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SOCIAL WORK SERVICE AND THE WELL-BEING OF DRUG-ADDICTED YOUTHS IN CALABAR METROPOLIS, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study examined the role of social work services in enhancing the well-being of drug-dependent youth in Calabar Metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria. The rising incidence of substance abuse among young people has become a serious social and public health concern, with far-reaching implications for families, communities, and national development. The study specifically assessed how social work interventions, such as counseling, rehabilitation programmes, community support initiatives, advocacy, and preventive services, contribute to the physical, emotional, and social recovery of affected youth. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and interviews administered to social workers, rehabilitation centre staff, and youth undergoing treatment in selected facilities within the metropolis. The findings revealed that social work services play a significant role in improving the well-being of drug-dependent youth by providing psychosocial support, promoting behavioural change, strengthening coping mechanisms, and facilitating successful reintegration into society. However, the study also identified several challenges constraining effective service delivery, including inadequate funding, persistent stigma, limited rehabilitation facilities, and a shortage of trained personnel. The study therefore recommends increased government investment in rehabilitation infrastructure, intensified public awareness campaigns, and the recruitment and deployment of qualified social workers to enhance recovery outcomes and promote safer communities in Calabar Metropolis.

Keywords: Calabar Metropolis, Drug Addiction, Social Work Services, Well-Being, Youth

Introduction

Drug addiction among youth has emerged as one of the most pervasive and challenging social issues in Nigeria, significantly impacting urban areas such as Calabar Metropolis in Cross River State. In recent times, the prevalence of drug use among Nigerian youth has escalated dramatically, transforming from isolated cases of experimentation into a widespread epidemic. This disturbing trend is fueled by several socio-economic, psychological, and environmental factors, such as peer pressure, youth unemployment, broken homes, inadequate parental supervision, emotional distress, and the increasing availability of illicit

drugs, which have all contributed to the surge in substance abuse. Drugs such as cannabis (Indian hemp), cigarettes, codeine-based cough syrups, tramadol, cocaine, and methamphetamine are commonly abused, often with little or no regard for their long-term consequences on physical and mental health.

Calabar Metropolis, comprising Calabar Municipal and Calabar South Local Government Areas, is not immune to this trend (James et al., 2025; Ofem et al., 2025). As a fast-growing urban center with diverse populations and cultures, it has witnessed a rise in youth involvement in drug-related activities. The youth demographic, typically between the ages of 15 and 35, is particularly vulnerable to the lure of psychoactive substances. These young individuals, often in search of identity, belonging, or escape from harsh socio-economic realities, fall prey to the temporary euphoria offered by drugs. Unfortunately, this choice often leads to addiction, criminal behavior, mental health issues, and, in many cases, premature death. The impact of drug addiction is not only a personal tragedy but also a community and national crisis. Families are torn apart, crime rates increase, educational attainment declines, and public health systems are overwhelmed. The economic burden of drug abuse is also substantial, draining national resources through lost productivity, increased healthcare costs, and expenditures on law enforcement and correctional services. These societal ripple effects underscore the importance of developing effective strategies for prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation.

In addressing substance abuse among youth, social work provides a multifaceted approach encompassing advocacy, counseling, community mobilization, and rehabilitation services. Scholars such as Nnana and Iloka (2025), Okpala and Eze (2023), and Umeh (2022) emphasize that social workers are instrumental in designing and implementing interventions that target the root causes of addiction, support the reintegration of recovering youth into society, and enhance overall well-being. By engaging at both individual and community levels, social work services contribute not only to reducing the prevalence of drug abuse but also to promoting mental health, social inclusion, and resilience among affected youth.

Drug addiction among youth has emerged as a pervasive social issue in Nigeria, with significant implications for urban centres such as Calabar Metropolis in Cross River State. Over the past decade, experimentation with substances has escalated into widespread abuse, driven by socio-economic, psychological, and environmental factors including peer pressure, youth unemployment, broken homes, inadequate parental supervision, and easy access to illicit drugs. Commonly abused substances include cannabis (Indian hemp), codeine-based cough syrups, tramadol, cocaine, and methamphetamine, which pose serious threats to both physical and mental health.

