



# **Educational Implications of Drug Use and Abuse Among University Students In Rivers State, Nigeria**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study investigated “Educational Implications of Drug Use and abuse Among Undergraduates in Rivers State”. Four research questions guided the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey as its working design. The population of the study comprised all the students in the Faculty of Education of the University of Port Harcourt and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education both in Rivers State numbering 5,852 from where a sample size of 374 undergraduates was drawn using both the stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Also, the Taro-Yamen formular was used in determining the number of respondents. The instrument was a validated 25-item questionnaire titled Psychoactive Drug Use Questionnaire, (PDUQ) which was developed by the researcher using the 4-point modified Likert scale. The data were parametric and from both primary and secondary sources. Mean scores and standard deviation was used in analyzing the research questions. Findings from the study revealed among others that use of psychoactive drugs by undergraduates is seriously hampering their academic performance. It was recommended among others that government and school authorities should work together and fashion out ways of curbing drug abuse in institutions of learning in order to preserve the future of students and the nation in general.

**Keywords:** Drug Use, Drug abuse, Undergraduates, psychoactive drugs

## **INTRODUCTION**

The goal of Nigerian education is to produce young quality men and women with rich knowledge, sound moral virtues, and critical thinking minds who will be able to move the country forward. Students are expected to learn and acquire the right experience they would need as future leaders to make difference wherever they operate. This is also the dream of parents and leaders of education in the country. Unfortunately, many students are trying to kill this dream with their bare hands through the use of drugs.

The acceptance of illicit drugs among undergraduates appears to be widespread, increasing rapidly everyday, bringing many young people to their ruins. A comparison with other developing countries reveals that Nigeria is among the highest users of harmful drugs such as cannabis, alcohol, tobacco, benzodiazepines, cocaine, and opioids (Fareo, 2012). Almost all types of psychoactive substances are available in Nigeria as a result of their spill-over into the streets from drugs traffickers who make use of Nigeria as a channel to transport drugs from South East-Asia (The Golden Triangle) and South America (Bolivia, Peru, and Brazil) to Europe and North America (Onofa, 2016).

The United Nations’ Division of Narcotic Drugs in Atoyebi and Atoyebi (2013) reported that never before have there been so many young people flirting with drugs and their associated hazard. More young people flirting with illicit drugs in Nigeria without minding its implications; which are manifested in physical health, psychological and social problems. The use of cannabis for instance has psychological health effect on the user, and goes a long way in reducing educational attainment just as it promotes anti-social behaviours. It is the same for other illegal drugs.

Drug is a substance used for medical purposes that changes the function of the body (Attah, Baba, and Audu, 2016). It is any natural or artificial substance other than food that by its chemical or physical nature alters structures or functions in the living organism, as well as bring about a change in the biological function through its chemical actions. Balogun (2006) identified drug as any substance which modifies perceptions, cognition, mood, behaviour and general body functions. In pharmacology, drug is seen as a chemical substance used in the treatment, cure, prevention, or diagnosis of disease or used to otherwise enhance physical or mental well-being. Psychoactive drugs are chemical substances that affect the functioning of the nervous system, altering perception, mood or consciousness. Recreational drugs are usually applied not for medicinal purposes but for pleasure which include alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine. Drugs are also utilized as food supplements such as vitamins; we benefit from drugs during ill-health; though, such should be prescribed by the doctor. Drugs are harmful and detrimental if they are used wrongly.

Drug abuse is defined as a state of psychic or physical dependence, or both on a drug following administration of the drug on a periodic or continual basis (Kobiowu, 2006). Drug abuse may be necessitated by individuals due to pleasure enhancement, curiosity, or imitation but produces harmful effect in the end on the user. Attah, Baba, and Audu (2016) also defined drug abuse as the taking of drugs or a deliberate use of drugs for purposes other than its intended purpose without the supervision of a physician or a medical practitioner; it could lead to drug addiction which is the continuous, uncontrolled, compulsive use of a drug not only to include intoxication but also to avoid the tortures of withdrawal. It is observed in the society that in spite of the efforts of individuals, agencies, mass media and the government at different levels to curb drug abuse, the practice of it among youths including undergraduates has continued to increase geometrically instead of decreasing.

