

INFLUENCE OF SELF-ESTEEM AND SOCIAL SUPPORT ON DRUG ABUSE AMONG STREET CHILDREN IN MAKURDI METROPOLIS

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Abstract

This study investigated assessment of psychoactive drug used and abused among street children in Makurdi metropolis in Benue State, Nigeria. The study employed ex-post facto research design. Two hundred (200) participants were randomly drawn from Makurdi metropolis in Benue State through stratified, convenience and simple random sampling methods. Self-esteem scale, social support scale and drug abuse screening scale were used for data collection. Three hypotheses were tested using multiple regression and simple linear regression analyses. The findings showed that self-esteem has no significant influence on psychoactive drug used among street children; however, the statistical values for each finding showed that social support has no significant influence on psychoactive drug used among street children. There was no significant joint influence of self-esteem and social support on substance abuse among street children. Based on these findings, it was concluded that self-esteem has no significant influence on psychoactive drug used among street children. Social support has no significant influence on psychoactive drug used among street children. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that parents and guardians should help children to identify and value themselves so as to boost their self-esteem. Parents, government, and NGOs should give support to children in order to encourage them by quitting drugs abuse. Children engaged in drug use are also encouraged to go for rehabilitation for proper treatment.

Keywords: Influence, Self-esteem, Social Support, Drug Abuse and Street Children

Introduction

Many youths today failed to discover their purpose as a person therefore found themselves in the street engage with so many activities. Some of these activities have changed their attitudes and personalities. Street can influence youths in so many ways as result of influence of peer-pressure. Many youths are not what they should be today because of the influence of peer-pressure in the street. So many things happen in the street and the chief of these are the uses and abuses of psychoactive drugs. The use and abuse of these drugs has both psychological and social influences.

The use of alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, and other psychoactive substances constitutes one of most important public health problems among youth worldwide (Oshodi et al., 2010). WHO (2023) in recent studies in African countries have shown that the phenomenon of drug use is also

common in this continent and is becoming one of the most disturbing health-related problems among street children (Igwe et al., 2009). Studies have shown that there is an increasing incidence in the use and a decreasing age of onset of these substances (Fatoye & Morakinyo, 2002). Most street boys begin their use of drugs with alcohol and cigarettes and later progress to more dangerous substances such as cannabis and codeine (Abiodun et al., 2010).

A psychoactive drug is a chemical substance that changes brain function and results in alterations in perception, mood, consciousness, cognition, or behavior (Lovett & Richard 2005). These substances may be used medically; recreationally; to purposefully improve performance or alter one's consciousness; as entheogens; for ritual, spiritual, or shamanic purposes; or for research (Ojo et al., 2009). Some categories of psychoactive drugs, which have therapeutic value, are prescribed by physicians and other healthcare practitioners. Examples include anesthetics, analgesics, anticonvulsant and antiparkinsonian drugs as well as medications used to treat neuropsychiatric disorders, such as antidepressants, anxiolytics, antipsychotics, and stimulant medications (Maurice et al., 2015). Some psychoactive substances may be used in the detoxification and rehabilitation programs for persons dependent on or addicted to other psychoactive drugs (Lovett & Richard 2005 & Jenna, 2023). Psychoactive drug use can be traced to prehistory. There is archaeological evidence of the use of psychoactive substances (mostly plants) dating back at least 10,000 years, and historical evidence of cultural use over the past 5,000 years (Merlin, 2003). The chewing of coca leaves, for example, dates back over 8,000 years ago in Peruvian society (National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, 2012). The reason for their use and abuse may be because of how they perceive themselves or and lack of support from others.

Self-esteem reflects a person's overall subjective emotional evaluation of his or her own worth. It is a judgment of oneself as well as an attitude toward the self. Self-esteem encompasses beliefs about oneself as well as emotional states, such as triumph, despair, pride, and shame, (Hewitt & John, 2009). Smith and Mackie (2007), Orth, (2018) defined it by saying self-concept is what people think about the self; self-esteem is the positive or negative evaluations of the self, as in how we feel about it. Self-esteem is an individual's sense of his or her value or worth, or the extent to which a person values, approves of, appreciates, prizes, or likes himself or herself (Baumeister et al., 2005). It is generally considered to be the evaluative component of the self-concept, a broader representation of the self that includes cognitive and behavioral aspects as well as evaluative or affective ones.

Social support is the perception and actuality that one is cared for, has assistance available from other people, and that one is part of a supportive social network. These supportive resources can be emotional, tangible, informational or companionship and intangible (Bolger & Amarel, 2007). Social support can be measured as the perception that one has assistance available, the actual received assistance, or the degree to which a person is integrated in a social network. Support can come from many sources, such as family, friends, pets, neighbours, coworkers, organizations, etc. Government provided social support is often referred to as public aid (Taylor et al., 2004 & Kendra, 2023).

