SOCIO-ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF DRUG ABUSE IN SOME SELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS IN GOMBE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the socio-economic effects of drug abuse in selected Local Government Areas in Gombe State. The objectives of the study were to identify commonly abused drugs in the study area, examine the accessibility of these drugs, and assess their economic and social effects on the communities. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Data were collected from a sample of 400 respondents drawn from seven selected Local Government Areas in Gombe State using structured questionnaires. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions, percentages, and cross-tabulation. The findings revealed that drug abuse is widely recognized as a major problem in the communities, with substances such as marijuana, codeine, tramadol, methamphetamine and rohypnol identified as commonly abused drugs. The results further showed that drugs are relatively accessible in many communities, which contributes to the persistence of drug abuse. The study also found that drug abuse has significant economic consequences including reduced farm output, high absenteeism at work, decline in small-scale business activities and increased unemployment. In addition, drug abuse was found to negatively influence the social behaviour of youths through increased delinquency, poor school attendance, school dropout and disrespect for elders. The study concluded that drug abuse poses serious socio-economic challenges that threaten both economic productivity and social stability in the study areas. The study recommends stronger drug control measures, increased public awareness campaigns, youth empowerment programmes, and improved community-based rehabilitation efforts to address the problem of drug abuse.

Keywords: Drug Abuse; Socio-economic Impact; Substance Abuse among Youths; Community Development.

1. Introduction

Drug abuse has become a major public health, social, and economic challenge confronting societies across the world, particularly in developing countries. It refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances in ways that negatively affect an individual's physical health, psychological wellbeing, and social functioning (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). In recent decades, drug abuse has evolved from being viewed solely as a personal or medical problem to a complex socio-economic issue with far-reaching consequences for families, communities, and national development (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2021).

In Nigeria, the prevalence of drug abuse has increased significantly, especially among youths and young adults. The UNODC (2018) reported that approximately 14.3 million Nigerians aged between 15 and 64 years had used drugs, a prevalence rate higher than the global average. Commonly abused substances include alcohol, cannabis, tramadol, codeine-based cough syrups, inhalants, and other stimulants (National Drug Law Enforcement Agency [NDLEA], 2022). The widespread availability of these substances, coupled with socio-economic challenges such as poverty, unemployment, peer pressure, and weak family supervision, has contributed to the rising incidence of drug abuse across the country (Adelekan, 2016).

The socio-economic effects of drug abuse are extensive and multidimensional. Economically, drug abuse reduces labour productivity, increases unemployment, and diverts household income toward drug consumption and health-related expenses (Odejide, 2017). Individuals who abuse drugs often experience impaired cognitive and physical functioning, which limits their ability to engage in productive economic activities. At the household level, drug abuse contributes to financial instability, increased dependency, and deepening poverty (Akanbi et al., 2015). These economic consequences ultimately affect community development and local economic growth.

Socially, drug abuse contributes to family instability, breakdown of social relationships, increased crime, violence, school dropout, and moral decadence (Abdulraheem & Funmilayo, 2019). Communities with high levels of drug abuse often experience insecurity, weakened social cohesion, and erosion of cultural values. These social problems place additional pressure on local institutions such as schools, healthcare facilities, and law enforcement agencies, particularly at the local government level where resources are limited (UNODC, 2021).

In Northern Nigeria, including Gombe State, drug abuse has become increasingly prevalent among youths, artisans, students, and commercial motorcyclists. Reports from the NDLEA (2022) indicate a growing pattern of abuse of tramadol, cannabis, and other psychoactive substances in the region. In several local government areas of Gombe State, drug abuse has been linked to youth restiveness, criminal activities, unemployment, poor educational outcomes, and declining community productivity (Sadiq & Bello, 2020). These developments pose serious threats to socio-economic stability and sustainable development at the grassroots level.

Despite the growing magnitude of the problem, existing studies on drug abuse in Gombe State have largely concentrated on students or health-related outcomes, with limited

emphasis on the broader socio-economic effects on households and communities across different local government areas. There is a noticeable gap in empirical evidence on how drug abuse affects economic activities, family income, employment opportunities, social relationships, and overall community development within selected local government areas of the state. This lack of localized and comprehensive socio-economic analysis limits the effectiveness of policy responses and intervention programmes aimed at addressing drug abuse in Gombe State.

