

Factors Promoting Drug Abuse among Secondary School Students in Tai Local Government Area of Rivers State.

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Abstract

The study examined the factors promoting drug abuse among secondary school students in Tai Local Government Area of Rivers State. Four objectives, four research questions and four hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of all senior secondary school students two (SS 2) in public schools in the area. The sample size consisted of 100 senior secondary school two students (50 males and 50 females) drawn through simple random sampling technique. Drug abuse questionnaire for students (DAQS) was developed and used for data collection. The reliability coefficient was determined using Chronbach Alpha method and it yielded an index of 0.86. Face and content validity were determined by two experts. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test was used in testing the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings reveal that self-esteem, peer pressure, mass media and the environment influence the secondary school students towards drug abuse. The researchers recommend among others that drug education be introduced in schools, students caught should be brought to book, parents to show love and teach their children to be God fearing and teach them the right type of social media culture.

Introduction

Drug abuse is on the increase and is one of the contemporary social problems that is prevalent in Nigeria as well as the entire world today. Upsurge of drug abuse in the country has made the issue a matter of constant discussion in the mass media, religious organizations, educational institutions, organizations and the family too. Onyeanusi, Mezieobi and Onyeanusi (2021) observed that this despicable act has

reached a frightening proportion that now pervades every sector of the society especially the educational sector of the country. Evidently, in Nigeria today, secondary school students are seen as the major culprits of the menace of drug abuse and addiction.

The socio-cultural life of the people has been adulterated by several factors, the wrong use of drug can now be noticed in almost all societies in Nigeria. To Okafor, Nnoruga and Ezeuzo (2021), drug abuse among youths in secondary schools have seriously affected their academic performance. Some of them either perform poorly in their studies while some discontinue or drop out of school and others involve in crimes or other social vices in the society. In fact, a situational analysis on drug abuse in Nigeria, discovered that it is gradually becoming a ticking time bomb in the Nigerian society, if not properly checked. This means that drug abuse could serve as a disastrous act capable of hampering the society in all ramifications.

A drug could be any substance other than food, that is used in the composition of medicine. On the other hand, drug abuse according Njoku (2015) is the use of drugs with such frequency that it causes physical or mental harm to the user or impairs social functioning. In a related development, Okafor et al (2021) see drug abuse as the excessive or persistent taking of drugs without regard to accepted medical practice. Drugs however, when used under medical prescription, has healing power on the consumer as it is basically designed to have positive effect on the mind, body, mood or behaviour of the user (Udoh, 2004). Hornby (2010) defined drug abuse as an illegal substance that some people smoke, inject and inhale etc. In view of the above definitions, drug abuse could be the use of unprescribed or excessive use or intake of drugs such that it hampers the normal functioning of the body. It may involve the use of illicit drugs like cannabis, alcohol, narcotic, stimulant, sedative, marijuana, anabolic steroids, inhalants to mention a few, which are very destructive to the human health.

Similarly, the World Drug Report indicated that the use of illicit drugs has increased in all nations in recent years. The report further highlights that the growing availability of a diverse range of drugs to an increasingly broad socio-economic spectrum of consumers is a source of concern (United Nations, 2018). The global impact of alcohol misuse alone is significant, with an estimated 3.3 million deaths attributed to its harmful use annually. Furthermore, at least 15.3 million individuals worldwide have been diagnosed with drug use disorders, underscoring the pervasive nature of substance abuse issues.

In 2012, an estimated 162 to 324 million people globally were found to have used psychoactive substances, this corresponds to between 3.5% to 7.0% of the global population aged 15-64, who had used illicit drugs and also an estimated 183,000 drug-related deaths were reported in 2012, ranging from 95,000 to 226,000, among the population aged 15-64 years (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014). In 2014, nearly one out of every 20 adults worldwide, aged between 15 and 64 years, were identified as drug abusers. This amounted to over 29 million people worldwide suffering from drug abuse disorders.