Education according to Fafunwa (1974), is the sum of all the processes by which a child or young adult develops the abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of positive value to the society in which he lives. As a social institution, education takes its form from the values of the society which houses it. Plato in Amaele (2015), being a moral philosopher, defined education as that training which is given by suitable habits to the first instinct of virtue in children when pleasure and pain are rightly implanted in rational souls. Peters (1979) explained education as the appropriate acquisition of values; and is the knowledge of things that are worthwhile. Okoli (2013) also defined education as the transmission of cultural values in societies from generation to generation.

According to Ndukwe in Ukegbu (2014), the world's view of every human being is a product of the kind of education such a person has. Education is expected to teach essential virtues and guide the individual towards the elevation of humanity and the expansion of the horizons and frontiers of human knowledge. It is a powerful human institution which continues to shape and influence societies. Societies grow and develop as a result of educational impact; for without education, a nation at best becomes a sleeping giant.

A child who is thus denied education has been denied much more than the knowledge he would have gained in the classroom; such as the opportunity to develop his full potential in every aspect of life. As a result of benefits accruable from education, education policy makers in Nigeria through the country's National Policy on Education (2013) and the Universal Basic Education Act of 2004 made education free and compulsory from primary to junior secondary school for all males and females. Articles 28 and 29 of the convention on the right of the child also state that all children have equal right to education and that the centre of such education provided, should be directed towards the enhancement of the child's personality, talents, mental and physical abilities as much as possible.

Academic achievement implies the level of performance a student acquires in his academic tasks and confirms what students should possess after their learning. This view is corroborated by Elliot, Kartochwill, Cook, and Travers (2000) just as they described academic achievement as knowledge and skills taught by school which individuals have learned with acceptable accuracy; and that such can be fully determined through a set of clearly defined instructional objectives.

Amadi (2002) opined that academic achievement varies from one student to another even when they might have received equal training, have similar attitude, or similar characteristics. Several factors account for the difference among individuals; one of which is the conscious efforts by some students to achieve more than others. These students go the extra mile in their academic pursuit by streamlining their activities and working vigorously to acquire greater success especially in examinations.

The Nigerian National Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has affirmed that drug abuse is a regular problem in schools (Alemika, 1998). For instance, about 20% of university undergraduates in Rivers State has taken psychoactive drug once in their lives (Alemika, 1998). Most of these behaviours are heavily linked to the peer culture, as students learn from and imitate the peers they admire. The need to be recognized by their peers exposes these students to alcohol consumption, eating disorders, tobacco and drug use, not practicing safe sex, tanning, vulnerability to injury, among other dangers. The effect of these is poor academic performance in classes, family problems, deviance, low self esteem, and so on (Atoyebi and Atoyebi, 2013).

Some environmental factors that contribute to drug use are cultural, parents' behaviour, regulation and policies which restrict access to drugs (Ijeoma, 2017). The adolescence stage is very critical as many cases of drugs intake being initiated occur. Adolescents may venture into drugs use for different reasons which include ignorance about the harmful effects of the substance, claiming personal independence, peer pressure, sheer curiosity, inability to maintain inter-personal communication, low level of self confidence, exposure to substance/substance abuser in the family, and so on; thereby raising concern to citizens due to their consequences.

In view of the above, it is needful to assess the impact of drug abuse on the educational performance of students.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of the study is to ascertain the educational implication of drug use among university undergraduates in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of the study will be to:

1. Identify the peculiar psychoactive drugs used among undergraduates in Rivers State.
2. Examine the reasons for undergraduates' indulgence in psychoactive drugs.
3. Investigate the effect of drug abuse on undergraduates' academic performance.
4. Provide strategies for curbing drug abuse among undergraduates.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions are:

1. What are the peculiar psychoactive drugs used among undergraduates in Rivers State?
2. What are the reasons for indulging in psychoactive drug use by undergraduates in Rivers State?
3. To what extent does drug use affect the education of undergraduates in Rivers State?
4. What strategies can be used for curbing drug abuse by undergraduates?

### **Social Learning Theory**

Social learning theory was postulated by Edwin Sutherland in 1939. It emphasizes that criminal or deviant behaviour is a product of learning. Sutherland called this formulation the theory of differential association since it is linked with social circles whose members define crime and deviance in favourable term. The central tenets of this theory are that crime and deviance are learned in intimate, face-to-face interactions with significant others, or people to whom one is close. A person engages in deviant and criminal behaviour to the extent that the definitions to which he or she is exposed are favourable violations of the law; because of an excess of definition favourable to legal and normative violations compared with definitions to such violations. The key to this process, according to Sutherland, is the ratio between definitions favourable and unfavourable to legal and normative violations. When favourable definitions exceed unfavourable ones, the individual will turn to deviance and crime.