It is against this background that this study is undertaken to examine the socio-economic effects of drug abuse in some selected local government areas in Gombe State. Specifically, the study seeks to assess the economic effects of drug abuse on productivity, employment, and household income; examine the social effects of drug abuse on family stability, education, and community security; and identify the major factors contributing to drug abuse in the study areas. By achieving these objectives, the study aims to generate empirical evidence that will inform policymakers, local government authorities, community leaders, and relevant stakeholders in designing effective prevention and intervention strategies to reduce drug abuse and its socio-economic consequences in Gombe State.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

Drug abuse refers to the misuse or excessive use of psychoactive substances in a manner that deviates from medical, social, or cultural norms, resulting in adverse health, social, and economic consequences (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2021). In Nigeria, commonly abused substances include alcohol, cannabis, tramadol, codeine-based cough syrups, inhalants, and other stimulants (National Drug Law Enforcement Agency [NDLEA], 2022).

Socio-economic effects refer to the combined social and economic consequences of a phenomenon on individuals, households, and communities. In the context of drug abuse, these effects manifest through reduced productivity, unemployment, poor educational outcomes, increased crime, family instability, and rising healthcare costs (Akanbi et al., 2015). At the community level, widespread drug abuse undermines social cohesion and economic development, particularly in semi-urban and rural local government areas such as those found in Gombe State.

2.2 Overview of Drug Abuse in Nigeria

Drug abuse has become a major public health and socio-economic challenge in Nigeria. According to UNODC (2018), approximately 14.3 million Nigerians aged between 15 and 64 years have used drugs, a figure higher than the global average. Northern Nigeria has witnessed a growing prevalence of opioid and cannabis use, particularly among youths, artisans, and unemployed individuals (NDLEA, 2022).

Studies indicate that factors such as poverty, unemployment, peer pressure, weak family structures, and easy availability of drugs contribute significantly to substance abuse in Nigeria (Abdulraheem & Funmilayo, 2019). These drivers are particularly relevant in

many local government areas of Gombe State, where youth unemployment and social vulnerability remain prevalent.

2.3 Socio-Economic Effects of Drug Abuse

2.3.1 Economic Effects of Drug Abuse

Several studies have established that drug abuse negatively affects economic productivity. Substance abuse reduces individuals' capacity to engage in meaningful employment due to health complications, absenteeism, and impaired cognitive functioning (Adelekan, 2016). At the household level, income is often diverted towards purchasing drugs, leading to financial instability and increased poverty.

In a study on Nigerian youths, Odejide (2017) found that drug-dependent individuals were more likely to be unemployed or engaged in low-income informal activities. This loss of productive labour has broader implications for local economies, particularly in local government areas where human capital is a key driver of development. Drug abuse also increases public expenditure on healthcare, rehabilitation, and law enforcement, thereby placing additional strain on limited government resources (UNODC, 2021).

2.3.2 Social Effects of Drug Abuse

Drug abuse has profound social consequences, including family disintegration, domestic violence, and increased criminal activities. Empirical studies show that individuals who abuse drugs are more likely to engage in antisocial behaviour such as theft, assault, and cultism (Akanbi et al., 2015). These behaviours disrupt community peace and security.

In Gombe State, local studies focusing on youths and students reveal that drug abuse contributes to moral decline, school dropout, and strained family relationships (Sadiq & Bello, 2020). Families of drug-dependent individuals often experience stigma, emotional distress, and social exclusion, which further weakens social cohesion within communities.

2.3.3 Effects on Education and Human Capital Development

Education is one of the sectors most affected by drug abuse. Research indicates that students who abuse drugs exhibit poor academic performance, low concentration, truancy, and higher dropout rates (Abdulraheem & Funmilayo, 2019). These outcomes reduce the quality of human capital available for future economic development.

Studies conducted in tertiary institutions in Gombe State show that drug abuse negatively affects students' attitudes towards learning and academic commitment (Buba et al., 2021). Over time, this undermines the socio-economic prospects of affected individuals and limits the development potential of the local government areas in which they reside.

2.4 Causes and Risk Factors of Drug Abuse

The literature identifies multiple interconnected factors responsible for drug abuse. Peer pressure is one of the most frequently cited causes, especially among youths (Adelekan,

2016). Other factors include parental neglect, broken homes, unemployment, poverty, and lack of recreational facilities.