Another research indicates that at least 14% of adolescent girls and 18% of boys aged 13–15 years in low- and middle-income countries have reported consuming alcoholic beverages (World Health Organization, 2019). By the time they reach their senior years in high school, almost 70% of adolescents will have experimented with alcohol, while half will have used an illegal drug. Additionally, nearly 40% will have smoked a cigarette, and more than 20% will have misused a prescription drug for nonmedical purposes (Adelekan, 2019). The prevalence of illicit drug use among adolescents in the United States of America, Canada, and the United Kingdom has been on the increase. According to the British Office for National Statistics, 12% of pupils aged 11–15 had used drugs (Adelekan, 2019). The prevalence of substance use is on the rise across numerous African countries. Research indicates that the onset of drug abuse often commences during adolescence. This increase in prevalence rate among

adolescents in African countries include high rates of alcohol use, cigarette smoking, and cannabis consumption (Adelekan, 2019).

Drug globally is highly and frequently becoming one of the most dangerous and despicable acts of our present-day students. A lot of secondary school students in Nigeria have engaged themselves in the act of drug abuse which in reverse damage or destroy their nervous system or lead them into psychological or emotional problems. Nwaiwu (2025) maintained that drug abuse has adverse effects on the brain, kidney, liver, pancreas, heart and lungs thereby making them vulnerable to diseases. Although, most of these students are pushed into drug abuse as a result of factors itemized by Okafor Ezeuzo (2021) as pervasive poverty, social problems, peer group influence, frustration, low self-esteem, modernization and its tendencies while some may see it to be as a result of self-medication and social pathologies. However, irrespective of the above reasons, the collaborative effort of the parents, teachers, religious organizations, government and other stakeholders is necessary to combat drug abuse in the society.

Onyeanusi, Mezieobi and Onyanusi (2021) also identified causes of drug abuse among secondary school students to be: self-medication, social pathology, peer group influence, easy availability of drugs, occupational disposition, performance enhancement, relaxation, family background, moral decadence, emotional and psychological problems, social problems, modernization and its tendencies. Furthermore, Nwaiwu (2025) identified some factors responsible for drug abuse among youths to include: unemployment; peer group influence; pervasive poverty, frustration, helplessness and low self-esteem, social problems, modernization and its tendency.

Drug abuse poses serious problems to the society. These problems are underlisted as follow:

- 1 Drug abuse destroys human brain cells, perceptual coordination and visual acuity. These problems according to Anagbogu (2004) damage the cognitive skills of the students.
- 2 It leads to the development of aggressive behavior and depressive mood that may lead to criminal behavior or low self-esteem (Okafor et al, 2021).
- 3 Drug abuse leads to serious health challenges for addicts. Drug abuse has adverse effects on the brain, kidney, liver, heart and lung thereby making them vulnerable to diseases (Nwaiwu, 2025).
- 4 It leads to social degeneration which is manifested in such things as inability to mix freely with peers and colleagues and becoming anti-social.
- 5 Drug abuse may lead to serious social problems to the abuser. These include poverty, marital problems, loss of job and problems with law enforcement agents (Adedeji, 2003).
- 6 It leads to poor performance in school work and may ultimately result to school dropout.
- 7 Active ingredients in cannabis seriously cause severe headache, irrational thinking, learning disability, desperation, loss of motivation and impaired logical sequence on the student.
- 8 Drug abuse attacks students' stomachs and leads to ulcer with bleeding, perforation, obstruction in breathing, death of body cells, cancer of the lungs and decreases in intellectual function.
- 9 Drug abuse also result in serious psychiatric implications like confusion, restiveness and outright madness on the students for at least one out of ten researches has proved that psychiatric cases are due to delirious effects of marijuana (Njoku, 2015).

Adolescence is a time of transition from infancy to adulthood, marked by various physical, psychological, and social changes. During this critical developmental period, individuals experience rapid physical growth, cognitive development, and emotional changes. Adolescents, aged 14 to 25, comprise a significant part of

Nigeria's population. Many students in Nigerian schools are in this age group, the Nigerian National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has emphasized that drug abuse constitutes a significant challenge within schools (Olugbenga-Bello, et al. 2019). For example, research by Alemika revealed that over 20% of the student population in Lagos State, Nigeria, had experimented with psychoactive drugs at least once in their lives. Substance abuse among adolescents is a growing concern, with significant implications for their overall well-being. Despite the limited data on alcohol consumption, Nigeria still ranks second in alcohol consumption among youths in Africa. Research consistently demonstrates that students who consume alcohol often use other psychoactive substances as well (Olugbenga-Bello, et al. 2019).

