

## **PERCEIVED PSYCHOSOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF ILLICIT SUBSTANCE USE AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN NIGER STATE**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper assesses the perceived psychosocial determinants of illicit substance use among University students in Niger State. The study adopted descriptive survey research design as a plan for data collection. Since it is practically impossible to cover the entire population, the researcher sampled 205 (129 male and 76 female) University students for the study using stratified random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire called 'Questionnaire for Psychosocial Determinants of Illicit Substance use among University Students' (QPDISUUS) was used for data collection. Cronbach Alpha method is estimating the reliability index was used and the instrument yielded 0.82 as index of internal consistency. Data collected that relate to research questions were analysed using descriptive statistics while chi-square statistics was employed to test hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The study found that curiosity and ignorance, peer group pressure, traumatic life events and frustrations, availability and accessibility of substance, media influence and societal pressure are some of the perceived psychosocial determinants of illicit substance use among University students in Niger State. The paper recommended that stakeholders in education most especially the University management is advised to establish and fund functional counselling unit to be saddled with responsibility of organising talks on negative consequences of illicit substance use and abuse among the students among others.*

**Keywords:** Psychosocial, Illicit Substance use, Gender, Drug abuse.

## Introduction

Recently in Nigeria, there is a general public concern about the dwindling standard of the educational sector. One of the indicators of the declining standard of education has been the poor performance of students in examinations. It is speculated that the situation is caused mostly by the negative effects of drug abuse which leads to high rate of school drop-out, high level of youth restiveness, teenage pregnancy, criminal activities and armed robbery among others.

Chikere and Mayowa (2011) is defined education as "the aggregate of all the processes by which a person develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour of practical values in the society in which he/she lives; the social process by which people are subjected to, the influence of selected and controlled environment, so that they may obtain social competence and optimum individual development" . Education could be seen as the process of development, wherein every member of the society is prepared not only to meet up with but also gradually adapts to various components of the environment vis-à-vis physical, economics and social environments. This has reflected in the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century Report to UNESCO to regard quality education as the kind of education receive that is meant and applicable throughout one's life which is expected to base upon four principles. Firstly, quality education should premise on principle of '*learning to know*' which acknowledges building knowledge which aims at accommodating learners" indigenous and external cultural components. Secondly, *learning to live together* which entails acquiring soft skills that is free from usual discrimination and segregation, as well as encouraging equal chance to develop oneself, immediate family and society at large. Thirdly, *learning to be* which works towards unravelling participants" potential. Fourthly, *learning to do* focuses at turning theoretical elements of what is learnt into practical application which could also be referred to as functional education (Atere, 2003).

In the light of this, growing commitment towards quality education has been noticed on the part of stakeholders of education. The commitment on the part of government and non-governmental bodies has facilitated the stakeholders in the educational industry to belief that youth who are within school settings should be properly guided and mentored in order to excel in the present dynamics society (Balogun, 2006). However, the dynamic nature of the present society might make some youths to opine that for them to be able to attain academic targets at their respective institutions, they need to involve in the illicit substance use (Agbongbale & Okaka, 2014). Meanwhile, it is an accepted belief that the socio-economic development of a nation is tied to the good health of its

people. This is an indication that a healthy population is an economic asset since the assured supply of a healthy labour force is an essential factor in growth and development of any country. Therefore, effort must be made to prevent all forms of perceived psychosocial factors that can militate against the good physical and mental health of school going Nigerians most especially youths who constitute hefty proportion of the entire population. As a result, youth can be described as a stage in life within the chronological age of 15 and 24 years (Burns, 2002). This period in human life could be mostly influenced by varieties of perceived psychosocial factors like peer group and family background. Besides, they have curiosity to practice new thing, to have saying among their peers as well as to find remedy to any of the identify problems that come their ways which may in turn engineer them to engage in drug use and abuse.