The social learning approach has been extended by sociologists who have blended Sutherland's theory of differential association with the principles of behaviourism in psychology. Social learning theory holds that behaviour is molded by rewards and punishment, or reinforcement. Past and present rewards and punishments for certain actions determine the actions that we continue to pursue. By interacting with members of certain groups or social circles, people learn definitions of behaviours as good or bad. It is in the group setting, differentially daily for different groups, that reward and punishment take place, and where individuals are exposed to behavioural models and normative definitions of certain behaviour as good or bad.

Social learning theory has a clear-cut application in explaining drug use. It proposes that the use and abuse of psychoactive substances can be explained by differential exposure to groups in which use is rewarded. These groups help to provide the social environments in which exposure to definitions,

imitations of models, and social reinforcements for use of our abstinence from any particular substance take place; the definitions are learned through imitation and social reinforcement of them by members of the group with whom one is associated; drug abuse is determined using the extent to which a given pattern of behaviour is continued through the combination of the reinforcing effects of the substance with social reinforcement, exposure to models, definitions through association with using peers, and by the degree to which it is not deterred through bad effects of the substance and/or the negative sanctions from peers, parents, and the law. Social learning theory, then, proposes that the extent to which substances will be used or avoided depends on the extent to which the members of a group embrace such substance as well as the existing workable sanctions the State has.

### METHODOLOGY

The research design adopted is the descriptive survey. The population of the study was all the students in the Faculty of Education of two universities in Rivers State, namely the University of Port Harcourt (UPH) and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (IAUE) numbering 5852 while a sample of 374 respondents was used for the study. Stratified random sampling was used to compose the sample of students after ascertaining the population of Faculty of Education students in each of the two selected universities. Thereafter, simple random sampling was applied in drawing the sample size.

Four research questions guided the study just as a self structured instrument titled “Psychoactive Drugs Use Questionnaire PDUQ” was used. It is a non-cognitive instrument containing 25 items. The items on the instrument were responded to on a modified 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

Experts in the two education faculties of the two different institutions assessed the instrument for validity after which the instrument’s reliability was examined using the test-retest method and were correlated using Pearson Product Moment statistics. The reliability coefficient value of the instrument was 0.81. Mean statistics was then used in analyzing the data collected. The criterion mean was established at 2.5 which was derived by adding 4+3+2+1 and dividing the result by 4;  $\frac{10}{4} = 2.5$ . Thus, mean score below criterion mean was rejected while that above it was accepted.

**Research Question 1:** *What are the psychoactive drugs used among undergraduates in Rivers State?*

**Table 1: Psychoactive drugs use amongst university undergraduates in Rivers State using mean analysis**

S/NO	ITEMS	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total Score	No of Resp.	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Mean Crit.	Result
1.	Heroin	171	138	42	23	1205	374	3.2	2.5	Agree
2.	Cigarette	170	139	40	25	1202	374	3.2	2.5	Agree
3.	Caffeine (Nescafe)	173	136	44	21	1209	374	3.2	2.5	Agree
4.	Diazepam (valium)	190	120	38	26	1222	374	3.3	2.5	Agree
5.	Cocaine	188	122	36	28	1218	374	3.3	2.5	Agree
6.	Tramadol	88	150	75	61	1013	374	2.7	2.5	Agree
7.	Marijuana	191	121	36	26	1225	374	3.3	2.5	Agree
8.	Vitamin C	42	132	61	139	825	374	2.2	2.5	Disagree

Table 1 shows that heroin, cigarette, caffeine, diazepam, cocaine, tramadol, and marijuana are major examples of psychoactive drugs used among male and female undergraduates in Rivers State. This is because their respective means of 3.2, 3.2, 3.2, 3.3, 3.3, 2.7 and 3.3 were higher than the mean criterion of 2.5. Vitamin C with mean of 2.2 is not among them as it fell below the criterion mean. Going by the decision rule for the interpretation of the respondent data, the answer to RQ1 is that the above mentioned drugs are types of psychoactive drugs commonly used among undergraduates in Rivers State.

