seem to clear the misconception by National Traditional institute on substance use that once reported that majority of youth between the ages of 15-34 years in higher institute of learning use substances such as alcohol (70%) and cigarette (40%).

The prevalence of substance use in Dan Amar B communities is not different from other societies or communities. However, the degree may vary depending on several factors. The analysed data reveals that the prevalence rate of substance use among youths in Dan Amar B communities in Bauchi Local Government Area, Bauchi State, is 75% which is a bit higher compared to other communities. However, this is not a surprise due to a high level of illiteracy accompanied by peer pressure, unemployment, and the desire to improve work performance, For example, in their farms or businesses, which is in line with other researchers worldwide as reasons of varying degrees of prevalence of substance use. The data also reveals that Tobacco is the most commonly use substance with a prevalence rate of 47% followed by

Cannabis 23% solvent/syrup 11% sedatives 10%, and alcohol 4% among others. And the majority of the youth regularly use two or more (multiple) types of substances irrespective of age, gender or educational level. This supports the report conducted in Northern Nigeria, e.g Sokoto, which indicated that 37% of out -of -school children abuse substances like cannabis, cigarettes, and solvents.

The major determinant of substance use identified in this study area (Dan Amar B communities) was peer group influence, which formed 108 (28%) of the total respondents supporting the social learning theory, which posits that youth are likely to model behaviour observed within their social network.⁵ Other reasons identified includes curiosity about the substance 60 (16%) to improve work performance 48 (13%), to deal with stress and self-medication has equal respondents of 39 (10% each) sexual enhancement 30 (7%) and family history of substance use has 25 (6%).

Additionally, lack of sound education seem to be a contributory factor of the youth's involvement in substance abuse as the higher prevalence was recorded among the illiterate and less educated ones which was contrary to the view by traditional institute on substance use who reported that majority of student in higher leaning are involved in use of substance like alcohol 70%, 40% smoke cigarette and 20% use prescription drug for non-medical reason. So this research viewed that report to be a misconception, which proved that the more educated a youth is, the more capable he is to resist, e.g peer group pressure to take part in substance use and the less involvement in the act, which is similar to findings from previous research in sub-Saharan Africa^{6,7}. The study also identifies the risk factors like genetic, environment, trauma, frequent family conflict and divorce to prone youth to use.

The analysed data further shows that as a result of the youth overindulging in act of

substance use, both the individual, family and even the society are feeling the negative impacts of substance abuse as 84 (22%) cases violent behaviour was recorded, 80 (21%) reported. turning to theft and 65 (17%) neglect their family. Other reported issues include prostitution, contacting diseases like HIV/AIDS etc This is in line with a researcher that opined that when an individual drug user cannot do without the substance he/she can takes every risk like begging ,stealing, prostitution, fraud or cheating to obtain drug.²⁴ And one boring issue is that despite all these challenges, majority of the youth are not willing to stop the act of use of substances which could be because of addiction as stated by a writer that when a person became addicted to substance the desire for impulsiveness make it difficult to stop the use of substance.

Another reason could be the reported existing gap of knowledge on negative health effects of substance use this is in line with a report by a researcher that lack of awareness on inherent dangers associated with substance use by youth contributed to their involvement in the use of substance.³⁰ This call for urgent intervention through more intensive education campaign to create awareness on the issue to help save the life of our future generation leader from the dangers associated with substance use..

A research conducted in Bauchi town shows the prevalence of substance use among youth within group of 15-35 years was also 40%. Based on 2018 National Drug Use Survey (UBS/UNODC) an estimated 16% prevalence of substance use was reported in the wider Bauchi State among individuals aged 15-64 respectively. A study was conducted among secondary school in Bauchi State which reveals that 34.2% were actively engaging in substance use versus 65.8% who claimed to have stopped.

Similarly, within the Nigerian context the prevalence rate of youth involved in substance use was reported to be 40% with South- East and some parts of the South West having a significant prevalence of

substance trafficking as a result of lack of awareness of the general public especially on the inherent dangers associated with substance use. The 2018 National Drug use Survey reported that 14.4% of the population age 15-64 years are psychoactive substance with the highest use among young adult. In Lagos 41% of adolescents reported using at least one psychoactive substance in Sokoto 37% of out of school youth admitted using cannabis and codeine syrup. And in Northern Nigeria cannabis and tramadol remain the most widely used substance among males.

In Africa the prevalence rate was found to be between 3.8 to 13%, while youth in West Africa age 15-64 years is 12% compared with 4 and 5% in East and South Africa respectively.

Globally, over 276 million people use drug in 2022 with youth accounting for significant proportion. (5.6%) reported using at least one illicit drug indicating an increase of 64 million (3%) since 2018.

Limitations

This study is subject to social desirability bias and cross-sectional design cannot establish causality.

Conclusion

This study showed a high prevalence of substance use among youths. Cannabis, tobacco, solvents, sedatives and others were used substances as single users and multiple users. Peer group influence, improved work performance, sex enhancement, and attempts to deal with stress were the contributory factors to substance use. There is a need to create and sustained an awareness of substance use and its consequences in the community.

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