Katung (2008) considered drug as a substance which is responsible in bringing noticeable change in biological functioning of man as a result of its embedded chemical content and actions. Drug use could be seen as substance in which its intake is liable to modify perception, change mood and overall functions of the body. In addition, drug use alters the body system either positively or otherwise depending on the body composition as well as the kind and volume of drugs consumed. Similarly, Fareo (2012) acknowledged that traditional medicine is useful in healing and controlling diseases. This scholar opines further that correctly administered drugs would be a blessing to the user and not likely to constitute any danger. Drug use refers to the use of drug generally, such as, the use of prescribed and dispensed drugs.

However, drug use is employed to describe the purpose for which drug is consumed by human beings. Also, illicit substance use entails the use of drug by man to the extent that definite impairment is recorded towards social, psychological or physiological functioning of the people in question (Abdullahi, 2006). This has made (Adegoke, Olasupo & Ayeni 2014) to see illicit substance use in terms of consumption of illegal substance, illegal use of substance as well as misuse of prescribed drugs. Meanwhile, abuse of drugs can impose remarkable damage to users" most especially youths" well-being in all ramifications.

It is on this note that made (Odejide, 2000) to advocate that individual who displays some symptoms like high tension, anxiety disorder, demoralization and negative change in behavior as a result of drug use and abuse should be attended to by qualify personnel in order to save him/her from deadly diseases. Jilinek (2001) opined that parents who are drug user and abuser are likely to have their wards following their

footsteps due to availability and accessibility of the items. This is because a youth who has an easy access to drugs while his parents or elder siblings are using it is more likely to use these drugs than those whose parents or anyone else is not using in the family. On gender, it was argued that male tend to abuse drugs more than their female counterparts. Enang (2007) concurs that provision of drugs by peers could make youths to engage in its consumption.

Ahmad (2014) maintained that psychological issues like achieving high self-esteem and making sound decision are some of the reasons for drug use and abuse among youths. Besides, an increase in the chronological age of the youths who involve in drugs would likely bring about increase in taking hard drugs. For the youths to be protected from using and abusing drugs, their active free time is expected to be monitored and maintenance of positive emotion within the family (Almasiova and Katarina, 2015). They submit that passive spending of free time could be connected with a higher frequency of drug use and abuse among youths. This is in agreement with submission made by Whitesell *et al.* (2013) in which youth maltreatment within the family, unfriendly parenting styles and single parenting to mention a few are some of the factors responsible for drug use at family level. Makinde (2004) attributed significance practice of drug use and abuse among youths to weak parental control, easy access to drugs, and emergency in the culture of street stars. However, both protective and risk factors according to Kabíček and Hamanová (2005.), are classified into individual, family and societal phases. At individual, protective factors consist of the positive knowledge from the peer groups, exhibition of high level of intelligence and self-control towards avoidance of drugs. Risk factors entail low level of self-esteem, general neglect and unemployment issue. At family stage, risk and protective factors could premise on prevailing parenting styles and pressure group. And some of the protective factors at societal level entail a sound education, formulation and enforcement of drug legislation, while risk factors involve low socio-economic status, glorification of negative behaviour in the media to mention a few.

Derois (2003) concluded that gender plays a significant role in the formation of drug use and abuse as well as mind set to desist forms it. This is premised on the ground that males are more likely to engage in drugs most especially smoking habits than their female counterparts. Even, females are more likely than males to desist from consuming drugs. Olatoye and Afuwape (2003) said that gender, religiosity and self-esteem had significant influences on illicit substance use. It is against this backdrop that this study is necessitated to assess the perceived psychosocial determinants of illicit substance use among University students in Niger State.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Youths form the highest proportion of illicit substance users and abusers in both developed and developing communities. For example, report from United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) indicated that 30% of the global population involved in illicit substance use, and at the same time. Again, variety of drugs are used and abused as identified by Adebisi, et al (2010) such that rate of consumption of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana and cocaine among male is high. This was attributed to availability of drug and free access to it by the youths (Johnson, 2003; Jiloha, 2009).