Several research done have also reported the use of illicit drugs among both adolescents in school and out-of-school adolescents (Olugbenga-Bello, et al. 2019). These studies have indicated a differ prevalence rate of substance abuse among students. The use and abuse of drugs by adolescents have emerged as one of the most concerning health-related phenomena in Nigeria and other regions across the globe. However, there are disagreements among researchers regarding the prevalence, patterns, and factors that predict the consumption of substances. The prevalence of substance abuse has been stemming from various factors, including social, economic, and psychological influences. Peer pressure, stress, curiosity, and accessibility to drugs are among the factors that can contribute to drug experimentation and misuse among adolescents. Understanding the causes and risk factors associated with adolescent substance abuse is essential in developing effective intervention strategies. There so many factors that can promote drug abuse among students but this research will focus of self-esteem, peer pressure, mass media and environment.

Self-esteem is an individual's subjective evaluation of his/her own worth. Self-esteem encompasses beliefs about oneself (for example, "I am unloved", "I am worthy") as well as emotional states, such as triumph, despair, pride, and shame. A student with

low self-esteem may have trouble overcoming negative thoughts or feelings and therefore turn to outside experiences or activities to change those negative thoughts into positive ones. Drugs can be one of the outside activities they turn to in a negative situation or state of mind. The Mental Health and Counselling Centre of the University of Texas (2015) reported that low self-esteem can lead to lack of development and/or tendency toward drugs or alcohol consumption. This is just one example of the many studies that have discovered some type of connection between low self-esteem and drug abuse (Aneela, 2023).

Peer pressure (or social pressure) is the direct influence on people by peers, or the effect on an individual who gets encouraged to follow their peers by changing their attitudes, values or behaviours to conform to those of the influencing group or individual. This can result in either a positive or negative effect, or both. Social groups affected include both membership groups, in which individuals are "formally" members (such as political parties and trade unions), and cliques, in which membership is not clearly defined. However, a person does not need to be a member or be seeking membership of a group to be affected by peer pressure. Peer pressure can decrease one's confidence (Jang, et al. 2016). Peers are considered a primary influence on the behaviour of adolescents, and their importance appears to remain in effect from childhood through emerging adulthood. Numerous studies have provided evidence on the influence of peers in the development of drug abuse (Andrews, et al. 2022). Peer influence is regarded as one of the strongest determinants of juvenile delinquency and particularly adolescent substance use. A commonly held view is that social pressure from friends to use drugs and alcohol is a major contributor to substance use. Yet the notion of peer pressure, implied by the association between peer-group associations and drug behaviour.

Mass media include the diverse arrays of media that reach a large audience via mass communication. Most of these mass media show some programmes that are not healthy for a child to watch. And when the child has access to these programmes it

can influence the child's behaviour which could in turn influence him into abusing drugs that not supposed to be abused.

Environment is that which surrounds us, it may be living or non-living things. It includes physical, chemical and other natural forces. Living things live in their environment. They constantly interact with it and adapt themselves to conditions in their environment. Sometimes when the environment is not conducive for the child, it could affect the behaviour of that child thereby increasing the chances of the child abusing drug.

Despite this, there is currently no comprehensive review on drug abuse among secondary school students in Nigeria. In this narrative review, we will explore the prevalence of substance abuse among adolescents, delve into the root causes and contributing factors, and discuss the type and pattern of drug abuse. By shedding light on the complexities surrounding adolescent substance abuse, this review aims to provide valuable insights for professionals and educators working with secondary school students on the factors promoting drug abuse among secondary school students in Tai Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of drug abuse among secondary school students is no longer news but a global problem. More often than not one hears tales of drug abuse in the society. Students' involvement in such acts has seriously posed various sociological problems in Nigeria. Federal government of Nigeria in her effort to curb this obnoxious act established National Drug and Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) to help monitor and control illegal and excessive use of drugs in the country, but to no avail, as secondary school students still remain culprits of drug abuse in the country. Hence, the healthy social life of the people is seriously threatened. Thus, there is need for lasting solutions to the problems of drug abuse in Nigeria especially among secondary school students. It is in the light of the above assertion that the present

study was carried out to examine the causes of drug abuse among secondary school students in Tai Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aims to examine the factors promoting drug abuse among secondary school students in Tai Local Government Area of Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

- 1 find out whether self-esteem influence drugs abuse among secondary students.
- 2 determine if peer pressure cause secondary school students to abuse drugs.
- 3 ascertain whether the influence of the mass media cause drug abuse among secondary school students.
- 4 determine if environmental factors cause drug abuse among secondary school students.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

- 1 To what extent does self-esteem encourage drug abuse among secondary school students?
- 2 How does peer pressure contribute to drug abuse among secondary school students?
- 3 Does mass media influence secondary school students' engagement in drug abuse?
- 4 To what extent does environmental factors promote drug abuse among secondary school students?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level.