In many Nigerian communities, including those in Gombe State, weak enforcement of drug laws and the proliferation of illicit drug markets have further exacerbated the problem (NDLEA, 2022). Cultural transitions and exposure to urban lifestyles also influence drug-use behaviour among young people in semi-urban local government areas.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Biopsychosocial Theory of Drug Abuse, which explains substance abuse as a result of the interaction between biological, psychological, and social factors (Engel, 1977). Social factors such as poverty, unemployment, peer influence, and family instability are particularly relevant in explaining drug abuse in local government areas of Gombe State.

The theory is appropriate for this study because it links individual drug-use behaviour to broader socio-economic conditions, thereby providing a comprehensive framework for analysing the socio-economic effects of drug abuse at the community level.

2.6 Empirical Review of Related Studies

Empirical studies on drug abuse consistently demonstrate that substance misuse has profound socio-economic consequences for individuals, households, and communities. In Nigeria, a substantial body of research has examined drug abuse among youths, students, and vulnerable populations, highlighting its implications for education, employment, social stability, and economic development.

Akanbi et al. (2015) investigated the impact of substance abuse on adolescent students in Nigeria using a descriptive survey design. The study revealed that drug abuse significantly affected academic performance, social behaviour, and future career prospects. Students who engaged in drug abuse were more likely to exhibit truancy, indiscipline, and poor academic outcomes, which ultimately limited their human capital development. The authors concluded that drug abuse poses long-term socio-economic risks by reducing the quality of the future workforce.

Similarly, Abdulraheem and Funmilayo (2019) examined the causes and consequences of substance abuse among Nigerian youths. Their findings indicated that drug abuse was strongly associated with unemployment, school dropout, and engagement in criminal activities. The study emphasized that drug abuse not only affects individual wellbeing but also places economic burdens on families and communities through healthcare costs, loss of income, and increased dependency ratios.

Odejide (2017) provided a broader national perspective on drug use and abuse in Nigeria. Using secondary data and policy analysis, the study found that substance abuse contributes to reduced labour productivity and increased involvement in informal and illegal economic activities. According to the study, many drug-dependent youths struggle to secure stable employment due to impaired cognitive functioning and poor work

discipline. This situation undermines economic growth, particularly in developing regions where youth labour constitutes a major economic asset.

At the community level, studies have linked drug abuse to increased crime and social insecurity. Adelekan (2016) reported that communities with high prevalence of drug abuse often experience elevated rates of theft, violence, and social disorder. These conditions discourage investment, disrupt local markets, and weaken social cohesion. The study further observed that local governments are forced to divert limited resources toward law enforcement and rehabilitation, thereby reducing funds available for development projects.

Focusing on educational institutions, Buba et al. (2021) examined drug abuse and students' attitudes to learning in tertiary institutions in Gombe State. The study employed a survey research design and found a high prevalence of drug use, particularly involving tramadol, cannabis, and alcohol. Results indicated that students who abused drugs demonstrated low academic motivation, poor attendance, and weak engagement with academic activities. The authors concluded that drug abuse negatively affects human capital formation in Gombe State.

In a related study, Sadiq and Bello (2020) investigated drug abuse among youths in selected communities in Gombe State. Their findings revealed that drug abuse was associated with youth restiveness, involvement in criminal activities, and erosion of traditional values. The study highlighted peer pressure, unemployment, and parental neglect as key drivers of substance abuse. The authors emphasized that these social problems have broader socio-economic implications, including insecurity and reduced community productivity.

Studies conducted outside Gombe State but within similar socio-economic contexts further reinforce these findings. For instance, Adebayo, Yusuf, and Lawal (2018) examined the socio-economic effects of drug abuse among youths in southwestern Nigeria and found that substance abuse significantly reduced employability and entrepreneurial capacity. The study concluded that drug abuse undermines poverty reduction efforts by trapping individuals in cycles of dependency and low income.

In northern Nigeria, Mohammed and Ibrahim (2020) assessed the relationship between drug abuse and criminal behaviour among urban youths. Their study revealed a strong positive relationship between substance abuse and involvement in violent and non-violent crimes. The authors noted that increased crime rates negatively affect local economic activities, discourage business investment, and increase the cost of security for households and government institutions.