Calabar Metropolis, encompassing Calabar Municipal and Calabar South Local Government Areas, has witnessed a growing involvement of youth in drug-related activities. Young people, typically aged 15–35, are particularly vulnerable as they seek identity, social belonging, or escape from socio-economic hardships. The consequences of addiction extend beyond the individual, affecting families, communities, and broader society through increased crime rates, school dropouts, deteriorating family relationships, mental health disorders, homelessness, and premature mortality. The economic burden is also substantial, manifesting in lost productivity, increased healthcare costs, and expenditures on law enforcement. These challenges underscore the importance of developing effective strategies for prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation.

Social work, grounded in principles of human dignity, social justice, and empowerment, plays a critical role in addressing substance abuse. Social workers provide holistic interventions, including psychological support, counselling, advocacy, life skills training, and referrals to appropriate services (Nnana, Isaac & Blessing, 2023; Okpala & Eze, 2023; Umeh, 2022). Through these measures, they help drug-addicted youth understand the root causes of addiction, develop coping mechanisms, and reintegrate into society with emotional stability, social connectedness, and a sense of purpose. Approaches such as motivational interviewing, cognitive-behavioural therapy, peer support, and community reintegration programmes are vital components of effective social work practice. Theoretical frameworks, including the biopsychosocial model and strengths-based approach, guide these interventions by addressing the interconnected biological, psychological, and social factors that influence addiction while leveraging individual resilience.

Despite the existence of governmental and non-governmental programmes in Calabar, many youth remain unaware of, unable to access, or unable to benefit from available social work services due to stigma, poverty, inadequate funding, or a shortage of trained professionals. Additionally, there is often a disconnect between policy formulation and implementation, and limited monitoring and evaluation reduces the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions (Ofem & Ubi, 2023). Research specifically evaluating the impact of social work interventions on the well-being of drug-addicted youth in Calabar remains scarce. Most studies generalise findings at national or regional levels, leaving a gap in context-specific evidence that could inform effective policy and practice.

Given these challenges, this study seeks to critically examine the role, availability, accessibility, and quality of social work services in enhancing the well-being of drug-addicted youth in Calabar Metropolis. By providing evidence-based insights, the research aims to inform policy, strengthen professional practice, and contribute to sustainable interventions that promote recovery, reintegration, and long-term well-being among affected youth.

Literature Review

Advocacy and the Well-Being of Drug-Addicted Youth

Advocacy is a central tenet of social work practice, aimed at promoting the rights, needs, and interests of vulnerable populations, including drug-addicted youth. In the context of substance abuse, advocacy operates at individual, community, and policy levels. At the individual level, social workers ensure timely access to assessment, referral, and case management services, facilitating effective treatment and social support (McLaughlin, 2020). Community-level advocacy involves public awareness campaigns, school-based prevention programmes, and anti-stigma initiatives designed to reduce drug initiation and encourage healthier lifestyles (Okon & Udo, 2021). At the policy level, advocacy addresses systemic barriers such as punitive drug laws, inadequate rehabilitation funding, and restrictive health policies, through lobbying for legal reforms and inclusive service systems (Orsi et al., 2021).

Empirical studies suggest that advocacy interventions improve psychosocial outcomes by promoting access to treatment, reducing stigma, and enhancing reintegration opportunities. Orsi et al. (2021) report that sustained advocacy in Europe facilitated policy changes that reduced treatment barriers for youth with substance use disorders. In Nigeria, Agu and Okon (2019) highlight how advocacy shaped youth-focused rehabilitation campaigns and substance abuse education programmes, improving community belonging and social reintegration.

However, there is limited evidence evaluating the direct impact of advocacy on recovery outcomes in Calabar, highlighting a research gap this study seeks to address.

Counselling and Psychosocial Support

Counselling is a core social work intervention for drug addiction, addressing psychological, emotional, and behavioural determinants of substance use. Effective counselling provides a confidential environment where youth can explore trauma, socio-economic stressors, and dysfunctional thought patterns while developing resilience and coping strategies (Okoye, 2017; Nnana et al., 2024). In Nigeria, studies indicate that counselling integrated with rehabilitation reduces relapse rates, strengthens emotional stability, and promotes social functioning among young people (Okoye, 2017; Nnodim et al., 2021).