However, a number of factors have been identified by past researchers, such as; peer group or encouragement from friends as probably being responsible for the abuse of illicit drugs among university students. Jason and Terrence (2012) stressed reduction and frustration minimisation, inquisitiveness, search for exhilaration, academic rigour, fast sleep and sexual pleasure as other likely reasons for illicit substance abuse among university students. Therefore, the thrust of this paper put in a question form is; what are the perceived psychosocial determinants of illicit substance use among university students in Niger State?

### **Purpose Of The Study**

The general objective of this paper is to assess the perceived psychosocial determinants of illicit substance use among University students in Niger State. Specifically, the paper sought to:

1. Determine the perceived psychosocial determinants of illicit substance use among male and female University students in Niger State.
2. Find out whether the perceived psychosocial determinants encourage illicit substance use among University students in Niger State.
3. Ascertain the different academic challenges that are associated with the use of illicit substances among University students.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions are raised to guide the study:

1. What are the perceived psychosocial determinants of illicit substance use among male and female University students in Niger State?
2. What are the difference academic challenges that are associated with the use of illicit substances among University students?

### **Hypothesis**

The following null hypothesis is formulated and was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

**H<sub>0</sub> 1:** There is no significant difference between the perceptions of male and female students' on the psychosocial determinants of illicit substance use among University students in Niger State?

### Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design as a plan for data collection. The design is considered suitable because the population is large and a representative of the population is selected for study. *The population of consists of all University students in Niger State. However, since it is practically impossible to cover the entire population, the researcher sampled 205 (129 male and 76 female) University students for the study using stratified random sampling technique. Students were stratified along male-female dichotomy before simple random sampling procedure was employed. The sampling procedure is considered suitable because it gave the students equal opportunity of being selected thereby reducing the bias effect that could interfere with the validity and reliability of the study.* A structured questionnaire called 'Questionnaire for Psychosocial Determinants of Illicit Substance use among University Students' (QPDISUUS) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated through experts' appraisal and checking of the appropriateness of the items. The reliability of the instrument was established through the process of pilot study. Cronbach Alpha method is estimating the reliability index was *used and the instrument yielded 0.82 as index of internal consistency. Data collected that relate to research questions were analysed using descriptive statistics (absolute and relative frequencies) while chi-square statistics was employed to test hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.*

### Results

**Research Question 1:** What are the perceived psychosocial determinants of illicit substance use among male and female University students in Niger State?

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Male Students' Perceived Psychosocial Determinants of Illicit Substance Use among University Students**

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1	Curiosity and ignorance	27 (35%)	39 (51%)	5 (7%)	5 (7%)	76 (100%)
2	Peer group pressure	30 (39%)	31 (41%)	10 (13%)	5 (7%)	76 (100%)
3	Traumatic life events and frustrations	37 (49%)	25 (33%)	10 (13%)	4 (5%)	76 (100%)
4	Availability and accessibility of substance	27 (35%)	35 (46%)	9 (12%)	5 (7%)	76 (100%)
5	Media influence	30 (39%)	35 (46%)	6 (8%)	5 (7%)	76 (100%)
6	Societal pressure	25 (33%)	39 (51%)	7 (8%)	5 (7%)	76 (100%)

Table 1 shows the **descriptive statistics for male students'** perceived psychosocial determinants of illicit substance use among University students in Niger State. It is evident that the major psychosocial determinants of illicit substance use are curiosity and ignorance, peer group pressure, traumatic life events and frustrations, availability and accessibility of substance, media influence and societal pressure as reflected by 86%, 80%, 82%, 81%, 85% and 84% respectively.

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1	Curiosity and ignorance	50 (39%)	45 (35%)	20 (16%)	14 (10%)	129 (100%)
2	Peer group pressure	46 (36%)	42 (33%)	20 (16%)	21 (15%)	129 (100%)
3	Traumatic life events and frustrations	45 (35%)	40 (31%)	15 (11%)	29 (23%)	129 (100%)
4	Availability and accessibility of substance	50 (39%)	40 (31%)	20 (16%)	19 (12%)	129 (100%)
5	Media influence	40 (31%)	42 (34%)	29 (23%)	18 (12%)	129 (100%)
6	Societal pressure	40 (31%)	46 (36%)	14 (10%)	29 (23%)	129 (100%)

Table 2 shows the **descriptive statistics for female students'** perceived psychosocial determinants of illicit substance use among University students in Niger State. It is evident that the major psychosocial determinants of illicit substance use are curiosity and ignorance, peer group pressure, traumatic life events and frustrations, availability and accessibility of substance, media influence and societal pressure as reflected by 74%, 69%, 66%, 70%, 65% and 67% respectively.

