

# Causative Factors and Problems Associated with the Use and Abuse of Psychoactive Substances among Students of Secondary Schools in Lagelu Local Government of Oyo State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

Over the past two decades 3.4 million kilograms of drugs have been seized and destroyed since the inception of the Nigerian anti-drug agency; the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) began operations in 1990. Majority of reported cases involved syndicates with international links. However, the influence and root factors of substance use and abuse among youth especially adolescents of secondary school age have not been thoroughly assessed. In this researcher paper, we studied and reported how drug abuse begins among students and how it progresses and becomes monumental and difficult societal problems. We also studied the current situation in randomly selected junior secondary schools in Lagelu local Government area of Oyo State in Nigeria. Results revealed some contributing factors to the risks of drug abuse which aggravate the chances for substance or drug abuse in schools where there were no preventive or proper interventions. It was also shown that most drug abusers including individuals at risk of drug abuse with addictive trends by youngsters span over different stages and over a long period in life. Results did also show that many in early adolescent respondents between the ages of 12 and 16 had started the use of illicit substance and drugs at early adulthood some of who were at the verge of becoming addicted to various illicit substances. Respondents in the range of 70.9 % cited frustration and low self-esteem as factors for their involvement in substance use while 72% cited parental deprivation resulting from polygamy, divorce or lack of parent's involvement in their upbringing. Another 81.3% of respondents took drugs for mind augmentation and relaxation and 67% of the respondents in their opinion, believed that parental influence and adult involvement were twin factors in the abuse of drugs.

**Keywords:** Psychoactive drug, Addictive desire, Drug Abuse, Adolescent

## 1. Introduction

Lagelu Local Government is one of the 33 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Oyo State, Nigeria. The headquarters of the Local Government is located at Iyana-Offa, a suburb of about 20 km from the State's capital city center, Ibadan. It has a land mass area of about 338 km<sup>2</sup> and an estimated population of about 147,957. There are 14 Local Governments constituencies and/or wards with a total of 132 towns and villages (NPC 2009, 2008).

From early 20th century, production of psychoactive drugs otherwise known as artificial or synthetic psychotropic drugs, such as 3,4-methyl-enedioxymethamphetamine, (MDM), lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), and marijuana etc in the last few years, became an established practice in Governmental policies in some countries including states in the United States of America, medical and health research industries. Some of these psychotropic drugs were initially produced for experimental purposes, sports and recreations and were in considered non-addictive (Merlin 2003). Some of these substances are used to intentionally alter consciousness or as entheogens in ritual, spiritual and shamanic purposes. However, most youth users of hard drugs use them as a tool for studying or augmenting the mind.

Some categories of psychoactive substances and drugs along with their derivatives are prescription drugs and possess therapeutic and stimulating qualities (Merlin 2003; Griffiths *et al.* 2006). However, advancement in technology, population growth and poverty has triggered a spike in physical and psychological dependence on some of these drugs by illicit drug users and abusers. The impact was a more subversive invention of drugs and subsequent abuse while intervention in dependence cycle becomes harder to achieve.

Drug or substance abuse is the use of substance in dosage or pattern that is considered unhealthy or harmful to

the user and to others. Drug abuse and crime are regarded as a major threat to humans and the environment. The twin-threat problem is at variance with development in terms of socio-economic, political, cultural development and sustainability. Drug abuse, drug-related deaths and crimes, are regarded to be the major threats to socio-cultural values and existence. Illicit drugs and their abuse pose problems to socio-economic life, political order, cultural referencing, sustainable stability and development.