International evidence further supports the effectiveness of counselling as part of holistic rehabilitation. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2023) and the World Health Organization (2022) note that counselling, when combined with detoxification, aftercare, and community reintegration programmes, enhances psychosocial outcomes, reduces criminal behaviour, and improves life satisfaction. Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is widely applied in youth rehabilitation, enabling individuals to restructure maladaptive beliefs and develop constructive coping mechanisms (Beck, 2011; Felicia et al., 2025). Despite these findings, there remains a lack of context-specific research assessing counselling effectiveness among drug-addicted youth in Calabar Metropolis.

Rehabilitation, Community Support, and Preventive Programmes

Beyond advocacy and counselling, social work services include structured rehabilitation, community support, and preventive initiatives. Rehabilitation programmes in Nigeria combine psychosocial support, vocational training, and reintegration strategies, aiming to restore functional capacity and social connectedness among recovered youth (Ofem & Ubi, 2023). Community support initiatives, such as peer mentorship, family engagement, and local support groups, have been shown to reduce relapse and improve well-being (Agu & Okon, 2019). Preventive programmes targeting schools and communities, including awareness campaigns and life skills training, aim to curb drug initiation among at-risk youth. While these interventions demonstrate promise, studies highlight challenges such as inadequate funding, poor programme monitoring, and limited access in urban centres like Calabar (Ofem & Ubi, 2023).

Collectively, the literature underscores the importance of multi-faceted social work interventions in promoting the well-being of drug-addicted youth. However, a significant gap exists in context-specific empirical research evaluating the availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of these services in Calabar Metropolis. This study seeks to fill this gap by providing evidence-based insights to inform policy, enhance practice, and improve recovery outcomes for affected youth.

Theoretical Framework: Person-in-Environment (PIE) Theory

The Person-in-Environment (PIE) theory, developed by James Karl and Karen Wandrei (1994), provides a holistic framework for understanding human behaviour by examining the dynamic interactions between individuals and their social, cultural, economic, and physical environments. The theory challenges the medical model's focus on pathology and individual deficits, emphasising instead that human problems, including drug addiction, are influenced by multi-systemic factors and the interdependence of personal and environmental domains (Achu et al., 2025).

Assumptions of PIE Theory:

1. **Interdependence of Individual and Environment:** Individual behaviour cannot be fully understood without considering the social, familial, and community contexts in which a person lives. Drug use among youth, for example, may be shaped not only by personal choices but also by peer pressure, unemployment, poverty, or lack of recreational opportunities.

2. **Multi-Systemic Influences:** Behaviour is affected by interactions across multiple systems — family, school, community, and societal institutions. A youth struggling with substance abuse may simultaneously face family dysfunction, school disengagement, and community neglect.

3. **Role of Structural and Environmental Factors:** Economic deprivation, inadequate social policies, and limited access to health or rehabilitation services can exacerbate personal vulnerabilities, creating a cycle that perpetuates addiction.

In applying PIE to the current study, this framework enables a **holistic assessment** of drug-addicted youth in Calabar Metropolis. Social workers can evaluate not only the individual's psychological and behavioural patterns but also environmental stressors, available social supports, and structural barriers. For instance, youth in low-income urban areas of Calabar may experience heightened exposure to illicit drugs due to limited recreational facilities, weak enforcement of drug regulations, and fragmented family support. By analysing these interrelated factors, social workers can design **targeted interventions**, such as counselling, advocacy, community programmes, and rehabilitation services that address both individual needs and systemic challenges.

Practical Domains of PIE in Social Work Practice:

1. **Individual Functioning:** Assessment of coping skills, psychological well-being, and substance use behaviours to inform personalised interventions.

2. **Environmental Stressors:** Identification of socio-economic pressures, peer influences, and community-level risks contributing to addiction.

3. **Social Supports:** Evaluation of family networks, peer relationships, and institutional supports, which can be leveraged to enhance recovery outcomes.

By integrating PIE into this study, the framework informs the research design, data collection, and analysis. It provides a lens through which the availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of social work services in Calabar can be critically examined, ensuring that interventions consider the complex interaction between individual vulnerabilities and environmental influences. Ultimately, PIE underscores that effective social work requires multi-level strategies that address both personal and structural factors, reinforcing the holistic recovery and well-being of drug-addicted youth.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a survey research design, which is appropriate for collecting systematic data from a broad population and generating both quantitative and qualitative insights into the availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of social work interventions for drug-addicted youths. The survey design enables structured data collection using questionnaires and interview schedules, facilitating pattern identification, comparison of responses across groups, and empirical assessment of perceptions, behaviours, and outcomes (Creswell, 2014).