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1	Poor academic performance	70 (34%)	95 (46%)	30 (15%)	10 (5%)	205 (100%)
2	Lateness class and non participation in class activities	65 (32%)	90 (44%)	35 (17%)	15 (7%)	205 (100%)
3	Non utilization of University library	60 (29%)	90 (44%)	30 (15%)	25 (12%)	205 (100%)
4	Drop-out from the University	80 (39%)	90 (44%)	20 (10%)	15 (7%)	205 (100%)

**Research Question 2:** What are the different academic challenges that are associated with the use of illicit substances among University students?

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for the Difference Academic Challenges Related to the Use of Illicit Substances among University Students**

Table 3 shows the **descriptive statistics** for the different academic challenges that are associated with the use of illicit substances among University students. It is obvious that the major academic challenges that are associated with the use of illicit substances among University students is drop-out from the school which is represented by the opinion of 83% of the entire respondents, followed by poor academic performance reflected by the views of 80% of the respondents. Lateness class and non participation in class activities and Non utilization of University library are academic challenges that are associated with the use of illicit substances among University students as represented by the opinion of 76% and 72% entire respondents respectively.

**Testing of Hypothesis**

**H<sub>0</sub> 1:** There is no significant difference between the perceptions of male and female students' on the psychosocial determinants of illicit substance use among University students in Niger State?

Table 4: Chi-square Result for Difference between the Perceptions of Male and Female Students' on the Psychosocial Determinants of Illicit Substance use

Variable		df	X <sup>2</sup> <sub>cal</sub>	X <sup>2</sup> <sub>tab</sub>	Decision
Male Students' Perception	0.05	9	8.352	16.919	Accept H <sub>0</sub>
Male Students' Perception					

**Table 4 showed the chi-square result for** difference between the perceptions of male and female students' on the psychosocial determinants of illicit substance use among University students in Niger State which revealed that at 0.05 level of significance and degree of freedom of 9, the X<sup>2</sup><sub>cal</sub> value is 8.352 which is less than the critical value of 16.919 was obtained. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. Hence, there is no



significant difference between the perceptions of male and female students' on the psychosocial determinants of illicit substance use among University students in Niger State.

### **Conclusion**

The empirical findings revealed that curiosity and ignorance, peer group pressure, traumatic life events and frustrations, availability and accessibility of substance, media influence and societal pressure are some of the perceived psychosocial determinants of illicit substance use among University students in Niger State. This means that youths immediate environment such as prepared ground by the family members could play a prominent role in attracting or discouraging their wards towards substance use and abuse. This is because some habits can be learnt by the youths through their interaction with the people in the vicinity. Such that the parents who are abuser of drugs would likely observe their youths acquiring the skill and therefore putting the act of using and abusing drugs into their habitual character. Lazarus (2001) acknowledged inverse relationship between parental background including parenting styles and drug use. This is premised on the ground that good rapport in terms constant communication and supervision of the youths by their parents would help them to desist from drug use and abuse.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are made:

1. Stakeholders in education most especially the University management is advised to establish and fund functional counselling unit to be saddled with responsibility of organising talks on negative consequences of illicit substance use and abuse among the students.
2. Policy makers should as a matter of priority formulate policies aimed at establishing and maintaining the standard of religious and moral institutions in all aspects of the society since the institutions are to ensure the basic morals needed to keep the youths out of crime.
3. There is need for an intensification of public enlightenment campaigns through mass media to inform the youths about the negative consequences that are connected with drug use and abuse.
4. Parents and guardians should monitor the performances of their wards at school on regular basis.

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