In the last two decade, information on the link between drug abuse, terrorism and violence and social disorder was scanty or non-existent in Nigeria. However, for many years, worldwide links between drug, its abuse and violent crimes were unimaginably compatible. Earlier, the connections between vices and substance abuse in Nigeria were in part obscured until the emergence of cultism and underworld social groups in higher educational institutions, subsequently exposing accompanying political and social problems of the menace. In an effort to curb drug-related activities at air and sea ports including other border crossing, the Nigerian Government in Decree 48 of 1990, established the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA). Before the September 11, 2001 terrorists attack on the United States of America, the reality of the link between heinous crimes and hard drugs in many parts of the world including Nigeria was rarely talked about and/or was poorly substantiated. In Nigeria, this was due in part to campus crimes and cult activism in higher educational institutions being accorded primary concerns in political and social arena of the Nigerian society.

According to NDLEA (2013), as at middle 2013, over 3.4 million kilograms of drugs were seized and destroyed since the Agency began operations in 1990. According to the report, the Agency intercepted a total of 3,434,966.23kg of narcotics including 2,827,861.70kg of cannabis, 178,120.73kg of cocaine, 195,283.92kg of heroin and 233,699kg of psychotropic substances. In addition, 21,871 drug traffickers have also been convicted. Illicit drugs were once described as aliens to Nigeria (Giade in NDLEA, 2010). Abuse of hard drugs has ability to destroy potentials, personal values and integrity, resulting in anti-social and other menacing personal character deformity. Reports have thereafter shown the evident reality of links between abuse of drugs, violent crimes, terrorism, human trafficking, sex trades, hooliganisms and other socio-economic problems, have the hallmarks of drug trade, drug use and abuse (Yayla 2007; Mace 2007; Onwubiko 2012).

In an effort to fight drug trafficking and those involved in the illicit trade, In its 93<sup>rd</sup> plenary meeting, the United Nations adopted June 26 of every year as world drug day through resolution 42/112 of December 7, 1987 (United Nations, 1987). The connection between various early drug use in secondary schools and consequent problems as one major education problem and negative influence of drug use and abuse on secondary school education were evaluated in this research.

## **2. Research methods**

The population for this study comprised of 900 student respondents that were randomly selected from junior secondary school (JSS) 1 to 3 from 10 schools. They were between 12 and 16 years of age. The research instrument was a self-reporting questionnaire distributed to the students of the selected schools through the Heads of the schools and some interested teaching and non-teaching staff. In order to meet the objectives of the study the researchers supervised the non-teaching staff to ensure justification in the discharge of the tasks. The questionnaire on abuse of substance was drafted in accordance with Gottfredson and Gottfredson (2002). In order to measure drug involvement and those at risk, the design of questionnaire on drug abuse was risk-factor variable based. Survey materials were administered individually and the survey lasted for two months. The target population of respondents was also the junior secondary school (JSS) 1 to 3 distributed over 30 towns and villages in the Local Government areas. Since the intention was to target early adolescents aged 12 to 16 years, purposive sampling technique was used to select the study population.

The questionnaire was sub-grouped into sections A and B. Section A comprised of demographic background such as age, gender, academic class and family history while section B focused on questions of risk factors for student's substance use/abuse. In the questions, factors such as frustration and low self-esteem, peer-group influence, parental deprivation and abuse, drug-use for fun and relaxation, influence of parents who engaged in the use and/or abuse of substance, social influence due to proximity to readily available illicit drugs were specifically studied, analyzed and discussed.

## **3. Data analysis and Results**

The analysis revealed that the students who were assessed were in the junior secondary school (JSS 1-3) students from 10 schools the ages ranging between 12 and 16. Only 30 villages in 5 wards were surveyed and

