

## Psycho-Social Determinants of Adolescents' Attitude towards Drugs Abuse Prevention in Cross River State, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The study was designed to find out the influence of the following psycho-social variables: social motivation, gender and self-concept on the attitudes of adolescents towards drug abuse prevention. Three (3) hypotheses were formulated to guide the study, and relevant literature was reviewed. A survey research design was adopted which made use of a sample of 1080 secondary school students (SS1) across the three (3) education zones. Two (2) research instruments, namely a 20-item questionnaire and an oral interview with the subjects, were used to obtain data from the field. The data analysis technique used included Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and Independent t-test statistics. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level. The results showed that the three independent variables have significant influence on the attitudes of adolescents towards drug abuse prevention.

**Keywords:** social motivation, gender, self-concept and adolescent attitudes towards drug abuse prevention

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background of the Study

Many Nigerians use and sometimes abuse alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and many other drugs. Denga and Akuto (2004) observed that the problems of substance abuse has expanded cancerously during the last two decades, from a relative confinement of those trafficking in drugs from Nigeria to overseas markets for economic purposes, to a widespread misuse of drugs in Nigerian urban areas, rural societies, tertiary institutions of learning, secondary schools and is threatening menacingly these days to engulf primary schools as well.

Drug is a strong propeller of delinquent behaviour among adolescents. Drugs are substances essentially required for human health which should be taken under medical prescription. It is however abused when it is taken without a doctor's prescription or when there is a persistent or sporadic excessive intake.

According to Obanya (2015) drug abuse includes smoking cigarettes, tramadol and marijuana, Indian hemp, taking tramadol and other drugs alleged to aid memory, energy, etc.

Adolescents who take drugs do so for a variety of reasons and a given individual may take different drugs at various times for different reasons. Denga and Akuto (2004) pointed out the chief reasons for adolescents taking drugs such as to satisfy curiosity.

Some adolescents use drugs because some of these substances provide immediate and powerful reinforcing feelings. Substance abuse may be maintained by numerous consequent reinforcers that may be psychological, social or physiological in nature. These reinforcing factors include anxiety reduction, enhanced ability to exhibit behaviours which one is incapable of without such substances.

Other reasons for taking drugs by adolescents are:

- To express independence
- Have pleasurable and thrilling new experience
- Gain an improved understanding or creativity

- Foster a sense of ease and relaxation
- Want to feel high, bold and challenge authority or feel fearless enough to attack other people and destroy them without showing human feelings.
- Peer group influence

Ajayi (2009) observed that misuse of drugs generally, especially psychoactive drugs, can lead to poor health, personality disorder or behavioural problems. Addicts, he emphasized, are always out of touch with reality and prone to taking actions which are social vices. Alcohol and other drugs impair perception, reduce powers of sound reasoning, learning ability and memory.

Jessor and Jessor (2008) reported that experimentation with alcohol and other drugs is no longer a common practice of only a small proportion of youths; rather, it has become the norm among the current generation of adolescents. It appears that most adolescents even perceive drug experimentation as a necessary transition to maturity or adulthood.

Adesoji (2019) emphasized that institutions of learning have been noted for students' unrest and violent behaviour and that sometimes lecturers and secondary school teachers are harassed and molested whenever students go on rampage. It is the general belief of people that no normal student would engage in this shameful act at the expense of his/her academics without the influence of drugs.

Besides, some students also belong to secret cults whose members are noted for drug abuse. Despite well-known risks, adolescents continue to abuse drugs thereby destroying their own lives. Folawiyo (2008) in a study of prison inmates observed that many youths are now languishing in prison or in police cells over drug-related offences. Folawiyo (2008) added that inspite of the grievous and dastard consequences of drug abuse and the preventive measures undertaken by national and international bodies to curb this menace in youths, this leprous practice has continued to prevail in today's society.

Evaluation of prevention programmes indicate that improvement in knowledge and some attitude change may occur. However, there is little evidence that programmes by drug agencies serve to actually reduce or eliminate drug use according to Botvin (2009).

Brown (2004) stated that prevention of alcohol and substance use problems among youths needs to be understood as a continuum of service and consequently research needs to span this continuum. Preventive interventions for alcohol, tobacco and other drug use disorders can be achieved through early detection and diagnosis, and through testing of new behavioural strategies at the individual, family and community levels as stated by Brown (2004). Generally, drinking and smoking are instinctive drives which adolescents get involved in because they want to satisfy certain biological and social demands. Isangedighi (2020) emphasized that parents and significant others in the society should help to guide the adolescents' impulse and drive energy which is fundamentally biological in nature (Id).