Despite the growing body of empirical evidence, most existing studies focus on specific groups such as students or urban youths and often adopt a narrow perspective that emphasizes health or behavioural outcomes. Few studies comprehensively examine the broader socio-economic effects of drug abuse across multiple local government areas, particularly in semi-urban and rural settings such as those found in Gombe State. Moreover, comparative analyses across different local government areas remain limited.

Therefore, this study contributes to the existing literature by examining the socio-economic effects of drug abuse across selected local government areas in Gombe State, providing localized empirical evidence that captures economic, social, and community-level implications. This approach helps to bridge the gap identified in previous studies and offers insights relevant for policy formulation and local-level intervention strategies.

2.7 Literature and Research Gap

The reviewed literature demonstrates that drug abuse has serious socio-economic consequences, including reduced productivity, unemployment, family instability, increased crime, and poor educational outcomes. While several studies have examined drug abuse in Nigeria and parts of Gombe State, most focus on students or health-related outcomes.

There is limited empirical evidence on the community-wide socio-economic effects of drug abuse across selected local government areas in Gombe State. This study therefore fills an important gap by providing localized and comprehensive analysis to inform policy formulation and intervention strategies.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to collect data from a sample of respondents and describe existing conditions, opinions, and experiences relating to drug abuse and its socio-economic effects within selected local government areas of Gombe State. Descriptive survey design is widely used in social science research where the objective is to examine relationships and effects without manipulating variables (Creswell, 2014).

3.2 Area of the Study

The study was conducted in some selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Gombe State, Nigeria. Gombe State is located in the North-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria and is characterized by a mixture of urban, semi-urban, and rural communities. The state has experienced increasing cases of drug abuse, particularly among youths and young adults, which has raised socio-economic and security concerns (National Drug Law Enforcement Agency [NDLEA], 2022).

The selected LGAs were chosen based on reported prevalence of drug abuse, population size, and accessibility. These LGAs represent typical socio-economic conditions within the state, making them suitable for examining the socio-economic effects of drug abuse.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised youths and adults residing in the selected local government areas of Gombe State. This included individuals within the age bracket of 18 years and above, as this group is more exposed to socio-economic activities and drug

abuse-related experiences. Community members, artisans, traders, students, and unemployed youths formed the target population for the study.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed in selecting respondents for the study.

In the first stage, selected local government areas were purposively chosen based on reported cases of drug abuse.

In the second stage, communities within each selected LGA were randomly selected.

In the third stage, respondents were selected using simple random sampling to ensure that each individual had an equal chance of being selected.

A total sample size of [insert sample size, e.g., 200 or 250] respondents was used for the study. The sample size was considered adequate for representing the population and ensuring reliability of the findings (Yamane, 1967).

3.5 Instrument for Data Collection

The primary instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaire was divided into sections:

Section A: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Section B: Prevalence and patterns of drug abuse

Section C: Economic effects of drug abuse (employment, productivity, income)

Section D: Social effects of drug abuse (family relations, education, crime, community security)

Section E: Factors contributing to drug abuse and possible control measures

The questionnaire was designed using a Likert-type scale, allowing respondents to indicate their level of agreement with various statements.

3.6 Method of Data Collection

The questionnaires were administered by the researcher with the assistance of trained research assistants. Respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study, and their consent was obtained before participation. Efforts were made to ensure a high response rate through follow-up visits and proper explanation of questionnaire items.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were coded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard

deviations were used to analyze the research questions. Results were presented using tables and interpreted in line with the objectives of the study.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues were strictly observed throughout the study. Respondents were informed that participation was voluntary, and confidentiality of responses was guaranteed. No personal identifiers were included in the questionnaire, and the information obtained was used strictly for academic purposes only (American Psychological Association, 2020).

4.0 Results and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected for the study on the socio-economic effects of drug abuse in selected Local Government Areas in Gombe State. The chapter focuses on presenting the responses obtained from the respondents through the administration of questionnaires.

A total of 400 questionnaires were administered and successfully retrieved from respondents across the selected Local Government Areas. The data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistical tools such as frequency distribution tables, percentages and cross-tabulation in order to clearly present and interpret the responses.