300 Students were targeted and marked out for the survey in villages of Lagelu local government area in Oyo state Nigeria. These students from these areas have been known for different kinds of atrocities in the state. It was revealed that the respondents used various substances and had been the root of juvenile delinquency and other malpractices in the area. The percentage of students who were involved in these activities and had used drugs or other substances like Indian hemp (Marijuana), tobacco and even alcohol was high. The questionnaires were analyzed and being a rural area many are of low socio-economic status, some of the students are coming from polygamous families and majority of them rated as illiterates. Some of the students were living with step mothers or grandparents. This study revealed that between ages 12 and 16, the students have started endangering their lives with snuff glue, gasoline or other inhalants, they had used illegal drugs and drunk as beverages available in their locality. The students have behavioral disorders such as fighting, bullying, destroying property, telling lies, truancy and stealing- before in their family history. Some of them either parent are alcoholics or had a criminal record and most of the students have been mistreated. Those whose parents were taking drugs also started in their early age since they have been exposed to abuse on the onset of their lives. Parents should be stimulated to meet their basic responsibilities to the children or their wards, not to leave their parental duties to the society.

Summary of collected data and analyses from 30 towns and villages in 10 wards surveyed revealed that some of the assessed students were in the junior secondary school (JSS 1-3) whose age ranged between 12 and 16 years. From a total of 900 students selected for the survey as shown in Table 1, it was also shown that 33.2% of the respondent students were in JSS 1 while 32.1% were in JSS 2 and 34.7% were in JSS 3 with 299, 289 and 312 students in JSS 1, JSS 2 and JSS 3 respectively. Moreover, from Table 1, gender distribution of the respondents did show that male students formed a majority of students attending various Government secondary schools in the Local Government; a traditional phenomenon that reflects in academic training of children in which male children are favored by culturally imbued societies (Table 1).

Table 1: Total student respondents by gender and academic levels within the population density of the survey showed gender discrepancy in all the junior secondary classes

Parameters	f	Male	Female	%
Valid	0			
JSS1	299	191	108	33.2
JSS2	289	180	109	32.1
JSS3	312	170	142	34.7
Sub-Total	900			
Total	900	541	359	100

Meanwhile, streaming analysis of gender by academic class ratio did show that there were a total of 299 randomly selected respondents from JSS 1. There were 191 male respondents forming 63.9% of total respondents in JSS 1 and 21.2% of overall male in the study. However, there were 108 female students from JSS 1 accounting for 36.1% of total class population and 12.0% of overall JSS 1 students in the study.

There were 180 male students and 109 female students in JSS 2 respectively forming 62.2% and 37.7% of class two populations of 289 respondents and accounting for 20.0% and 12.1% of respective overall respondents in the study (Table 1, Figure 1).

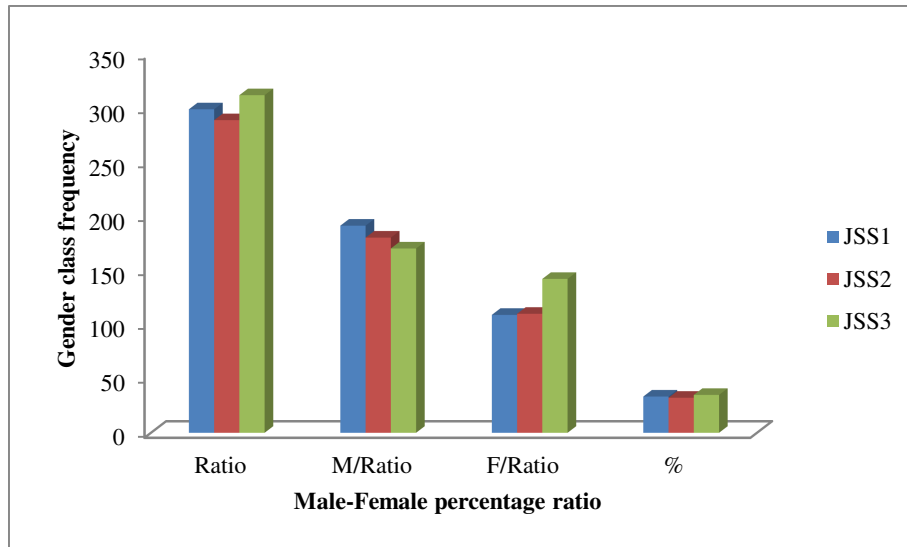


Figure 1: Relationship of gender-academic class level ratio did show the traditional male dominance with slight reduction in the number of both genders along academic progression