The author also stated that adolescents' id continues to push them into involvement in this act (substance use and abuse) thereby making prevention difficult. This also implies that there is always a conflict between the three personality components. Thus parental and societal demands always force adolescents into indulging in uncontrolled practice of drug use and substance abuse as a means of warding off tension arising from conflicts of ideas.

US Department of Health and Human Service (2011), reported that most secondary schools students believe that smoking and alcohol intake are dangerous to one's health. Yet despite this knowledge, many adolescents at that level experiment with smoking and consumption of alcohol. This situation suggested that social adaptation may over ride intellectual adaptation or knowledge of the dangers of substance abuse. Thus, peer group pressure or social adaptation (for acceptability) will always cause adolescents to resist any attempt to prevent them from continuous indulgence in drinking and smoking.

Ukpong (2020) emphasized that an adolescent who develops a negative self-concept towards life generally becomes frustrated, anxious and loses self-confidence and may venture into other illicit means to obtain happiness such as drug use and drug abuse. The adolescent with such a negative self-concept about life needs help from social workers, parents and especially, teachers to be able to develop a positive and acceptable lifestyle.

Normally, the prevalent values and beliefs in an environment facilitate the making of one's self-image or concept. The basic force motivating the adolescent to engage in substance abuse, and his/her subsequent attitude towards abuse prevention is to actualize, maintain and enhance himself/herself within the context of his/her environment.

The social learning theory of Bandura (1977) emphasized the roles played by vicarious, symbolic and self-regulatory processes in the acquisition of behaviour such as the tendency towards drug abuse and the attitude towards abuse prevention. Thus, drinking, smoking and subsequent abuse of even other drugs, and the attitude towards prevention appear to be initiated as a result of social influences or, more particularly, the imitation of models such as peers and significant others.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite well-known risks, adolescents continue to abuse drugs and such abuse continues to destroy lives according to Eneh (2013) and Olusakin (2015). This persistent act by adolescents has continued to pose serious concern to the government, parents, as well as the general public.

Government and parents are worried because continuous substance abuse by adolescents leads to unconsciousness, alteration or narcosis which will invariably affect the aggregate development of the nation.

Researchers like Onete (2008), Miller (2005) and Bachman (2012) stated that adolescents with negative life experiences are known to be at risk or vulnerable to using alcohol, cigarette or marijuana.

Several research studies have been carried out and the need to address psycho-social factors such as parenting styles, peer group influence, socio-economic status, residential location, and motivation has been stressed. Besides, governments, school counsellors, psychologists and local agencies have constantly organized talks aimed at encouraging attitude change towards substance abuse by adolescents. In spite of all these, the problem of substance abuse and adolescents' negative attitude towards drug abuse prevention has persisted as reported by Ekeratte (2019). It is therefore envisaged that this research may help to foster a positive attitude towards drug abuse prevention.

### **Objective/Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to find out the influence of psycho-social determinants of adolescents' attitude towards drug abuse prevention in Cross River State, Nigeria. The following specific objectives were formulated to guide the study.

- 1) Examine the influence of social motivation on adolescents' attitude to drug abuse prevention.
- 2) Determine the influence of gender on adolescents' attitude towards drug abuse prevention.
- 3) Determine the influence of self-concept on the attitude of adolescents to drug abuse prevention.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following research hypotheses were tested in this study:

- 1) There is no significant relationship between social motivation and the attitude of adolescents towards drug abuse prevention.
- 2) There is no significant gender difference in the attitude of adolescents towards drug abuse prevention.
- 3) Self-concept does not significantly influence the attitude of adolescents towards drug abuse prevention.

### **Justification of the Study (with Particular Reference to Nigeria)**

Extensive empirical research work has been carried out on social variables and adolescents' attitude towards drug abuse prevention by various researchers notably Onete (2006), Adesoji (2019), Agbor (2004) and Asuquo (2013) in the areas of substance use and abuse generally. What is perhaps new is the fact that the research will usher in a new area of attitudinal change among youths.

It is also believed that classroom teachers as well as adolescents themselves will gain more insight into the dangers of substance abuse which determines their negative disposition towards drug abuse prevention.