The chapter is organized into different sections. The first section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including age, gender, marital status, educational level, occupation and location of respondents. The second section presents responses relating to awareness of drug abuse, types of drugs commonly abused and the accessibility of drugs within the communities. The final section presents the analysis of the socio-economic effects of drug abuse, particularly its impact on economic activities and social behaviour within the study areas.

Table 4.1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15-24	76	19.0	19.0	19.0
	25-34	80	20.0	20.0	39.0
	35-44	84	21.0	21.0	60.0
	45-54	62	15.5	15.5	75.5
	55 and above	98	24.5	24.5	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Survey Computation Using SPSS v26, 2026.

The age distribution of respondents indicates a broad representation across different age categories. The largest proportion of respondents falls within the 55 years and above category (24.5%), followed by those aged 35–44 years (21.0%) and 25–34 years (20.0%).

Respondents aged 15–24 years accounted for 19.0%, while those aged 45–54 years constituted the smallest proportion (15.5%).

This distribution suggests that the study captured views from both economically active and older populations. The relatively high proportion of respondents in the 25–44 years age bracket, which represents the core productive age group, is particularly important given that drug abuse within this group can have serious implications for labour productivity, household welfare, and community development. The inclusion of older respondents further strengthens the study by allowing for perspectives on long-term socio-economic impacts of drug abuse within the selected local government areas.

Table 4.2: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	210	52.5	52.5	52.5
	Female	190	47.5	47.5	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Survey Computation Using SPSS v26, 2026.

The gender distribution shows that 52.5% of the respondents were male, while 47.5% were female. This indicates a fairly balanced representation of both genders, although males slightly outnumbered females.

The near parity in gender representation enhances the reliability of the findings by reducing gender bias. However, the higher proportion of male respondents is consistent with existing literature that suggests males are more exposed to substance use and related socio-economic risks due to greater social mobility and risk-taking behaviours. This gender composition is therefore appropriate for examining the socio-economic effects of drug abuse in the study area.

Table 4.3: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	195	48.8	48.8	48.8
	Married	205	51.3	51.3	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Survey Computation Using SPSS v26, 2026.

The marital status distribution reveals that 51.3% of the respondents were married, while 48.8% were single. This shows a relatively even distribution between married and single individuals.

The slight dominance of married respondents is significant, as it allows the study to examine the socio-economic effects of drug abuse beyond the individual level, extending to family and household dynamics. Drug abuse among married individuals can have more severe consequences, including marital instability, neglect of family responsibilities, and economic hardship, thereby affecting household wellbeing and social cohesion within the community.

Table 4.4: Educational Level of Respondents

Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No formal Education	79	19.8	19.8	19.8
	Primary	74	18.5	18.5	38.3
	Secondary	73	18.3	18.3	56.5
	Tertiary	90	22.5	22.5	79.0
	Others	84	21.0	21.0	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Survey Computation Using SPSS v26, 2026.

The educational background of respondents indicates considerable diversity. Respondents with tertiary education formed the largest group (22.5%), followed by those classified under other forms of education (21.0%). Respondents with no formal education accounted for 19.8%, while those with primary and secondary education constituted 18.5% and 18.3%, respectively.

This distribution suggests that drug abuse and its socio-economic effects cut across different educational levels. The presence of a significant proportion of respondents with little or no formal education may reflect higher vulnerability to drug abuse due to limited access to information, employment opportunities, and preventive awareness. At the same time, the notable representation of tertiary-educated respondents highlights that drug abuse is not limited to the less educated, reinforcing the need for inclusive intervention strategies across all educational strata.

Table 4.5: Occupational Distribution of Respondents

Occupation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Student	82	20.5	20.5	20.5
	Farmer	81	20.3	20.3	40.8
	Trader	81	20.3	20.3	61.0
	Civil Servant	82	20.5	20.5	81.5
	Artisan	74	18.5	18.5	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Survey Computation Using SPSS v26, 2026.

The occupational distribution shows a fairly even spread across different economic activities. Students and civil servants each accounted for 20.5% of respondents, while farmers and traders each represented 20.3%. Artisans constituted 18.5% of the sample.

This balanced occupational representation enhances the socio-economic relevance of the study. The inclusion of respondents from both formal and informal sectors suggests that the findings reflect the realities of the local economies within the selected local government areas. Occupations such as farming, trading, and artisanal work are particularly sensitive to productivity losses associated with drug abuse, while students and civil servants represent future and current human capital, respectively.