- 1 There is no significant influence of self-esteem on drug abuse among secondary school students.

- 2 There is no significant influence of peer pressure on drug abuse among secondary school students.
- 3 There is no significant influence of the mass media on drug abuse among secondary school students.
- 4 There is no significant influence of the environment on drug abuse among secondary school students.

Methodology

The design for the study is descriptive research design. The population of the study comprised all senior secondary school two students (SS 2) in Tai Local Government Area of Rivers State. As at the time of the study, there were 388 students in the public senior secondary schools in the area. The sample size for the study was 100 Senior Secondary School 2 (SS2) students were drawn with the use of purposive sampling technique. 50 males and 50 females were involved in the study. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire titled “Drug Abuse Questionnaire for Student’s (DAQS), developed by the researchers. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by two experts.

The reliability of the instrument was tested using 20 respondents outside the sample size but equivalent in all respect using test-retest method. Chronbach Alpha reliability method was used and a reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while t-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses of the study at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

The sequence of the presentation of the result obtained in the study is in accordance with the research questions and hypotheses raised to guide the study.

Research Hypothesis One: To what extent does self-esteem encourage drug abuse among secondary school students?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on self-esteem

Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	Response
Male	50	2.69	0.207	Accepted
Female	50	2.67	0.248	Accepted

Data from Table 1 above revealed that male has a mean score of 2.69 with a standard deviation of 0.207 while their female counterpart has a mean score of 2.67 with the standard deviation of 0.248. Both scores are more than the criterion mean of 2.5, thus showing an influence of self-esteem on drug abuse by the students.

Research Question 2: How does peer pressure contribute to drug abuse among secondary school students?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on peer pressure

Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	Response
Male	50	3.43	0.415	Accepted
Female	50	3.45	0.454	Accepted

Result on Table 2 above shows that male has a mean score of 3.43 with a standard deviation of 0.415 while their female counterpart has a mean score of 3.45 and a standard deviation of 0.454. Both scores exceed the criterion mean of 2.5, thus showing that peer pressure contributes to drug abuse among secondary school students.

Research Question 3: Does mass media influence secondary school students to engage in drug abuse?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation on mass media.

Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	Response
Male	50	2.39	0.117	Rejected
Female	50	2.09	0.207	Rejected

Result on Table 3 revealed that male students have a mean score of 2.39 and the standard deviation is 0.117 while that of the female is 2.09 and 0.207 respectively. This shows that the mass media does not have much influence on students' engagement on drug abuse as the scores fall below the criterion mean of 2.5.

Research Question 4: To what extent does environment promote drug abuse among secondary school students?

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation on environment

Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	Response
Male	50	2.58	0.214	Accepted
Female	50	2.43	0.476	Rejected

Data from Table 4 above shows that male students have a mean score of 2.58 and the standard deviation is 0.214 while their female counterpart has 2.43 and 0.476 respectively. This means that the environment influence male toward drug abuse with a grand mean of (2.58) but does not cause drug abuse among the female that has a grand mean of (2.43) which was less than the criterion mean of 2.50.

Hypothesis One: There is no significance influence of self-esteem on drug abuse among secondary school students.

Table 5: t-test analysis of the influence of self-esteem

Self-esteem	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal	t-crit	df	Sig. level	Decision
Male	50	2.69	0.208					
Female	50	2.67	0.248	0.75	1.98	98	0.05	

Result on Table 5 above shows that the calculated t-value is 0.75 which is less than the critical value of 1.98 at the degree of freedom of 98 at 0.05 level of significance. This means that self-esteem has significant influence on drug abuse. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant influence of peer pressure on drug abuse among secondary school students.