In class 3 however, as shown in Table 1 and Figure 1, male students were 170 representing 54.5% of class 3 students and 18.9% of pool of students in the study while female respondents were 142 forming a class percentage of 45.5% and 15.8% respectively of JSS 3 students or 18.9% and 15.8% respectively of total student pool in the study. In summary, a total of 541 male respondents and 359 female respondents formed 60.1% and 39.9% of total respondents respectively with slight decline in the numbers of students from both genders yearly along academic progression line. In other word, the slight reduction in the number of students as reflected in the random sampling of student respondents were attributed to many factors and was seen to be substance of reality of events in many of the schools studied.

Results from six categories of questions grouped into two batches revealed that close to 80% of the respondents mostly female, attributed use and abuse of substances to low self-esteem, 67.3% to peer-group impact, and 72% to deprived parental upbringing in various forms, as shown in Table 2 (Batch A). However in the second batch, there were slightly higher ratings of use of substances for relaxation or “cooling-off” with 81.3% attributing substance abuse to that single factor while 67% attributed substance abuse to parental influence in that one or both parents used one or more illicit substances and whopping 82.6% attributed use and abuse to availability or easy accessibility to the substance or drug (Table 2, Batch B).

Table 2: Majority of the respondents attributed their usage of substance to various factors emanating from one or more of the causative factors in the two-batched areas of interest

Batch A	LSE		PGI		DEP	
	n	f(100)	n	f(100)	n	f(100)
N/Inf.	262	29.1	294	32.7	252	28.0
Inf.	628	70.9	606	67.3	648	72.0
Total	900	100.0	900	100.0	900	100.0
Batch B	RLX		PAR		AVL	
	n	f(100)	n	f(100)	n	f(100)
N/Inf.	168	18.7	297	33.0	156	17.4
Inf.	732	81.3	603	67.0	744	82.6
Total	900	100.0	900	100.0	900	100.0

The graphic expression (Figure 2), of the response to the influence of low self-esteem contribution to substance abuse among students in junior secondary schools, almost 3 in 4 of the respondents representing 628 respondents were influenced while 262 were not influenced by peer groups. Peer-group influence accounted for similar response with 606 of the 900 respondents indicated they were influenced while 648 said they were driven into trying illicit substance by deprivation (Figure 2)

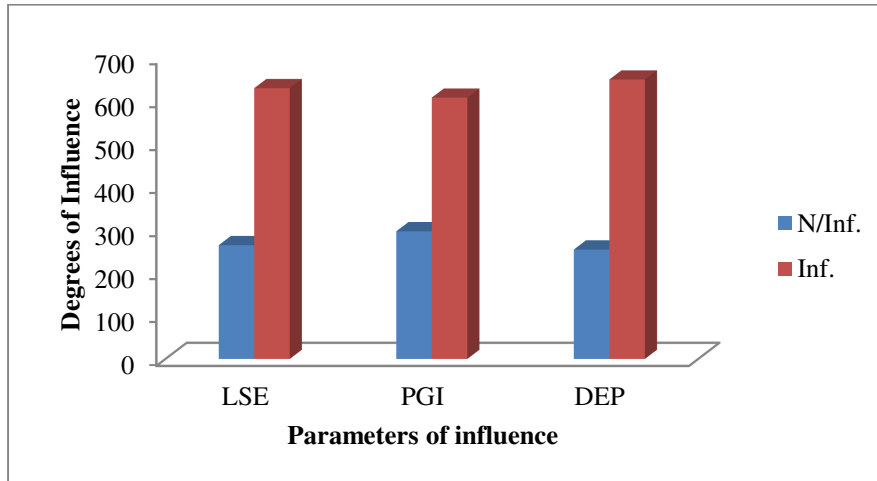


Figure 2: Parametric influence resulting from low self-esteem, peer-group influence and deprived upbringing and the degrees of influence by individual factor

Comparatively, the influence of each of the three factors in the first batch showed slim differences in each response to the factors. The not influenced were in the range of 252 to 294 while the influenced were between 606 and 648. By comparison therefore, there were more young people getting involved in drug use and abuse by their judgment of the basic factors as shown in Figure 3.

