



ISSN 2278 – 0211 (Online)

## **Influence of Drug Abuse on School Attendance among Senior Secondary School Students in Uromi Metropolis**

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### **Abstract**

*The study investigated the influence of drug abuse on school attendance among senior secondary school students in Uromi metropolis. One research question and hypothesis was raised and formulated respectively to guide the study. Descriptive based on survey method was used as the research design of the study. Research participants were 589 public senior secondary school students drawn by simple random sampled technique from a population of eleven thousand, seven hundred and seventy (11,770) student in Uromi metropolis. The instruments used include a School Attendance Checklist (SAC) and an adapted questionnaire titled: Drug Abuse Screening Test Questionnaire (DASTQ) with a reliability alpha ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.86. Percentages and t-test statistical analysis were used to analyse the research question and test the hypothesis respectively at 0.05 alpha level. The result showed that there is no significant difference between victims and non-victims of drug abuse on their school attendance ( $p>0.05$ ). The study recommended that continued collaboration between the school and family should be intensified through Parents Teacher Association (PTA) meetings to sustain the support needed by children to grow into well-adjusted individuals.*

**Keywords:** Drug abuse, school attendance, drug abuse victims, non-drug abuse victims

### **1. Introduction**

The use of drugs - chemical substances to produce stimulation, relief or relaxation dates back to many years ago. It was one of the early discoveries of man in the organization of the human society. It was enthroned and cherished by man not just for its availability but also because of its effects which are often deleterious (Adomeh, 2010). This is perhaps the reason Rathus (1981) accentuated that “the world is a supermarket of consciousness-altering chemical substances or drugs.

Nigeria is not left out among nations that use hundreds of drugs that can distort perceptions and change mood. Significantly, the use of alcohol and smoking cuts across the whole population strata but at high risk are the youths and often it begins at or even before adolescence (National Agency for Campaign Against Drug Abuse-NACADA, 2004a; National Co-ordinating Agency for Population and Development -NCAPD, 2005). The vast majority of students in many places in the world experiment at least with alcohol and tobacco but a few become drug abusers (Papalia, Olds and Fieldma, 1999). For example, in 2006, 72.7% and 47.1% of American students of 12<sup>th</sup> grade was reported to have used alcohol and cigarettes in their lifetime respectively (Johnston, O’ Malley, Bachman, 2006).

Alcohol and cigarettes smoking have reasserted their dominance among the drugs used by adolescents of school age. Students who have tried marijuana are in majority, thus making alcohol and cigarettes smoking drugs of choice among youths of school age. No drug has offered so much attractiveness as to lead to an abuse like alcohol. According to Rathus (1981), alcohol is used to celebrate accomplishment while young people use it to assert their maturity among their peers. Marijuana is of interest to youths because it contains ingredients that help them to relax, elevate their mood and sometimes produce mild hallucination which is the reason why marijuana is referred to as ‘hallucinogenic drug’. Also, cigarette smoking seems to influence their social perception of others, their sense of maturity and individuality (Rathus, 1981).

#### *1.1. Drug Abuse and School Attendance*

There was once a time when secondary school students represented Nigeria’s most lively, ambitious and energetic population. However, teenage drug abuse of today has severely tarnished that image. Therefore, drugs have no rightful place anywhere in society; however, they have even less of a place in school environments where school age adolescents are living their most formative years.

The fact that students' academic performance among drug users is severely impaired, along with their level of responsibility such as skipping classes speaks to the notion that drug use is rampant among students in our schools.

Obviously successful schooling begins by engaging students and making sure they come to school regularly. On the other hand, what is less obvious is that the consequence of low attendance is not only for the student who missed school but also for the community because going to school regularly is important to a child's future. A child who missed school frequently could be adversely affected academically and perform poorly in his/her examinations. In consonance, Great School (2011), opined that the benefit of regular school attendance by a child is that such a child is likely to succeed in academics. They further stressed that students who are not in school on a regular basis are more likely to acquire deviant behaviours in event of socializing with wrong peers in the community.

