

Influence of Substance Abuse and Peer Pressure on Psychological Well-Being of Secondary School Adolescents in Mushin Local Government Area, Lagos State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the influence of substance abuse and peer pressure on psychological well-being of secondary school adolescents in Mushin Local Government Area, Lagos State, Nigeria. Four research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The sample was 200 secondary school adolescents in Mushin Local Government Area. These 200 adolescents were selected using the simple random technique from 10 different schools were chosen at random in the Mushin environment with selected 20 from each of these school. A descriptive survey design was used, which involved administering a questionnaire to a large group of adolescents to gather data on their experiences with substance abuse and peer pressure and the effects it had on their psychological well-being. A self-designed research instrument was employed for the study: the Peer Pressure and Substance Abuse Questionnaire (PPSAQ). It was resulted that, there is significant relationship between substance abuse and psychological well-being among adolescents ($r(200) = .72$, $df=198$, $p<.05$), there is no significant relationship between substance abuse and psychological well-being of secondary school adolescents in Mushin Local Government ($r(200) = .65$, $df=198$, $p<.05$), secondary school adolescents who engage in substance abuse in Mushin Local Government do experience significantly more psychological issues than those who do not ($t(200)=1.76$, $df=198$, $p<.05$) and there is significant difference between substance abuse and psychological well-being of secondary school adolescents ($t(200)=0.76$, $df=198$, $p<.05$). Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proposed: Enhanced Educational Programs, comprehensive substance education programs that emphasises the dangers of substance addiction and give children coping mechanisms to fend off peer pressure should be implemented in schools.

Keywords: Adolescent- students, Peer-pressure, Psychological wellbeing, Substance, Substance-abuse

INTRODUCTIONS

The use of hard substances by secondary school adolescents has remained on a high global index (World Health Organisation, 2021). This has also remained a trend and a high risk in Nigerian schools, which has also become a significant concern for parents, educational institutions, government authorities, and the society at large. This group of students' ongoing substance abuse can cause serious psychological issues and jeopardize the stability of society. One of the major concerns is that this destructive practice, along with its associated problems could potentially lead to the emergence of a generation of youths with severe mental

health issues. This fear is substantiated by the frequent and rampant substance crises observed in many Nigerian educational institutions. Adolescence is defined as the period of life between 10 and 19 years of age (WHO, 2009). Adolescence stage is also a critical biological, psychological, and social development phase when substance use is prevalent among the adolescents (Nath et al., 2022). Most adolescence are mostly confused, and curious about their identity, hence, they want to explore, thereby going the wrong way (Odeyemi-Bsd & Odeyemi, 2025). Due to this curiosity, they go into unnecessary adventures, and

risks-taking behaviours, thereby becoming preys to the use and abuse of psychoactive substances, which are substances that have a profound effect on the brain, leading to sedation, stimulation, or changes in mood. Adolescents are particularly prone to risk-taking and experimentation when in the company of peers, as peer influence significantly impacts their risk assessment compared to when they are alone (Blakemore & Mills, 2014). Most students in Nigerian senior secondary schools also fall within the adolescent age range of 10–19 years.

Substance abuse is a global health and social problem that extends beyond the adolescent population to affect society at large, causing significant harm to both the physical and mental health of users and non-users alike. There is a consensus that individuals struggling with substance abuse are at a higher risk of developing other mental health issues, which can exacerbate treatment outcomes, increase vulnerability to social problems, and hinder their ability to lead a decent life (Richert et al., 2020). While substance abuse has traditionally been associated with adults, the alarming rate at which adolescents are now integrating substances into their daily lives is particularly concerning. Furthermore, adolescents are increasingly creating their own chemical compounds by combining common substances with unusual elements to formulate their own substance mixtures. This trend, popularly known as the “science students” practice in Nigeria serves as a prime example of how substance consumption patterns have changed (Odejide et al., 2019; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2023), moving away from traditional sedatives, alcohol, cocaine, heroin, and cannabis and toward dangerous combinations of multiple substances and herbs that either increase the chance of a fatal overdose or increase

pleasure. Multiple substances and herbs increase pleasure or increase the possibility of a fatal overdose. Teenage substance use is becoming more socially acceptable as a result of this phenomenon, which is gradually destroying Nigerian society and endangering their mental health. The curiosity-driven behaviours characteristic of adolescence often lead to impulsive, non-conforming, and reckless actions, making this age group particularly vulnerable to substance abuse (Raimi et al., 2019).