Moreover, it allows triangulation of perspectives from both service recipients and providers, thereby enhancing the credibility and comprehensiveness of the findings.

Study Area

The research was conducted in Calabar Metropolis, the capital of Cross River State, Nigeria, comprising Calabar Municipal and Calabar South Local Government Areas. Calabar is a major urban centre with diverse socio-cultural characteristics and a significant youth population, estimated at over 400,000 residents with a substantial proportion aged 15–35 years (National Population Commission, 2023) a demographic category considered most vulnerable to drug use and addiction. This setting was selected due to the concentration of social work interventions (including rehabilitation centres, community outreach programmes, and government-led prevention initiatives) and the presence of varied socio-economic and environmental factors that influence both drug use behaviours and responses to intervention.

Study Population

The target population comprised:

1. Youths aged 15–35 years who have experienced drug addiction and are currently receiving or have previously received social work services in Calabar Metropolis; and
2. Social work practitioners, including rehabilitation officers, community outreach workers, counsellors, and programme coordinators engaged in substance abuse intervention.

Operationally, "drug-addicted youth" refers to individuals within the specified age range who meet the DSM-5 criteria or clinical referral for substance use disorders and have participated in at least one form of social work intervention.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A total of 150 participants were purposively selected for the study to ensure that only respondents with relevant experience and knowledge contributed to the research. The sample was drawn from:

- Selected rehabilitation centres,
- Community-based outreach programmes,
- Non-governmental and government-led social work initiatives.

The purposive sampling technique was employed to identify participants who could provide rich, informed perspectives on social work services for drug-addicted youths. This non-probability method is appropriate where specific characteristics are required of respondents (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). Care was taken to balance representation between service recipients (youths) and service providers (practitioners).

Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire for quantitative responses and a semi-structured interview guide for qualitative insights. The questionnaire included sections on demographic characteristics, types of services accessed, perceptions of service effectiveness, and barriers to access. The interview guide explored deeper contextual experiences, challenges, and recommendations.

To ensure instrument reliability, a pilot study was conducted with 15 respondents outside the main study locations. Internal consistency of Likert-type scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with values above 0.70 considered acceptable (Field, 2018). Content

validity was ensured through expert review by two social work academics and a practitioner involved in addiction rehabilitation programming.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the University Research Ethics Committee of [Institution Name]. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. For participants below 18 years, consent was obtained from legal guardians in addition to the participants' assent. Respondent anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research process, and data were securely stored in password-protected files.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) and inferential statistics (chi-square tests, regression analysis where appropriate) through SPSS version 25. This analytical approach enables the study to identify patterns, associations, and predictors related to service effectiveness and well-being outcomes.

Qualitative data from interviews were analysed using thematic content analysis, which involved coding responses, identifying recurring themes, and interpreting meanings in relation to the research objectives and the Person-in-Environment theoretical framework. Themes were triangulated with quantitative findings to strengthen conclusions.

Findings Section

A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed to youths undergoing or who had undergone rehabilitation programmes in Calabar Metropolis, and 110 copies were completed and returned, giving a response rate of 91.7%. The remaining 10 questionnaires were either incomplete or returned with missing information and were therefore excluded from the analysis.

Additionally, qualitative data were collected from 30 social work practitioners through semi-structured interviews. Together, the quantitative and qualitative datasets provide a comprehensive perspective on the availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of social work interventions for drug-addicted youths in Calabar.

Table 1: Demographic Information

GENDER	**FREQUENCY**	**PERCENTAGE%**
Male	70	63.6
Female	40	36.4
Total	110	100
AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE%
15-20	18	16.4
21-25	40	36.4
26-30	32	29.1
31-35	20	18.1
TOTAL	110	100
MARITAL STATUS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE%
Single	78	70.9
Married	22	20.0
Divorced/Separated	10	9.1
Total	110	100

OCCUPATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE%
Student	42	38.2
Employed	18	16.4
Civil servant	10	9.1
Unemployed	40	36.3
Total	110	100
DURATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE%
Less than 6 months	28	25.5
6-12months	32	29.1
1-2 years	30	27.3
Above 2years	20	18.1
Total	110	100