In a study by Hickman (2008) cited in Great Schools (2011), they tracked students' attendance rate and associated problem from kindergarten through high school and found that drop out patterns were linked with poor attendance at school. It was also discovered that school budgets may suffer when students do not attend school regularly because school budgets are usually based on students' enrollment in a period of schooling. In other words, if many students that enrolled at a school fail to consistently attend, schools would have less money to pay staff and meet essential needs. For this reason, Rutherford (1981) opined that drug abuse could lead to what he referred to as an 'amotivational syndrome'. He explained it as a lack of interest in achievement, a sort of generalized melting away of ambition. According to him, correlational evidence has shown that students who smoke marijuana regularly do not strive to succeed as much as their non-smoking classmates. On this note, Shehu and Idris (2005) indicated in their study that the poor performance observed in smokers was as a result of persistent absenteeism which was found to be high among smokers than non-smokers.

One might readily argue that teenage drug abuse has reached disturbing proportion in schools. Alcohol which is one of the most misused substances today is also one of the most readily available solvents taken by students. American Psychiatric Association (APA) (1980), defines alcohol abuse or alcoholism as drinking that repeatedly interferes with physical, personal or social well-being. Thus, a student who is absent at school because of drunkenness could be said to have abused alcohol. Moreso, waking up in a stupor after the previous night's party may severely impair academic performance of a student by being unable to attend classes due to the intoxicating effect of alcohol.

In other to conceptually clarification the term, Adomeh (2010), alluded to the fact that professionals now prefer the term 'non-medical drug use' to drug abuse due to variations arising from what constitutes abuse in the use of drugs because an individual may use it out of curiosity, fun, recreation or amusement. Such an individual may not be said to have abused drug even though he used it without medical prescription. Rather, he can be said to be involved in the act of self-medication. In this case, there is the possibility that the amount consumed did not interfere with such an individual's daily activity; thus, still maintaining accurate perception and judgment. From this perspective, Rutherford (1981) holds that the quantity of drug abuse is not necessarily an adequate indication of whether or not a person is abusing drug. Rather, account must also be taken on how that person's pattern of drug abuse interacts with other elements in his or her life. In all, Siegel (2000) opined that studies have shown that drug abusers are maladjusted, alienated and emotionally distressed. He added that their drug use is one among many social problems confronting young individuals which could lead to other consequences in the life of the student which normally disdain their education.

### *1.2. The Problem*

Drug abuse is an anti-social behaviour common among youths of school going age. It is a practice that involves the inhaling, ingestion or consumption of any edible substance other than food which could provoke adverse bodily changes or mental functioning of its victim. Some of these non-food substances are alcohol and cigarettes. A study conducted among high school students in Cape Town, South Africa revealed that the prevalence rates on the use of cigarettes and alcohol were 27% and 31% respectively (Fisher, Parry, Evans, Muller and Lombaard, 2003). In 2002, 27.7% and 8.3% of students interviewed in Kenya from primary schools to university reported "life time use" of alcohol and cigarettes respectively (NACADA, 2004b).

High evidences of alcohol and cigarettes use among college students in Nigeria and Senegal has also been reported by scholars (Fatoye and Morakinyo 2002; Abasiubong, Atting Bassey and Ektt, 2008) respectively. To determine the influence of drug abuse on school attendance among senior secondary school students in Uromi metropolis of Edo State, this paper will:

- a. describe the school attendance rate of senior secondary school students in Uromi Metropolis;
- b. determine the influence of drug abuse on students' school attendance in Uromi Metropolis.

### *1.3. Research Questions*

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What is the school attendance record of senior secondary school students in Uromi Metropolis?
2. Does drug abuse have influence on school attendance among secondary school students in Uromi Metropolis?

### *1.4. Research Hypothesis*

The hypothesis below is formulated for this study:

1. There is no significant difference between victims and non-victims of drug abuse on their school attendance record in secondary schools in Uromi Metropolis

## 2. Methods

Descriptive based on survey method was used as the research design of the study. The study area was Uromi metropolis of Edo State, Nigeria. The metropolis has a total of nine (9) public senior secondary schools with a population of eleven thousand, seven hundred and seventy (11,770) student. The simple random sampling technique was used in selecting five (5) of the nine (9) public secondary schools in the study area. A sample size of five hundred and eighty-nine (589) representing 5% of the total population (11,770) of Senior Secondary School (SSS) students (from SSS 1-3classes) was drawn from the five selected schools.