The research is therefore justified and based on the above, the research is important for the following reasons:

- 1) It is hoped that the results will bring about attitudinal change in adolescents towards substance abuse prevention.
- 2) It is expected that the behaviour of youths towards drug use and abuse prevention will witness a positive change thereby reducing cases of delinquency in the society. The long-term benefit is that in Cross River State and Nigeria as a whole prisons will no more harbour youths for drug-related offences.
- 3) Parents and the society at large will become aware of the different roles they can play in awakening desirable attitudes in adolescents towards drug use, drug abuse and drug abuse prevention.
- 4) Finally, schools will see the need to equip counselling units so as to handle students' issues pertaining to drug use and drug abuse prevention.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Social Motivation and Attitudes of Adolescents towards Drug Abuse Prevention**

Motivation energizes, sustains, directs and regulates behaviour, and influences an individual to act in a certain way. Onete (2008) noted that a person's behaviour is influenced most fundamentally by social interactions which can determine their sense of identity and belonging, and this can equally affect their behaviour or attitude in life activities including indulgence in drug abuse.

Simon (2005) observed that people act only in terms of the attitude or feelings they have about a given situation and such feelings or dispositions are always imperfect. Thus, the presence of cognitive limitations and their impact on one's attitudes seriously impairs one's abilities to clearly define problems, generate ideas or action alternatives with ideal and predictable consequences for example, reactions to drug abuse prevention.

Motivation generally too is a process which can to a large extent, influence one's attitude or feelings towards a particular object, event, or issue. Thus, according to Bryant (2002), an individual with a positive attitude towards a particular object may react favourably to the situation or object while a person with a negative attitude or disposition will react unfavourably.

Cesnoff (2008) found out that reward for a desired behaviour can lead to formation or alteration of attitudes with favourable attitudes arising from the experience of goal fulfilment.

Borba (2009) observed that there is a relationship between motivation and attitudinal behaviour. He noted that cigarette smoking usually begins through a variety of motives including initiation, a desire for social approval, inner feeling of inferiority and other motives.

Adolescents normally show curiosity in their reluctance to take good advice from parents or other significant persons because of their inquisitiveness and experimentation. They will always want to find out things for themselves. This motivational dimension is commonly observed in adolescents with respect to drug abuse prevention even with good advice from older people on the adverse effects of smoking, drinking excessively (preventive measures), etc.

Trying out drugs is no longer an exception especially in learning institutions. Both male and female students indulge in the use and abuse of drugs because they have the urge to reduce tension, win status and sophistication, make up, show down and be happy through pills, cigarette or/and alcohol.

### **Gender Difference and the Attitude of Adolescents towards Drug Abuse Prevention**

The behaviour of an individual towards environmental stimuli has a relationship with the gender of the individual as opined by Adepoju (2006). According to Adie (2006) and Bogard (2019) males are generally more likely to perform actions or have a higher tendency or inclination towards a certain behaviour than do females. The authors also stated that gender differences in reaction to drug abuse prevention are much larger in the presence of provocation than in its absence. In other words, males are significantly more likely than females to react negatively to drug abuse prevention when they are provoked.

However, the magnitude and direction of gender differences in attitude to substance abuse prevention seems to vary greatly with the type of drug in question. While males are more likely to display negative reactions to the preventions of smoking cigarettes, marijuana and cocaine, females are more likely to display a negative attitude to the prevention of alcohol drinking as reported by Okon (2009).

Onyejiaku (2001) asserted that boys are involved in delinquent behaviour such as burglary, mischief making, car snatching, theft, use of hard drugs, and other various social vices, whereas a greater number of girls than boys are involved in running away from home, defiance of parental discipline and illicit sexual behaviour.

In all instances, it is clear that gender influences attitudes of adolescents towards drug use, substance abuse and drug abuse prevention.

Oliver (2018) using 1,500 adolescents in Lagos, Nigeria arrived at the following conclusions about stereotypes held on how males and females differ in drug use, and abuse preventions:

- 1) Girls on the average are good in alcohol intake and frown seriously at prevention of consumption;
- 2) Boys on the average are better in smoking alcoholism, taking of hard drugs including tramadol and ignore any attempt at preventing consumption.

### **Self-Concept and Attitude of Adolescents towards Drug Abuse Prevention**

A positive self-concept is viewed as the hallmark of not only decent behaviour, but of a healthy personality according to Basse (2009). Generally, individuals seek to associate themselves with those who have similar attitudes.

Brophy (2016) opined that self-concept is organized and resists change as much as possible in order to enjoy a consistent and organized world. However, he averred that “self” changes when environmental conditions are favourable and vice-versa. For example, if an individual perceives drug dependence as meaningful and rewarding, and he is able to cope well with the drug environment and conditions, then, he is likely to develop a positive view of

himself with respect to substance dependence. His attitude towards substance abuse will be positive and any attempt to prevent abuse will be met with strong resistance.