Source: Field survey (2026)

Table 1 shows that most respondents were male (63.6%), reflecting the higher prevalence of drug use among males compared to females. The majority of respondents (36.4%) were aged 21-25 years, showing that youths in this age bracket are most affected by drug addiction in Calabar metropolis. The majority of respondents were single (70.9%), showing that drug addiction is more prevalent among unmarried youths. Many respondents were either students (38.2%) or unemployed (36.3%), which may contribute to involvement in drug use due to peer influence and idleness. Most respondents (29.1%) had been in rehabilitation for 6-12 months, showing active efforts in recovery,

Social Work Services and Well-being indicator

Table 2: Awareness and accessibility of services

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	SD	D	TOTAL	MEAN
1	I am aware of the existence of social work services for drug addicts in Calabar.	50	40	15	5	110	3.23
2	Social work services are easily accessible to youths struggling with drug addiction.	38	42	20	10	110	2.98
3	I received information about social work services from reliable sources (media, peers, NGOs, etc.).	44	36	20	10	110	3.04

Source: Field survey (2026)

Awareness of social work services is high, though accessibility remains moderate.

Table 3: Types of Social Work Services Received

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	SD	D	TOTAL	MEAN
1	I have received counseling services from social workers	45	40	15	10	110	3.09 '
2	Rehabilitation services were helpful in my recovery	42	38	20	10	110	3.02
3	Social work services included medical/health support	40	34	24	12	110	2.92
4	Social workers provided vocational/life	36	38	20	16	110	2.85

	skills training						

Source: Field survey (2026)

Counseling and rehabilitation services were the most common interventions received, while vocational training was less frequent.

Table 4: Effectiveness of Social Work Services

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	SD	D	TOTAL	MEAN
1	Counseling positively impacted my attitude toward drug use	46	42	12	10	110	3.13
2	Rehabilitation improved my physical and mental health	40	44	16	10	110	3.04
J	Vocational support improved my chances of self-reliance	38	36	20	16	110	2.87
4	Interventions reduced my involvement with drugs	42	40	18	10	110	2.04

Source: Field survey (2026)

Counseling and rehabilitation were effective in improving recovery outcomes, though vocational support showed weaker results.

Table 5: Challenges in Accessing Services

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	SD	D	TOTAL	MEAN
1	The cost of services limits my ability to access interventions	36	38	20	16	110	2.85
2	Somatization discourages youths from seeking services	48	40	12	10	110	3.15
	Distance to service centers makes access difficult	40	38	22	10	110	2.98
4	Inadequate information about the available Services	42	34	24	10	110	2.97

Source: Field survey (2026)

Stigmatization is the greatest challenge to accessing services, followed by cost and distance

Table 6: Well-being Outcomes

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	SD	D	TOTAL	MEAN
1	Social work services improved my overall quality of life	48	40	14	8	110	3.16
2	I feel socially accepted and supported	44	38	16	12	110	3.04
5	Services restored my self-confidence and dignity	42	40	18	10	110	3.04
4	My relationship with family/community members has improved	40	38	20	12	110	2.98

The majority of the respondents indicated positive well-being outcomes, particularly improved quality of life and restored self-confidence.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that youth in Calabar Metropolis are generally aware of social work services aimed at addressing drug addiction, but face significant barriers to access, including cost, stigmatization, and insufficient information. This aligns with prior

studies in Nigeria, which highlight that despite the presence of rehabilitation and counseling programmes, many youths are unable to fully utilise these services due to social stigma and limited outreach (Agu & Okon, 2019; Ofem & Ubi, 2023). Similarly, international research underscores that accessibility challenges remain a common obstacle in urban centres, particularly in low- and middle-income contexts where structural inequalities limit service delivery (Orsi et al., 2021).