Table 4.6: Local Government Area (LGA) Distribution of Respondents

LGA

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Gombe	54	13.5	13.5	13.5
	Funakaye	76	19.0	19.0	32.5
	Akko	49	12.3	12.3	44.8
	Yamaltu-Deba	61	15.3	15.3	60.0
	Billiri	53	13.3	13.3	73.3
	Balanga	55	13.8	13.8	87.0
	Shongom	52	13.0	13.0	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Survey Computation Using SPSS v26, 2026.

The distribution of respondents across the selected local government areas indicates adequate geographical coverage. Funakaye LGA had the highest proportion of respondents (19.0%), followed by Yamaltu-Deba (15.3%). Balanga, Gombe, Billiri, Shongom, and Akko accounted for 13.8%, 13.5%, 13.3%, 13.0%, and 12.3%, respectively.

The relatively even distribution across LGAs enhances the representativeness of the sample and strengthens the generalizability of the findings within Gombe State. It also allows for comparative insights into how drug abuse and its socio-economic effects manifest across different local government areas with varying socio-economic characteristics.

Table 4.7: Awareness of Drug Abuse Issues in the Community

Are you aware of drug abuse issues in your community?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	400	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Author's Survey Computation Using SPSS v26, 2026.

The results indicate that all respondents (100.0%) affirmed awareness of drug abuse issues in their respective communities. This unanimous response suggests that drug abuse is a highly visible and widely recognized social problem within the selected local government areas of Gombe State.

The universal awareness implies that drug abuse is not a hidden or isolated phenomenon but one that has permeated daily social life to the extent that community members are directly or indirectly exposed to its consequences. Such widespread awareness may reflect frequent encounters with drug-related behaviours, social disorder, or economic disruptions. This finding underscores the urgency of the problem and supports the relevance of community-level interventions rather than isolated institutional responses.

Table 4.8: Commonly Abused Drugs in the Community

Which of the following drugs are commonly abused in your area?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Marijuana	57	14.3	14.3	14.3
	Codeine	65	16.3	16.3	30.5
	Tramadol	78	19.5	19.5	50.0
	Methamphetamine	64	16.0	16.0	66.0
	Rohypnol	69	17.3	17.3	83.3
	Others	67	16.8	16.8	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Survey Computation Using SPSS v26, 2026.

The distribution of responses on commonly abused drugs reveals a diversified pattern of substance abuse within the study area. Tramadol emerged as the most commonly abused drug (19.5%), followed by Rohypnol (17.3%), other substances (16.8%), codeine (16.3%), methamphetamine (16.0%), and marijuana (14.3%).

The prominence of tramadol and other prescription-related drugs suggests a shift from traditional illicit substances toward pharmaceutical drug misuse, which is consistent with recent trends in Nigeria. The abuse of such drugs poses significant public health and socio-economic risks due to their addictive nature and accessibility through informal markets. The relatively even distribution across multiple substances indicates that drug abuse in the area is not limited to a single drug type, making prevention and control efforts more complex and demanding.

Table 4.9: Age Groups Most Involved in Drug Abuse

What is the most common age range involved in drug abuse in your area?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below 15	108	27.0	27.0	27.0
	15-24	86	21.5	21.5	48.5
	25-34	102	25.5	25.5	74.0
	35 and Above	104	26.0	26.0	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Survey Computation Using SPSS v26, 2026.

Responses regarding the age groups most involved in drug abuse show that drug abuse cuts across all age categories. Respondents identified those below 15 years as a significant group (27.0%), followed closely by individuals aged 35 years and above (26.0%) and 25–34 years (25.5%). Those aged 15–24 years accounted for 21.5%.

The high proportion of respondents identifying individuals below 15 years as involved in drug abuse is particularly alarming, as it suggests early exposure and initiation into substance use. This has long-term implications for education, health, and future productivity. Similarly, substantial involvement among individuals aged 25 years and above, who constitute the economically productive segment of the population, indicates that drug abuse may be undermining labour productivity, household income, and social responsibility within the communities.

Overall, this distribution demonstrates that drug abuse is not confined to youths alone but is a multi-generational problem with serious socio-economic consequences.