As an individual grows up, his/her self-concept develops either negatively or positively depending on the nature of experiences he/she is exposed to. According to Osborne (2007), both positive and negative self-concepts are parts of a circular relationship and constitute the basis of attitudinal and behavioural manifestation.

Curran (2000) in his “containment” theory tried to explain maladjustment in relation to the attitude of adolescents. He postulated that some inner forces, hostilities, frustration and inferiority feelings (an aspect of self-concept) could push students towards behaviour disorder for example, drug abuse persistence.

Rubin (2004) surveyed the opinions of a large sample of students (both sexes) on self-concept and behaviour disorder and found a positive correlation between negative self-concept and substance abuse. The implication here is that an individual with a negative self-concept is more likely to indulge in drug abuse.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The survey research design was adopted for this work. It involves determining the nature of a situation as it exists at the time of investigation. Also, this design is useful for opinion and attitude studies such as adolescent’s attitudes towards drug abuse prevention, and depends basically on questionnaire and interviews as means of data collection.

### Area of the Study

The study area is Cross River State of Nigeria. Cross River State is one of the 36 geographical entities/states in Nigeria with its headquarters at Calabar. The state is comprised of 18 local government areas, categorized into four educational zones namely: Calabar, Ugep, Ikom and Ogoja. The state occupies a total land mass of 23, 074, 425 square kilometres, and it is situated in the tropics and lies between Latitudes 5<sup>o</sup>50 and 9<sup>o</sup>28 North of the Equator and East of the Greenwich meridian respectively.

Cross River State is rich in natural resources with thickly forested land of about 6,101,290 square kilometres.

The people have three major languages namely: Efik, Ejagham and Bekwarra. It has many tourist sites for example EPZ, Obudu Ranch Resort, TINNAPA, etc.

### Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised of all Senior Secondary One (SS 1) students in all public secondary schools in the state. The estimated population is about 15,400 SSI, students drawn from 310 public secondary schools in Cross River State for the 2022/2023 academic session (Source: PPMP, Calabar, 2023).

### Sample and Sampling Procedure

Multi stage sampling was employed in the data collection process. First, purposive cluster sampling was adopted by selecting schools within the three educational zones.

Next was stratified sampling according to educational zones followed by local government areas. Finally, simple random sampling was adopted based on selection from representative population. This gave a sample size of one thousand, eighty students (1,080 students) in 45 schools from 310 schools across the state.

### Instruments for Data Collection

The following research instruments were used for data collection.

- a. Adolescents Attitude Towards Drug Abuse Prevention Scale (AADAPSQ) questionnaire
- b. Oral interview with the subjects using tape-recorders for reliable information about adolescents' substance use, abuse and prevention.

### Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

The instruments were subjected to preview and independent expert judgement for face and content validity. Also, Cronbach Coefficient Alpha method was used to analyse data that was trial-tested. The internal consistency of the items were considered high enough (subscales of 0.76 to 0.91) to justify the use of the instruments.

### Statistical Analysis Technique

The data obtained were analysed using two (2) types of descriptive statistics.

- 1) Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r)
- 2) Independent t-test analysis.

**Table I: School sample characteristics**

S/N	Educational Zone	No. of L.G.As	No of schools sampled	No. of students sampled	Total No. in each educational zone
01	Calabar	05	15	300	300
	Ikom	05	15	420	420
	Ogoja	05	15	360	360
		15	45	1080	1080

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### General Description of Research Variables

The study was focused on the psycho-social determinants of adolescent's attitudes towards drug abuse prevention in Cross River State of Nigeria. The independent variable was psycho-social determinants, with three sub-variables namely social motivation, gender and self-concept. The dependent variable was attitudes of adolescents towards drug abuse prevention. The descriptive statistics for variables are shown in Table II.

**Table II: Means and standard deviations of major variables in the study**

S/N	Variables	N	Mean	SD
1	Attitudes towards drug abuse prevention	1080	20.32	4.10
2	Social motivation	1080	20.09	3.60
3	Gender	1080	21.28	2.62
	Self-concept	1080	18.86	3.07
	Total	1080	80.55	13.39

### Presentation of Results

**Hypothesis one (I):** These is no significant relationship between social motivation and the attitudes of adolescents towards drug abuse prevention.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation test-statistics was used and the result is presented in Table III.