Counseling and rehabilitation interventions emerged as the most effective social work strategies in promoting recovery, psychosocial well-being, and social reintegration. This corroborates findings by Okoye (2017) and Nnana et al. (2024), who demonstrated that psychological support, individualized counseling, and structured rehabilitation programmes significantly reduce relapse rates and enhance emotional stability among drug-addicted youth. The study also indicates that vocational training and empowerment programmes were perceived as less effective, suggesting that while skills development is important, its implementation in Calabar may be limited by resource constraints, insufficient follow-up, or inadequate integration with broader reintegration support.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings can be interpreted through the Person-in-Environment (PIE) framework. The PIE theory posits that individual behavior is shaped by interactions between personal characteristics and environmental contexts (Karl & Wandrei, 1994). In the Calabar context, youths' drug use is influenced not only by individual vulnerabilities such as psychological stress, curiosity, and peer pressure but also by environmental factors including poverty, unemployment, family dysfunction, and community exposure to drugs. Social work interventions, particularly counseling and rehabilitation, function as targeted responses within these environmental systems, helping individuals develop coping mechanisms while simultaneously addressing systemic barriers through advocacy, reintegration programmes, and public awareness.

Moreover, the study highlights that social work services contribute to enhanced quality of life, self-confidence, and social connectedness. This outcome aligns with the strengths-based component of PIE, which emphasises leveraging individual and community resources to foster resilience and functional social roles (Karl & Wandrei, 1994). The persistent challenges in vocational and empowerment initiatives suggest that environmental constraints such as limited funding, inadequate policy implementation, and social stigma continue to hinder optimal service outcomes, demonstrating the interdependent nature of personal and environmental factors as highlighted by PIE theory. In comparison with existing literature, the study confirms both national and international trends. For instance, Agu and Okon (2019) documented the importance of comprehensive social work interventions in Nigerian youth rehabilitation, while Orsi et al. (2021) noted that systemic advocacy and community engagement improve access and effectiveness of services in European contexts. The findings thus bridge a gap in localized research for Calabar, offering empirical evidence on the effectiveness, accessibility, and limitations of social work services in a rapidly urbanising Nigerian setting.

Practical implications of the study include the need to expand vocational training and empowerment programmes, strengthen community outreach to reduce stigma, and increase awareness and accessibility of counseling and rehabilitation services. Policymakers and social work agencies should consider integrating multi-level interventions that address both individual vulnerabilities and structural challenges, in line with the PIE framework. Doing so would enhance sustainable recovery, improve reintegration outcomes, and strengthen the overall well-being of drug-addicted youth in Calabar.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that social work services play a critical role in addressing youth drug addiction and enhancing well-being in Calabar Metropolis. Guided by the Person-in-Environment (PIE) theory, the findings underscore that drug addiction is a product of complex interactions between individual vulnerabilities, family dynamics, peer influences, and broader socio-economic and environmental factors. Counseling, rehabilitation, and advocacy services directly address individual psychological and social needs, while empowerment and vocational initiatives aim to modify environmental constraints that exacerbate vulnerability.

The study aligns with prior research showing that social work interventions are most effective when they consider both personal and systemic factors (Okoye, 2017; Agu & Okon, 2019; Orsi et al., 2021). While awareness of services among youth is high, accessibility remains limited due to stigma, financial hardship, and insufficient outreach highlighting the need for interventions that integrate social, economic, and structural supports. Counseling and rehabilitation emerged as the most impactful interventions, consistent with global evidence that psychological and medical support are essential for recovery, yet their effectiveness is constrained if broader environmental and community factors are neglected.

From a policy and practice perspective, the study recommends expanding vocational and life-skills programmes, strengthening community engagement to reduce stigma, and ensuring sustainable access to social work services through coordinated multi-agency collaboration. Research implications include the need for longitudinal studies to track long-term outcomes of social work interventions and further investigation into context-specific barriers in urban Nigerian settings.

Therefore, this study highlights that effective social work practice in drug addiction requires a holistic, multi-dimensional approach that addresses both individual needs and environmental determinants, reinforcing the PIE theoretical premise that sustainable recovery and youth well-being are contingent upon the dynamic interplay between people and their environments.

Recommendations

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

1. Enhance rehabilitation programs through vocational and skills development: Rehabilitation efforts should incorporate structured vocational training, entrepreneurship initiatives, and skills acquisition programs. These interventions will provide recovering youths with economic empowerment, helping to reduce relapse rates linked to idleness and financial insecurity.

2. Improve accessibility and decentralization of social work services: Social work services should be expanded to the grassroots level through mobile rehabilitation units, satellite centers, and community-based programs in peri-urban and rural areas, addressing geographical barriers. Additionally, subsidies or financial support should be provided to ensure that services are affordable for economically disadvantaged youths.

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