Many adolescents participate in risky substance abuse behaviours that they understand to be harmful but that are socially acceptable in their peer groups. Adolescents' mental health can suffer as a result of peer pressure since it frequently causes them to sacrifice their individuality in order to fit in with the group. For example, Jelsma and Varner (2019) highlighted that substance use, particularly alcohol, strongly predicts peer pressure among adolescents, and the interaction between this stressor and substance use contribute to the deterioration of adolescent mental health. Adolescents often rely on various substances, including tobacco, Indian hemp, cocaine, morphine, heroin, alcohol, ephedrine, caffeine, glue, and barbiturates, to cope with their daily activities, whether social, educational, political, or moral. Experimenting with substances during adolescence (11–25 years) is common, as this age group is driven by curiosity and the desire to experience new things.

Adolescents use substances for various reasons, including feeling good, reducing stress, or appearing more mature. Early use of alcohol and tobacco increases the risk of later transitioning to other, more dangerous substances. According to data from the World Heart Foundation and the World Health Organization, 22.1% of school-age youth in Nigeria who are between the ages of 12 and 17 smoke. Today, more Nigerian

youths are becoming substance-dependent, with Nigeria gradually shifting from a substance-consuming nation to one that produces substances (Odejide et al., 2019; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2023). Youths, especially those from affluent backgrounds, are increasingly identifying with "big boys" who use substances like heroin and cocaine. Other substances that are commonly discovered in schools include codeine- and methamphetamine-containing tablets, as well as Indian hemp, which is produced extensively in Nigeria (Staff, 2012). It is on this background that the study aimed at examining influence of substance abuse and peer pressure on psychological well-being of secondary school adolescents in Mushin Local Government.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the course of the study at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant relationship between peer pressure and substance abuse of secondary school adolescents.
2. There is no significant relationship between substance abuse and psychological well-being of secondary school adolescents.
3. Secondary school adolescents who engage in substance abuse in Mushin Local Government do experience significantly more psychological issues than those who do not.
4. There is no significant difference between substance abuse and psychological well-being of adolescents in Mushin Local Government.

METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out in Mushin Local Government, one of the 20 Local Government in Lagos State, Federal Republic of Nigeria, situated in the

Southwest geopolitical zone. Mushin is a centre of both formal and informal education. This chapter focuses on the research design and the methodology adopted for the study. A descriptive survey design was used, which involved administering a questionnaire to a large group of adolescents to gather data on their experiences with substance abuse and peer pressure and the effects it had on their psychological well-being. The purpose of using descriptive surveys was to collect detailed and factual information. Two self-designed research instruments were employed for the study: the Peer Pressure and Substance Abuse Questionnaire (PPSAQ) and the Academic Performance Test (APT). The PPSAQ comprises five sections; labeled A to E. Section A captured the demographic information of the respondents, including variables such as gender, age, and religion. Section B focused on assessing substance abuse behaviour among students. Section C evaluated the level and influence of peer pressure on the students. Section D examined the psychological well-being of the respondents. Section E was dedicated to gathering insights on potential solutions and interventions to address substance abuse and peer pressure among students. Making use of Strongly Agree = **SA**, Agree = **A**, Neutral = **N**, Neutral Disagree = **NS**, Disagree = **D**, Strongly Disagree = **SD**. The APT, on the other hand, measures the academic performance of the students based on standardized tests in relevant subjects. The target population was all the secondary school adolescents in Mushin Local Government Areas of Lagos State, Nigeria. These secondary adolescents were selected using simple random sampling techniques. The sample for this study were 200 adolescents in Mushin local government area. These 200 secondary school adolescents were selected using the simple

random technique from 10 different schools chosen randomly. The validity of the instrument was ascertained by giving out to, experts in Social Studies and Test and Measurement, copies of the drafted questionnaires, research questions, hypothesis, alongside with the purposes of the study. The suggestions and recommendations of the experts were used for the final draft. The instruments were also be tested project supervisors and some other lecturers to ensure reliability. The data was analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha to

determine the reliability of the instruments. Peer Pressure Questionnaire yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.80. It was then adjudged that the instrument was reliable for gathering the intended data.

RESULTS

Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses One: There is no significant relationship between peer pressure and substance abuse of secondary school adolescents in Mushin Local Government.

Table 1: Peer Pressure/Substance Abuse and Adolescents.