**Research Question 2:** *What are the reasons undergraduates indulge in use of psychoactive drugs in Rivers State Universities?*

**Table 2: Reasons undergraduates indulge in use of psychoactive drugs.**

S/NO	ITEMS	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total Score	No of Resp.	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Mean Crit.	Result
9.	Curiosity	152	137	55	30	1159	374	3.1	2.5	Agree
10.	Peer group influence	150	140	55	29	1159	374	3.1	2.5	Agree
11.	Depression	121	102	70	81	1011	374	2.7	2.5	Agree
12.	Anxiety	120	103	71	80	1011	374	2.7	2.5	Agree
13.	Socio-economic status	189	156	18	11	1271	374	3.4	2.5	Agree
14.	Low self esteem	168	76	84	46	1114	374	3.0	2.5	Agree
15.	Boldness	148	113	62	51	1106	374	3.0	2.5	Agree
16.	Intelligence	83	122	39	130	906	374	2.4	2.5	Disagree

Table 2 indicates that curiosity, peer group influence, depression, anxiety, socio-economic status, low self esteem and boldness are some of the reasons undergraduates indulge in use of psychoactive drugs. This is because their respective means of 3.1, 3.1, 2.7, 2.7, 3.4, 3.0 and 3.0 are above the mean criterion of 2.5. The last reason which is intelligence with mean value of 2.4 is not among them since it fell below criterion mean. Going by the decision rule for the interpretation of the respondent data, the answer to RQ2 is that the above mentioned items are reasons for undergraduates indulging in the use of psychoactive drugs.

**Research Question 3:** *What are the effects of drug abuse on the academic performance of undergraduates in Rivers State Universities?*

**Table 3: Effect of psychoactive drugs use on the academic performance of university undergraduates in Rivers State**

S/NO	ITEMS	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total Score	No of Resp.	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Mean Crit.	Result
17.	Brain damage	100	146	49	79	1015	374	2.7	2.5	Agree
18.	Emotional trauma	152	132	68	22	1162	374	3.1	2.5	Agree
19.	Stress	206	97	52	19	1238	374	3.3	2.5	Agree
20.	Loss of life	180	162	19	13	1257	374	3.4	2.5	Agree
21.	Expulsion of perpetrators from school	140	158	38	38	1142	374	3.1	2.5	Agree
22.	Violent behaviours	138	159	39	38	1145	374	3.1	2.5	Agree

Table 3 shows that brain damage, emotional trauma, stress, loss of life, expulsion of perpetrators from school, and violent behaviours are some of the effects of psychoactive drugs use by university undergraduates. This is as a result of their mean values of 2.7, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.1, and 3.1 exceeding the mean criterion of 2.5. Going by the decision rule for the interpretation of the respondent data, the answer to RQ3 is that the above mentioned items are some of the effects of psychoactive drugs.

**Research Question 4:** *What are the strategies involved in curbing psychoactive drugs intake among university undergraduates in Rivers State?*

**Table 4: Strategies involved in curbing the use of psychoactive drugs among university undergraduates using mean analysis.**

S/NO	ITEMS	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Total Score	No of Resp.	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ )	Mean Crit.	Result
23.	Use of modeling behaviour concept.	134	163	39	38	1141	374	3.1	2.5	Agree
24	Counseling	142	155	36	41	1146	374	3.1	2.5	Agree
25.	Setting up of school rules, regulations, and sanctions using government standard.	141	154	37	42	1142	374	3.1	2.5	Agree

Table 4 shows that the use of modeling behaviour concept, counseling, as well as setting up of school rules, regulations, and sanctions are among the strategies which can be used in curbing the intake of psychoactive drugs among university undergraduates. This is implied since their means of 3.1, 3.1 and 3.1 are above the criterion mean of 2.5. Going by the decision rule for the interpretation of the respondent data, the answer to RQ4 is that the above mentioned items are some of the strategies which are involved in curbing the use of psychoactive drugs.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS/DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### 1. Types of psychoactive drugs used among undergraduates.

Psychoactive drugs used by undergraduates are many, some of which are heroin, cigarette, caffeine, diazepam, cocaine, tramadol, and marijuana.