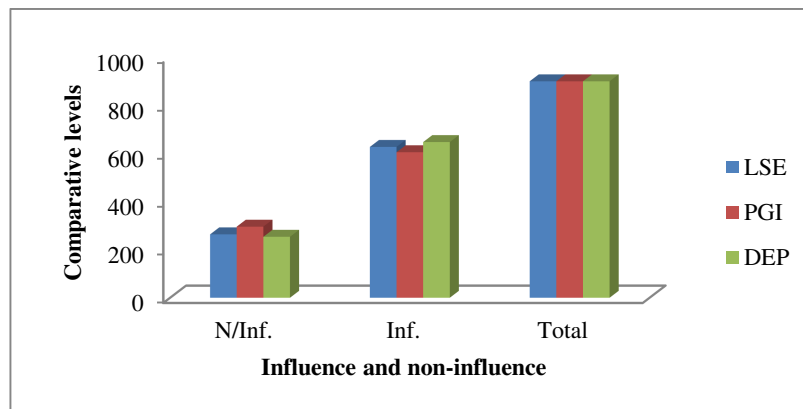


Figure 3: Comparative levels of influence resulting from low self-esteem, peer-group influence and deprived upbringing

The graphic presentation of the respondents to parents influence on drugs for relaxation, adolescent participation in drug use and abuse and substance availability is shown in Figure 4. This result showed that the respondents viewed drug as a way of enjoyment, relaxation or fun and as such get engaged in its use and abuse. The result did show also that the respondents were of the opinions that availability of different types of drugs in their environment has aided their involvement in substance use and abuse (Figure 4).

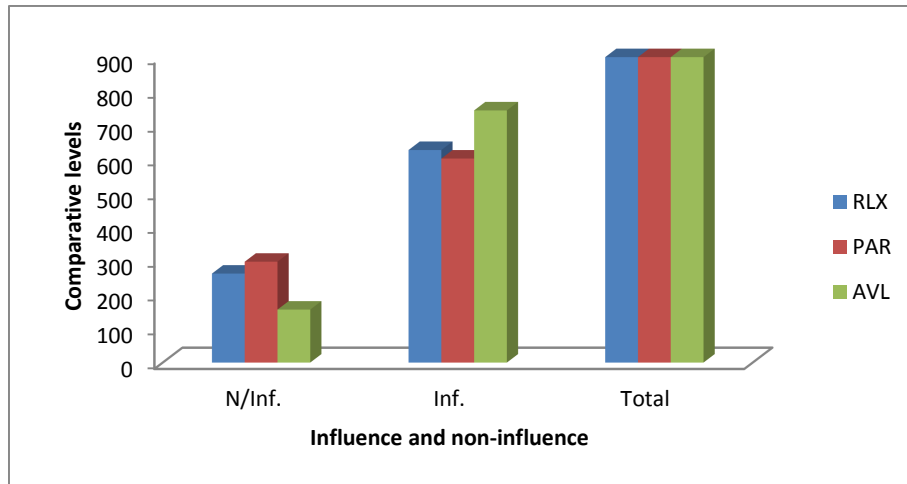


Figure 4: Students whose view on drug was based on relaxation, parental-family influence and off-the-shelf ready availability of the drug as factors

In the second batch which comprised of the view of drugs as tool of relaxation and the influence of parents or members of extended family and ready-availability of the drugs on teens’ use and abuse of hard drugs. Analyses did show that motivating factors and reactions of young drug users are closely similar across the board. There was little or no disparity between the factors in the first batch and second of the study schools and the respondents (Figure 5).