Variable	Mean	SD	N	df	r	p	Rmk	Decision
Peer Pressure	11.60	5.14						
Adolescent	10.32	8.46	200	198	.72	.001	Sig	Reject H ₀₂

Sig @ p<0.05

The information on Table 1 showed that there is significant relationship between peer pressure and substance abuse of secondary school adolescents in Mushin Local Government ($r(200) = .72$, $df=198$, $p<.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between peer pressure and substance abuse of secondary school adolescents in Mushin Local Government was rejected. Therefore,

there is significant relationship between peer pressure and substance abuse of secondary school adolescents in Mushin Local Government.

Hypotheses Two: There is no significant relationship between substance abuse and psychological well-being of secondary school adolescents in Mushin Local Government.

Table 2: Substance Abuse/Psychological and Adolescents

Variable	Mean	SD	N	df	r	p	Rmk	Decision
Substance Abuse/ Psychological	12.68	6.69						
Adolescent	9.32	8.56	200	198	.65	.002	Sig	Reject H ₀₃

Sig @ p<0.05

The information on Table 2 showed that there is significant relationship between

substance abuse and psychological well-being of secondary school adolescents in

Mushin Local Government ($r(200) = .65$, $df=198$, $p<.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between substance abuse and psychological well-being of secondary school adolescents in Mushin Local Government is rejected. Therefore, there is significant relationship between substance abuse and psychological well-being of

secondary school adolescents in Mushin Local Government.

Hypotheses Three: Secondary school adolescents who engage in substance abuse in Mushin Local Government do experience significantly more psychological issues than those who do not.

Table 3: Substance Abuse and Adolescent

Variable	Mean	SD	N	df	t	p	Rmk	Decision
Substance Abuse	12.22	6.51	200	198	1.76	.062	Sig	Reject H_{04}
Adolescent	10.15	8.46						

Sig @ $p<0.05$

The information on Table 3 showed that secondary school adolescents who engage in substance abuse in Mushin Local Government do experience significantly more psychological issues than those who do not ($t(200)=1.76$, $df=198$, $p<.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis which stated that secondary school adolescents who engage in substance abuse in Mushin Local Government do experience significantly more psychological issues than those who do not was rejected. Therefore, secondary

school adolescents who engage in substance abuse in Mushin Local Government do experience significantly more psychological issues than those who do not.

Hypotheses Four: There is no significant difference in adolescents due to the intervention provided to address the substance abuse and psychological well-being of adolescents in Mushin Local Government.

Table 4: Substance Abuse and Adolescent

Variable	Mean	SD	N	df	t	p	Rmk	Decision
Substance Abuse	11.65	7.52	200	198	0.76	.062	Sig	Reject H_{05}
Adolescent	9.22	9.42						

Sig @ $p<0.05$

The information on Table 4 showed that there is significant difference in adolescents due to the intervention provided to address the substance abuse and psychological well-being of adolescents in Mushin Local

Government ($t(200)=0.76$, $df=198$, $p<.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in adolescents due to the intervention provided to address the substance abuse and

psychological well-being of adolescents in Mushin Local Government was rejected. Therefore, there is significant difference in adolescents due to the intervention provided to address the substance abuse and psychological well-being of adolescents in Mushin Local Government.

Summary of findings

The following results are the summary of findings of this study:

- a) There is significant relationship between peer pressure and substance abuse of secondary school adolescents in Mushin Local Government.
- b) There is significant relationship between substance abuse and psychological well-being of secondary school adolescents in Mushin Local Government.
- c) Secondary school adolescents who engage in substance abuse in Mushin Local Government do experience significantly more psychological issues than those who do not.
- d) There is significant difference in adolescents due to the intervention provided to address the substance abuse and psychological well-being of adolescents in Mushin Local Government.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The research findings revealed that there is significant relationship between peer pressure and substance abuse of secondary school adolescents in Mushin Local Government. This analysis, supported by data and recent literature, demonstrates the multifaceted challenges that peer dynamics and substance-related pressures introduce for adolescents. Research indicates that peer pressure is a primary driver influencing adolescents to experiment with substances, often linked to a strong desire for social acceptance during this developmental stage (García et al., 2020). In line with these findings, many students reported feeling

pressured by peers to engage in substance use to fit in or gain social standing, creating conflicts between personal values and the urge to belong (Jongenelis et al., 2021). The tension between individuality and social acceptance can lead some adolescents to compromise their principles, making them more vulnerable to risky behaviors. Recent studies have reinforced that the need for acceptance among adolescents is especially influential, potentially increasing their likelihood of substance use and, subsequently, affecting their mental well-being (Hawke et al., 2020).