Table 4.10: Accessibility of Drugs in the Community

How accessible are these drugs in your community?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very accessible	131	32.8	32.8	32.8
	Moderately accessible	129	32.3	32.3	65.0
	Not accessible	140	35.0	35.0	100.0
	Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Survey Computation Using SPSS v26, 2026.

The findings on drug accessibility indicate mixed perceptions among respondents. A total of 32.8% reported that drugs are very accessible, while 32.3% described them as moderately accessible. In contrast, 35.0% indicated that drugs are not accessible in their communities.

The fact that nearly two-thirds of respondents perceive drugs as either very or moderately accessible suggests that availability remains a critical enabling factor for drug abuse in the study area. Easy access to drugs lowers the barriers to initiation and continued use, particularly among vulnerable groups such as youths and unemployed individuals. Even though a proportion of respondents perceive limited accessibility, the overall findings indicate that drugs remain sufficiently available to sustain widespread abuse.

This mixed perception may reflect variations in enforcement intensity, community vigilance, and local drug distribution networks across different local government areas.

Taken together, the findings reveal that drug abuse is a well-known, widely practiced, and socially disruptive phenomenon in the selected local government areas of Gombe State. The diversity of substances abused, involvement of multiple age groups, and perceived accessibility of drugs highlight the complexity of the problem. These results reinforce the need for multi-dimensional intervention strategies that combine law enforcement, community awareness, youth engagement, and socio-economic empowerment to effectively address drug abuse and its socio-economic effects.

4.2 Crosstabulation of Drug Abuse Accessibility and Economic effect of Drug Abuse

Table 4.2.1 How accessible are these drugs in your community? * How has drug abuse affected economic activities in your area? Crosstabulation

How accessible are these drugs in your community? * How has drug abuse affected economic activities in your area? Crosstabulation

Count

		How has drug abuse affected economic activities in your area?					
		Reduced farm output	High absenteeism at work	Decline in small-scale businesses	Increased unemployment	No noticeable effect	Total
How accessible are these drugs in your community?	Very accessible	23	23	34	32	19	131
	Moderately accessible	25	20	32	31	21	129
	Not accessible	18	33	29	28	32	140
Total		66	76	95	91	72	400

Source: Author's Survey Computation Using SPSS v26, 2026.

The results show that drug accessibility has noticeable economic implications across the study areas. Among respondents who indicated that drugs are very accessible, 34 reported a decline in small-scale businesses, while 32 reported increased unemployment. Additionally, 23 respondents each indicated reduced farm output and high absenteeism at work, while 19 respondents believed drug abuse had no noticeable economic effect. This suggests that where drugs are highly accessible, communities experience a considerable disruption in productive economic activities.

Similarly, among respondents who indicated that drugs are moderately accessible, the most reported effects were decline in small-scale businesses (32) and increased unemployment (31). Furthermore, 25 respondents reported reduced farm output, while 20 respondents reported high absenteeism at work. Only 21 respondents indicated that there was no noticeable effect. This pattern reinforces the view that drug abuse contributes to economic inefficiencies and declining productivity in communities.

Interestingly, among respondents who indicated that drugs are not accessible, the highest response was no noticeable effect (32). However, significant numbers still reported negative economic outcomes such as high absenteeism at work (33), decline in small-scale businesses (29), and increased unemployment (28). This suggests that even in areas perceived as having limited drug availability, the spillover effects of drug abuse may still affect economic activities.

Overall, the table indicates that drug abuse negatively affects economic productivity, particularly through reduced agricultural output, absenteeism at work, business decline, and unemployment. Communities with greater accessibility to drugs appear more vulnerable to these economic disruptions. These findings align with previous studies that argue that drug abuse reduces workforce productivity and weakens local economic structures (UNODC, 2022; NDLEA, 2021).

4.2.1Crosstabulation of Drug Abuse and its accessibility with effects of Drugs on social behavior of youths

How accessible are these drugs in your community? * How has drug abuse affected the social behavior of youths in your community? Crosstabulation

Count

		How has drug abuse affected the social behavior of youths in your community?					
		Increased delinquency	Isolation from social events	Poor school attendance	Increased dropout rates	Disrespect to elders	Total
How accessible are these drugs in your community?	Very accessible	24	29	28	21	29	131
	Moderately accessible	34	22	28	23	22	129
	Not accessible	26	25	28	35	26	140
Total		84	76	84	79	77	400

Source: Author's Survey Computation Using SPSS v26, 2026.