Table 6: t-test analysis of peer pressure influence

Peer pressure	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal	t-crit	df	Sig. level	Decision
Male	50	3.43	0.415					
Female	50	3.45	0.454	1.96	2.15	98	0.05	NS

Result on Table 6 shows that the calculated t-value is 1.96 which is less than the critical value of 2.15 at the degree of freedom of 98 at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that peer pressure has significant influence on drug abuse. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant influence of the mass media on drug abuse among secondary school students.

Table 7: t-test analysis of mass media influence

Mass Media	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal	t-crit	df	Sig. level	Decision
Male	50	2.39	0.117					
Female	50	2.09	0.207	1.86	1.96	98	0.05	NS

Result on Table 7 shows that the calculated t-value is 1.86 which is less than the critical value of 1.96 at the degree of freedom of 98 at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that mass media has greater influence on drug abuse. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significance influence on the environment on drug abuse among secondary school students.

Table 8: t-test analysis of environmental influence.

Environment	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal	t-crit	df	Sig. level	Decision
Male	50	2.58	0.214					
Female	50	2.43	0.476	1.23	1.96	98	0.05	NS

Results from Table 8 above reveals that the calculated t-value is 1.23 which is less than the critical value of 1.96 at the degree of freedom of 0.05. this shows that the environment of the student influences them towards drug abuse. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings.**Influence of self-esteem on drug abuse**

On the hypothesis one, the result revealed that there was no significant difference in the influence of self-esteem on drug abuse by both male and female secondary school students. Self-esteem has been viewed by some psychologists as influencing some negative behaviours in adolescents. However, the reported insignificant influence indicates that not all those who are neither low in self-esteem nor high in self-esteem also scored high in their drug abuse. The result that there is an insignificant influence of self-esteem on drug abuse is not surprising. This is because drug cannot boost the self-esteem of an individual rather it reduces the worth of an individual. This could be the better explanation to this result. Also, the findings of the study is in consonance with the observation of Nwaiwu (2025) that helplessness and low self-esteem causes drug abuse among youths.

Influence of peer pressure on drug abuse

As shown on Table two, a significant difference was found in the influence of peer pressure on drug abuse among secondary school students. This means that as students' scores in peer group is going up the score of students on drug abuse will as well increase. Therefore, the result that there is a significant influence of peer group on drug abuse among secondary school students is not surprising because when a student peer group highly influences his decision, it is most likely that the students will not believe in himself and will tend to do the bidding of the group, meaning if the group is the type that takes illicit drug, he will join them to do so. Also one of the major traits of peer group is that it makes a student to have a disbelief attitude in a positive outcome which certainly will reduce his/her task accomplishments which may lead him/her into drug abuse. This could be the possible explanation to this result. This finding is in line with the view of Nwaiwu (2025) who identified the influence of peer group as one of the factors responsible for drug abuse.

Influence of mass media on drug abuse

On the evidence from data analysis the mass media greatly influence secondary school students towards drug abuse. Such mass media include radio, television and films. So, when children get addicted to these various media, it can increase their desire to abuse drugs. This could be as a result of some unhealthy programmes that is being shown on those media spaces.

Influence of the environment on drug abuse

On the Table 8 reveals that the environment of the secondary school students enhances drug abuse. This indicates that when the environment is toxic it can increase the tendency of children abusing drug.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it was established that self-esteem, peer pressure, mass media and the environment were the major factors contributing to drug abuse among secondary school students. Again, it is well established that drug abuse and addiction are in tandem with violent conflict and crime in human environment.

Recommendations

- 1 Drug education should be made a compulsory teaching subject from the lower basic classes to the highest level of education.
- 2 A multidimensional approach should be embarked upon to curb the menace of illicit drug use.
- 3 Establishment of drug education association should be made in schools to ensure commitment and awareness among students.
- 4 Government should create a conducive environment for learning, this will help reduce the level of stress among students. And this will help combat drug abuse among secondary school students.

- 5 Parents should monitor the type of television programmes their children watch as well as other social networks.
- 6 Parents should try as much as they can to adopt a healthy means of child upbringing which will involve proper monitoring and care. This will help reduce the level of drug abuse among students.
- 7 School administrators should provide means of monitoring students peer relationship. This will help to know the kind of friends students keep.
- 8 Counsellors should always organize drug prevention conversation between parents and their children in order to help reduce the rate of drug abuse.

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