The third research finding shows that there is significant relationship between substance abuse and psychological well-being of secondary school adolescents in Mushin Local Government. Negative peer influences increase susceptibility to behaviours that compromise mental health, such as experimenting with substances, skipping classes, or engaging in acts of delinquency, which can ultimately lead to psychological distress, anxiety, and diminished self-worth (Ibrahim et al., 2020). Research underscore that many adolescents who engage in substance abuse may be struggling with underlying mental health issues, such as depression or anxiety which is often exacerbated by the stigma around mental health in Nigerian society. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), a substantial portion of individuals who consume alcohol or abuse substances do so as a coping mechanism to alleviate symptoms of depression and other mental health challenges. WHO 2021 report indicated that a significant number of alcohol consumers globally are individuals who suffer from mental health disorders, with depression being a common underlying factor.

The research findings for the hypotheses three indicated that secondary school adolescents who engage in substance abuse

in Mushin Local Government do experience significantly more psychological issues than those who do not. This is affirmative with the empirical studies in Nigeria which demonstrated that substance abuse, which is a key variable in this research among adolescents, leads to significant psychological challenges, including increased rate of depression and anxiety (Adeoye et al., 2020). Peer pressure has also been shown to escalate these issues, with students who are pressured into substance use experiencing poorer mental health outcomes compared to their peers who resist such pressures (Ogunyemi & Alabi, 2023). Finally, the fourth research finding shows that there is a significant difference in adolescents due to the intervention provided to address the substance abuse and psychological well-being of adolescents in Mushin Local Government. Addressing the negative effects of peer pressure on mental health, and reducing substance abuse among adolescents requires awareness of mental health issues, and adequate mental health support services. Properly diagnosing and treating mental health conditions is essential, as untreated cases often lead to an increased risk of substance abuse as adolescents search for ways to self-manage their distress (Adeyemi & Olajide, 2022).

Family and school support systems have emerged as crucial protective factors against the effects of peer pressure and substance abuse. Recent studies emphasise the collaborative role of parents, teachers, and schools in building resilience among adolescents through early education on substance-related risks, establishing strong support systems, and providing accessible counseling resources (Kim et al., 2021; Munawar et al., 2023). Many respondents underscored the role of collaboration between parents and teachers in promoting preventive programs that educate students on the dangers of substance abuse. For

instance, schools can offer preventive education while families provide moral and emotional support, creating a framework that fortifies students against peer influences (Ragelienė & Grønhøj, 2019).

In conclusion, recent research confirms that substance abuse and peer pressure are significant factors impacting adolescents' psychological well-being. Addressing these issues call for multifaceted strategies, incorporating education, family-school collaboration, peer support, and accessible mental health resources. With these supports in place, adolescents are better positioned to develop resilience, make healthy choices, and improve their overall mental and emotional health, thus mitigating risks associated with peer pressure and substance use (Kelley et al., 2021; Gooren et al., 2022; Bartlett et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

The following results are the summary of findings of this study:

- a) There is significant relationship between peer pressure and substance abuse of secondary school adolescents in Mushin Local Government.
- b) There is significant relationship between substance abuse and psychological well-being of secondary school adolescents in Mushin Local Government.
- c) Secondary school adolescents who engage in substance abuse in Mushin Local Government do experience significantly more psychological issues than those who do.
- d) There is significant difference in adolescents due to the intervention provided to address the substance abuse and psychological well-being of adolescents in Mushin Local Government.

In conclusion, Government and private institutions should provide greater support for its adolescents and create a more

resilient and healthy generation by tackling these concerns through policy lobbying, community support, counselling services, parental participation, and focused educational initiatives. Sustained advances in the psychological health of community students will need ongoing study and cooperation from stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proposed:

- i. Enhanced Educational Programs: Comprehensive substance education programs that emphasize the dangers of substance addiction and give children coping mechanisms to fend off peer pressure should be implemented in schools.
- ii. Parental Involvement and Support: The value of having open lines of contact with children should be taught to parents.
- iii. Strengthening School Counseling Services: The Mushin Local Government's schools ought to improve their counseling programs by hiring qualified counsellors with expertise in adolescent psychology. Frequent counselling sessions and workshops on mental health might provide a secure environment for students to talk about their difficulties and get support.
- iv. Community-Based Interventions: Local governments and community organizations should organize awareness programs targeting adolescents and their families. These programs can focus on educating young people about the consequences of substance abuse and provide platforms for positive peer interactions and mentorship.
- v. Peer Support Groups: Peer support groups may provide teenagers a feeling of community and a chance to learn from their peers who have fought against

harmful influences. They can be established in schools and communities. An atmosphere of accountability and positive reinforcement is fostered via support groups.

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