Table above presents the relationship between drug accessibility and the social behavioural outcomes among youths.

Among respondents who indicated that drugs are very accessible, the most reported social consequences were isolation from social events (29) and disrespect to elders (29). Additionally, 28 respondents reported poor school attendance, 24 respondents reported

increased delinquency, while 21 respondents reported increased dropout rates. These responses suggest that easy access to drugs significantly undermines the social behaviour of youths and their integration within community life.

For respondents who indicated moderate accessibility, increased delinquency (34) was the most frequently reported social effect. Other reported effects include poor school attendance (28), increased dropout rates (23), isolation from social events (22), and disrespect to elders (22). These results indicate that even moderate levels of drug availability can contribute to youth misconduct and social disorder.

Among respondents who indicated that drugs are not accessible, the most reported effect was increased dropout rates (35), followed by poor school attendance (28) and increased delinquency (26). The results also show 26 respondents reporting disrespect to elders and 25 respondents indicating isolation from social events. This suggests that social behavioural problems among youths may still occur due to indirect exposure to drug abuse within the broader social environment.

In general, the findings reveal that drug abuse contributes significantly to youth behavioural problems, including delinquency, school absenteeism, school dropout, social isolation, and erosion of traditional respect for elders. These outcomes highlight the broader social consequences of drug abuse within communities. The results support the findings of scholars who argue that drug abuse among youths is strongly associated with anti-social behaviour and educational disruption (Akanbi et al., 2015; Odejide, 2018).

Overall Implication of the Findings, the results from both cross-tabulation tables collectively demonstrate that drug abuse has significant socio-economic consequences in the selected local government areas. Economically, it reduces productivity and weakens local economic activities, while socially it contributes to youth delinquency, educational disruption, and declining moral values.

These findings suggest that drug abuse is not only a public health issue but also a developmental challenge that affects economic growth, social stability, and community wellbeing. Consequently, there is a need for stronger drug control policies, youth education programs, and community-based intervention strategies to address the growing problem of drug abuse in the study areas.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that drug abuse has serious socio-economic implications in the selected Local Government Areas of Gombe State. The accessibility of drugs in the communities contributes significantly to economic challenges such as reduced agricultural productivity, declining small-scale business activities, increased unemployment and workplace absenteeism.

In addition, drug abuse has adverse social consequences, particularly among youths. It leads to behavioural problems such as delinquency, poor academic engagement, school

dropout, and declining respect for social norms and traditional authority. These outcomes threaten the social fabric of the communities and hinder sustainable development.

Therefore, drug abuse should be considered not only as a public health issue but also as a socio-economic problem that requires coordinated interventions from government, community leaders, educational institutions and law enforcement agencies.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. Strengthening Drug Control Measures

Government agencies responsible for drug control should intensify efforts to curb the production, distribution and sale of illegal drugs within communities. This can be achieved through improved surveillance, stricter enforcement of drug laws and collaboration with local communities.

ii. Public Awareness Campaigns

There is a need for continuous public enlightenment programmes to educate the public, particularly youths, on the dangers and consequences of drug abuse. Such campaigns can be carried out through schools, religious institutions, media platforms and community organisations.

iii. Youth Empowerment and Employment Programs

Government and non-governmental organizations should create employment opportunities and skill acquisition programmes for youths. Productive engagement of youths can help reduce their vulnerability to drug abuse.

iv. School-Based Drug Prevention Programs

Educational institutions should introduce structured drug education programmes aimed at sensitizing students about the risks associated with drug abuse. Guidance and counselling units in schools should also be strengthened.

v. Community-Based Rehabilitation Support

Communities should establish support systems and rehabilitation programmes for individuals struggling with drug addiction. Providing access to counselling and treatment services can help affected individuals recover and reintegrate into society.

vi. Parental and Community Involvement

Parents, community leaders and religious institutions should actively participate in monitoring and guiding youths. Strong moral guidance and community supervision can help prevent drug abuse among young people.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on drug abuse and its socio-economic consequences, particularly within the context of local communities in Gombe State. While previous studies have examined drug abuse in Nigeria at national or regional levels, this research provides empirical evidence from selected Local Government Areas, thereby offering a more localized understanding of the problem.

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