The above revelation is very worrying and gives room for concern. These drugs are now everywhere in the society and students can easily access them. Worse of it is that both male and female undergraduates indulge in them implying that no gender is free of drug abuse. However, the case is worsening everyday as more students are involved. Also, these drugs come in different forms. This is supported by NAFDAC as cited by Fareo (2012) which observed that drugs could be in the form of stimulants, hallucinogens, sedatives, tranquilizers, among others. Drugs abuse pattern may also vary in places with time.

### 2. Reasons undergraduates indulge in the use of psychoactive drugs.

Students indulge in use of psychoactive drugs for many reasons some of which are curiosity, peer group influence, depression, anxiety, socio-economic status of their family, low-self esteem, and boldness.

The result above is very alarming. It is a sign that our undergraduates are facing many social and psychological challenges which should be adequately looked into. While the spirit of curiosity is good if handled positively, its negative effects should be curtailed. Many students have intentionally and ignorantly addicted themselves to drug abuse out of curiosity. Peer group influence is another area which has to be rightly managed. These and many other reasons show how vulnerable students are and the present unpleasant conditions they are in. Odejide (2014) and Ballas (2006) commented on the above reasons when they identified peer group influence, curiosity, low-self esteem, among others as factors which influence youths to use psychoactive drugs.

### 3. Effect of using psychoactive drugs.

Using psychoactive drugs end up destroying the academic performance and career of undergraduates; just as their health is also affected.

The above result is painful but not surprising. There is no way students can excel when they frolic with drugs. In-take of unprescribed drugs is a distraction which only causes injury to the offender. When drugs are taken without prescription, students' health is affected; they become weak and dizzy and their brains may be affected. Their academic performance is affected and they could be expelled from school. This is corroborated by Perkinson (2002) who said that use of psychoactive drugs can depress the central nervous system as well as dull the brain, making learning a difficult task. Attah,

Baba, and Audu (2016) also asserted that use of psychoactive drugs can interfere with an individual's awareness of self, his potential as well as one's career development, which gradually results in social, emotional, and physical problems; producing feelings of guilt, helplessness, and despair.

#### **4. Strategies for curbing drug abuse among undergraduates.**

A strong government policy on the control of drug abuse combined with counseling in institutions of learning among other strategies will be helpful in the control of drug abuse in Nigerian universities.

The above result is true. If government can establish a drug control centre to oversee drug issues in schools, which will be duly managed by the ministries of health and internal affairs, it will help a lot. They will thus help in public enlightenment on the dangers of drug abuse as well as punishment for offenders. Schools can as well establish counseling units which will help guide our undergraduates; just as homes and religious bodies should act their functions. These views are corroborated by Attah, Baba, and Audu (2016) who further posited among others that government should prevent the cultivation/sale of Indian hemp and other deadly herbs that encourage drug abuse and also that government should strictly enforce its existing laws against drug abusers through its regulatory agencies.

### **CONCLUSION**

Drug abuse is not a distant term/reality anymore. It is found presently amongst us; especially with the undergraduates who deliberately or unconsciously indulge in it. Unfortunately, its effects are terrible; some leading to death. However, its worst effect is in the decline of academic performance of students which are presently showing. Many students are having problems with their studies due to health issues related to drugs abuse. They lose concentration frequently in classes and cannot cope with expected academic requirements. Many end up indulging in exam malpractices and other dangerous vices. While some are expelled or seriously punished, many do not end well with their studies. Some of these undergraduates find themselves indulging in violent acts, sexual acts, criminal acts which are shameful, and which may end up giving them physical, mental, and psychological afflictions. There is urgent need therefore for all stakeholders including government, school authorities, families and religions bodies to rise up, come together, and see how this drug abuse menace can be curbed in our institutions of higher learning. This is the only way of preserving the future of our students and the society at large.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following are recommended:

- 1) There should be consistent enlightenment in schools where students will be told of the realities and dangers of drug abuse.
- 2) Schools should have strict rules forbidding drug abuse within its environment.
- 3) School authorities and government should regularly meet and channel ways of stopping drug abuse/discourage students from embracing it.
- 4) Moral education should be promoted in schools where students should be informed about drug abuse.
- 5) Drug abusers in universities should be called and addressed. They should be counseled on how to come out from it.
- 6) Schools should have medical facilities where serious drug offenders/addicts should be treated.

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