The instruments that were used for collecting data include: students' School attendance checklist (SAC) and an adapted questionnaire titled: Drug Abuse Screening Test Questionnaire (DASTQ). The researcher collected the school attendance data of students from their school attendance register as recorded by their class teachers in each of the selected schools. The data collected on school attendance covered a period of nine (9) weeks in an academic term. On the other hand, the Drug Abuse Screening Test Questionnaire (DASTQ) is a self-test completion questionnaire originally developed by Gavin, Ross and Skinner (1989). The scale (DASTQ) was adapted by modifying the scale into a four point Likert type to rate responses from strongly disagree -1 to strongly agree - 4. The original questionnaire has a co-efficient alpha of 0.86. As a standardized instrument, the validity of the instrument has been ensured by developers of the instrument.

The questionnaire was administered by the researcher with the assistance with three research assistants. All completed questionnaires were collected while the scores were collated and subjected to statistical analysis. The research question was analyzed using frequency count and percentages while the hypothesis was tested using t-test statistical technique at 0.05 level of significance.

### 2.1. Research Question

What is the school attendance record of senior school students in Uromi metropolis?

Score Range	Grade Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 62	Poor	55	9.3
63-66	Good	115	19.6
67-75	Very good	151	25.7
76 and Above	Excellent	267	45.4
<b>Total</b>		<b>588</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1: Distribution of Students' School Attendance record in Uromi metropolis

Table 1 above indicates that 55 of the student representing 9.3% of the 588 participants in the study scored less than 62 in the score range indicating poor school attendance rate. 115 (19.6%) of the participants scored between 63-66 score range; indicating good school attendance performance. 151 (25.7%) of the participants scored between 67-75 in the scored range indicating very good school attendance while the 267 (45.4%) of the total participants scored 76 and above in the score range which indicated excellent school attendance performance.

### 2.2. Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between victims and non-victims of drug abuse on their school attendance record in secondary schools in Uromi Metropolis

Variable	Drug abuse status	N (588)	$\bar{X}$	S. D	d. f	t-cal.	p-value	Remarks
School attendance	Victims	67	81.08	16.15	586	0.202	0.54	Reject null hypothesis ( $p < 0.05$ )
	Non-victims	521	81.87	14.47				

Table 2: T-test Analysis on differences in School Attendance record between Victims and Non-Victim of Drug Abuse

Table 2 indicates that the t-calculated value of 0.202 is not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between victims and non-victims of drug abuse on their school attendance record in secondary schools in Uromi Metropolis is retained while the alternate is rejected. This implies that drug abuse has no significant influence on students' school attendance in Uromi Metropolis.

## 3. Discussion of Results

The study showed that there is no significant difference between victim and non-victims of drug abuse in their school attendance record as victims of drug abuse exhibited good school attendance rate as their non-victim counterparts. This is not in agreement with the report of Shehu and Idris (2008), who found that cigarette, marijuana and alcohol are the common drug abused by youth of school age in Nigeria. They added that the heavy consumption of the aforementioned substances could affect students' involvement in school activities. They noted that the poor performance observed in smokers was as a result of persistent absenteeism which was found to be high among smokers than non-smokers.

Ruthus (1981) earlier opined that drug abuse could lead to what he referred to as an 'amotivational syndrome'. He explained it as a lack of interest in achievement, a sort of generalized melting away of ambition. According to him, correlational evidence has shown that students that smoke marijuana regularly do not only fail to attend classes regularly but also do not strive to succeed as much as their non-smoking classmates.

#### 4. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made on the study:

- 1) School guidance counsellors have roles to play in orienting and informing students on the possible effects that could go with abusing drugs.
- 2) The government in conjunction with school administrators should encourage continued collaboration between the school and family through the Parents Teacher Association (PTA). This could serve as an appropriate avenue for parents to keep educators informed on the risky behaviours such as binge drinking that their child(ren) indulge in at home; thereby helping educators to work out corrective measures in helping identified drug victims.

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