**Table III. Pearson’s correlation analysis of the relationship between social motivation and attitude of adolescents towards drug abuse prevention (n=1080)**

Variables	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r
Social motivation (x)	20090	45481	.83887	-0.89
Attitude towards drug abuse prevention (y)	20320	46135		

Note: \*P<0.05, df = 1078, critical r value = 0.062.

The result in Table III indicates that the absolute value (-0.89) of the calculated r is higher than the critical value (0.062) at 0.05 level of significance with 1078 degree of freedom, rejecting the null hypothesis. This implies that there is a significant relationship between social motivation and the attitudes of adolescents towards drug abuse prevention.

**Hypothesis two (II):** There is no significant gender difference in the attitudes of adolescents towards drug abuse prevention. Independent t-test statistics was used to analyse the data and the result is presented in Table IV.

**Table IV: Results of Independent t-test analysis of influence of gender on the attitudes of adolescents towards drug abuse prevention (N=1080)**

Group	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	t
Male	540	19.99	3.61	2.90*
Female	540	20.65	3.58	
Total	1080	20.32	3.60	

Note: \*P<.05, df=1078, critical t-value = 1.96.

The results in Table IV indicates that the calculated t-value of 2.90 is greater than the critical t-value (1.96) with 1078 df at 0.05 alpha level. The null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant gender difference in the attitudes of adolescents towards drug abuse prevention.

**Hypothesis III:** Self-concept does not significantly influence the attitudes of adolescents towards drug abuse prevention.

To test this hypothesis, the respondents were categorized into high and low self-concept groups based on their score (20 and above, high self-concept group), below 20, low self-concept group II). Also, independent t-test statistics was used to analyse the data and result is shown in Table V.

**Table V: Independent t-test analysis of the influence of self-concept on adolescents’ attitude towards drug abuse prevention**

Group	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	T
High	593	20.51	3.64	2.05*
Low	487	20.04	3.54	
Total	1080	20.32	3.60	

Note: \*p< .05, df = 1078, critical t-value = 1.96.

The result of the analysis gave a t-value of 2.05, which was higher than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level with 1078 df. This implies that self-concept significantly influences the attitude of adolescents towards drug abuse prevention.

## Discussion of Findings

The main focus of this study was to find out the extent to which psycho-social variables such as social motivation, gender and self-concept could influence adolescents' attitudes towards drug abuse prevention in Cross River State, Nigeria.

The results/findings showed a significant correlation and influence of social motivation, gender and self-concept and attitudes of adolescents towards drug abuse prevention.

The findings agree with empirical research results of Obanya (2015), Adesoji (2019) and Isangedighi (2020) who found a significant relationship between social motivation and attitudinal/behavioural manifestation of adolescents. They also emphasized that during the developmental period, adolescents are seriously engaged in social activities, falling in and out of relationships, striving for independence from parents and personal identify and heightened pleasurable sensations.

Also, in agreement with the findings, Peck (2019) asserted tha a positive (high) self-concept adolescent is viewed as the hallmark of not only a decent behaviour but a healthy personality, whereas adolescents with negative (low) self-concept display unfavourable attitude or disposition towards drug abuse prevention.

Parental approval normally motivates the adolescent and helps to build up prestige in him/her which the adolescent child tries to maintain by striving to live an acceptable standard of life such as avoidance of drug abuse or supporting the ways of drug abuse prevention. Low self-concept breeds poor achievement in life, and may usher in frustration, thus indulging in social vices such as drug abuse.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The major aim of this study was to find out the extent to which psycho-social variables such as social motivation, gender and self-concept influence the attitudes of adolescents' drug abuse prevention in Cross River State, Nigeria. The three null hypotheses were all rejected. On the basis of the findings, it was concluded that social motivation can influence either negatively or positively the attitudes of adolescents towards drug abuse prevention. Therefore, motivational factors when properly applied can help to shift adolescents' attention from drug abuse tendencies.

Also, there is a significant influence of gender on the attitudes of adolescents towards drug abuse prevention. However. Males are more involved in delinquent behavioural activities and other social vices including substance use, abuse and avoidance of preventive measures as reported by Miller (2004). Finally, it was recommended that proper projection of self-concept by parents/teachers will make for an improved and better attitudinal and overall behavioural development of adolescents.

Finally, governments should develop appropriate policies that respond to the drug situation through focusing on effecting attitudinal change of adolescents' towards its prevention as part of the demand reduction strategy.

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