Social supports have different patterns of correlations with health, personality, and personal relationships (Gurung, 2006). For example, perceived support is consistently linked to better mental health whereas received support and social integration are not (Gurung, 2006). In fact, research indicates that perceived social support that is untapped can be more effective and beneficial than utilized social support (Taylor et al., 2004). Some have suggested that invisible support, a form of support where the person has support without his or her awareness, may be the most beneficial (Bolger & Amarel, 2007). Yet, there is no universally agreed upon definition of social support among researchers in the field, but these distinctions are all key in understanding what exactly researchers are examining in studies (Bolger & Amarel, 2007 & PHC, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

A nation that fails to recognize the usefulness of her younger generation can be likened to a woman with everything yet begging to survive. Children are the future workforce of every nation, but when they are not in a normal state, their workforce nature becomes jeopardized. Psychoactive drugs problem is one of the issues Benue State Street children are facing. It has affected their daily functioning and their mental process. Most street children are what they are today because of the problem of psychoactive drugs. Many youths today have turned to criminality (Akpa et al., 2019).

Psychoactive substance use poses a threat to the health, social and economic fabric of families, communities, and nations. Adolescence is a time of experimentation and risk-taking, and the initiation of substance use often begins during this period. The consequences of drug use are often multifaceted. This habit not only affects health, education, and occupational career but also incurs a huge financial and social burden to society. According to the World Health Organization substance abuse is persistent or sporadic drug use inconsistent with or unrelated to acceptable medical practice. Today, there is no part of the world that is free from the curse of drug trafficking and drug addiction. All over the world, millions of people with drug addiction are leading miserable lives between life and death. Makurdi street children too are caught in this vicious circle of drug abuse, and the numbers of drug addicts among these children are increasing day by day.

Drug abuse has created a detrimental impact on society. It has led to an increase in the crime rate. Individuals with addiction resort to crime to pay for their drugs. Drugs remove inhibition and impair judgment egging one to commit offenses. The incidence of eve-teasing, group clashes, assault, and impulsive murders increases with drug abuse. A significantly higher proportion of substance users were associated with predisposing factors such as joint family, parental abuse status, working status, and illiteracy/school-drop out among Makurdi street children. Much research has been conducted on drug used and abuse but none have being conducted among street children in Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria, therefore making this research to fill a gap in literature and to add to knowledge.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. Assess the influence of self-esteem on psychoactive drug use among street children in Makurdi metropolis.
- ii. Examine the influence of social support on psychoactive drug use among street children in Makurdi metropolis.
- iii. Investigate the joint influence of self-esteem and social support on psychoactive drug use among street children in Makurdi metropolis.

Hypotheses

- i. Self-esteem will significantly predict psychoactive drug use among street children in Makurdi metropolis.
- ii. Social support will significantly predict psychoactive drug use among street children in Makurdi metropolis.
- iii. Self-esteem and social support will significantly and jointly influence psychoactive drug use among street children in Makurdi metropolis.

Methodology

Ex-post factor research design was employed in order to determine the influence of self-esteem and social support on drug abuse among street children. An ex-post factor research design was used because of its appropriateness when attempting to determine causes, effects between events that have already occurred; that the causes are studied after they presumably have exerted their effects or influence on another/other variables. Since the researcher intends to use the results of the study for counselling, placement and improvement of educational achievement, the researcher used ex-post factor research design. The area of this study is Markudi Metropolis of Benue State. Markudi has an area of about 34, 059 km² kilometre and a population of 300, 377 (National Population Census) (NPC, 2006). The River Benue is a major driver of economic, agricultural and environmental significance in the city as it supplies the bulk of water use by the people of Markudi and its environs for different activities depending on its points of contact.

The populations for this study were strictly street children in Makurdi Metropolis in Benue State. The study involved 200 street children, 142 male which is 71 % and female 57 which is 29 %. The participants were asked to fill in their biodata and to respond to the option that best fit them. The study used three sets of Instruments for data collections. The instruments are (1) Self-Esteem Scale, (2) Socio Support Scale and (3) Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement Scale (ASSIST).

Self Esteem Scale by Rosenberg (1965) is a 10-item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. The scale is believed to be multi-dimensional. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Items 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 are reverse scored. Give “Strongly Disagree” 1 point, “Disagree” 2 points, “Agree” 3 points, and “Strongly Agree” 4 points. Sum scores for all ten items. Keep scores on a continuous scale. Higher scores indicate higher self-esteem.

The self-esteem scale is a standardized scale developed is a standardized scale of measurement. This scale has both direct and indirect scoring system and has the following: Disagree strongly= 1, Disagree= 2, Neither = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree=5.

Socio Support Scale is a standardized scale of measuring tool developed by Zimet, Dahlem and Farley in 1988. The scale was used to assess perceived social support. The instrument is of 12-item with the 7-point Likert response scale. The questionnaire will be score in direct way and have the following score very strongly disagree =1, strongly disagree =2, disagree =3, neither =4, agree =5, strongly agree =6, very strongly disagree =7. The reliability coefficient of the instrument is .93 for friends, .92 for family, and .93 for others.

Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement Scale (ASSIST) is a standardized scale the measure drug involvement and the rate of use. The validity of the revised ASSIST is 0.76 Cronbach alpha ASSIST is score ranging from Never =0 Once Twice =2, Monthly =3, Weekly =4, Daily =6 or Almost Daily =7.

The procedure for the study involved moving from street to street engaging the street children. The participants were asked to fill in the biodata and to respond to the option that best fit them. Out of 252 questionnaires were distributed, 200 questionnaires were returned filled completely. The statistical methods for this study were simple and multiple regressions. The simple regression tested the relationship between self-esteem and psychoactive drug used abuse as well as social support and psychoactive drug use and abuse. Multiple regression was used to determine a statically significance joint relationship between the means in psychoactive drug use and abuse and self-esteem as well as the means in psychoactive drug use and abuse and socio support.

Results

Table 1: Regression analysis showing the independent and joint influence of self-esteem and social support on substance abuse among street children

Variables	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	β	<i>T</i>	<i>sig</i>
Constant	.125	.016	1.544	A	12.878	.000
Self-esteem					.134	.895
Social Support					-1.756	.081

Dependent Variable: Substance Abuse

The results presented in Table 1 showed that self-esteem has made no significant contribution to substance abuse ($\beta = .009$, $p > .05$). Similarly, there is no significant influence of social support on substance abuse. However, social support made strong contribution ($-.125$, $p > .05$) higher than self-esteem indicating that it made higher of unique contribution to substance abuse when self-esteem is controlled. Finally, the results presented in table 1 above revealed that there was no significant joint influence of self-esteem and social support on substance abuse among street children ($R = .125$, $R^2 = .016$ ($F(2, 196) = 1.544$, $p > .05$). This means that self-esteem and social support jointly contributed to 1.6% variation in substance abuse among street children. Therefore, hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 have been rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings were discussed according to the tested hypotheses. Hypothesis one stated that self-esteem will predict psychoactive drug use and abuse among youth in Makurdi metropolis. Self-esteem has made no significant contribution to substance abuse in Makurdi Metropolis. The finding showed that street boys that have high self-esteem are not likely to abuse drugs even though they are in the street. But street boys with low self-esteem equally abuse drugs to boost self-esteem. This result could be attributed to lack of self-value and confidence. Some of the street boys that abused these drugs may try to gain the self-value they lack. Some of them may lay all their confidence on the drugs because they lack the self-value. Self-esteem is an important factor in humans' life but when it is not there, the individual can use drugs to boost it which is what the result of this study suggested.

This result is in line with The Mental Health and Counseling Center of the University of Texas (2014) report which showed that low self-esteem can lead to lack of development and/or tendency toward drugs or alcohol consumption. When a person has low self-esteem, they may be more influenced by the world around them and their resulting actions. A person 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.

This study is also agreed with Smart and Ogborne (1994) result that stated that youths under treatment for drug abuse had lower self-esteem than their counterpart. According to their report, youth with low self-esteem lack confidence in themselves therefore boast their confidence through the use of drugs. A person who has low self-esteem and has a drug or alcohol addiction or is at risk for developing an addiction normally has problems with relationships. Many of these people come from abusive or dysfunctional families.

The second hypothesis which stated that social support will predict psychoactive drug use and abuse is rejected based on the result. There is no significant influence of social support on substance abuse. However, social support made strong negative contribution indicating that it made higher of unique contribution to substance abuse when the other variable is controlled. This means that street boys that have support scored low on substance use and these without support tend to use drugs more. This could be because of coping with their situation that lack support. From the result, it showed that street boys that have social support have low tendency to abuse drugs compare to the children without social support.

This study is in line with the work of Antover and Tuliao (2011) research that compared the structural and functional social support of Filipino adults with substance use disorder. Results suggest that the lower social support had a significantly high influence on drug use. Their result also indicated that Heavy marijuana and tobacco users reported lower family and friend social support than light users, while heavy alcohol users reported higher friend social support than light users. Young adolescents reported using marijuana at an earlier age than young old adolescents.

Conclusions

Based on the findings it was concluded that:

- i. Self-esteem has no contribution on psychoactive drugs use among street children in Makurdi Metropolis in Benue State.
- ii. Social support has negative influence on psychoactive drugs use and abuse among street children in Makurdi Metropolis.
- iii. There was no significant joint influence of self-esteem and social support on substance abuse among streets children

Recommendations

This study calls attention for both Governmental and NGOs on the importance of self-esteem and social support on substance abuse among street children and how they can be help. This study has the following recommendation for psychological wellbeing since self-esteem and interpersonal communication are considered to improve it.

- i. Parents, government, and NGOs should support children to help them to stay away from drugs.
- ii. Therapist should help street boys with special techniques that will help eliminating low self-esteem from them. Techniques such as exercises, and sensate focus techniques are very effective in helping street boys work through their problems because in many cases of use of psychoactive drugs are due to low self-esteem.

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