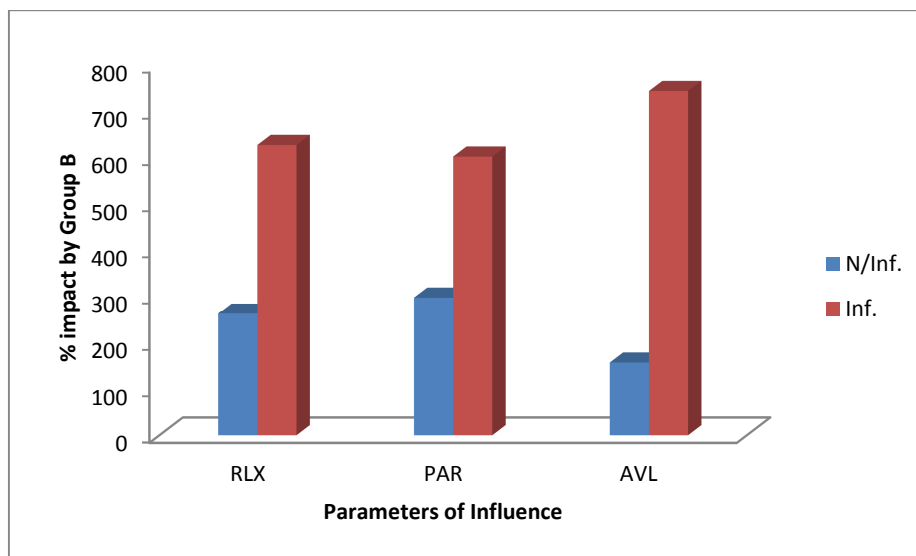


Figure 5: Respondents views on substance use and abuse based on relaxation, parental-family influence and off-the-shelf ready availability of the drug as factors have little or zero disparity of views

#### 4. Discussion

It should be noted that the low number of female students in schools was neither confined to secondary education nor to Lagelu Local Government alone. It was once a wide-spread phenomenon. Certain cultural beliefs, customs and religious practices that permit discrimination against women contributed to the problem. One such derogatory traditional belief was a now defunct norm in which female children were described as flimsy along with some unpopular and misconceived notions in which a female child was thought to be “another man’s wife” on whom less time and money should be spent. These traditional myths as earlier high-lighted play dominant role in gender-based discrimination which still contributes adversely to the low self-esteem, development and education of female children especially in less cities and remote villages.

In the report of Francoeur *et al* (2000), female children were regarded as deficient in logic, analytical abilities and critical thinking in comparison with their male counterparts. The consequential old traditions have resulted in issues that negatively impact female children from childhood. These include low self-esteem and abuse by male in particular and the society in general. For instance, the adolescent girls especially in some villages are groomed for domestic work such as care of aged parents or younger siblings and helping their parents in basic house cores and trade. Also the narrow view that motherhood responsibilities can be performed better if girls are less educated has resulted in marriage at a younger age, mostly before the age of 18 years. In such conditions, substance use and abuse have been seen as a shortcut to alleviating the painful stigma and side effects leading to frustration and low self-esteem undoubtedly with serious repercussions. Though most of these myths have been busted and done away with, however their residual effects along with other successive factors still plague many parents especially those with little or no academic literacy and subsequently, the society. Though the numbers of female users and abusers of illicit substances/drug were very low, low self-esteem as a factor is worth noticing.

Moreover, in modern times with Government policies on compulsory education and enlightenment programs, coupled with stringent penalties for marrying out a female child before her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, the age-long traditional burdens which once hindered the desire, ability and vision of young girls to further their education after primary education have been reduced drastically and eliminated in most places.

Economically, healthy youths make up the economic power base of any nation. According to the statistical figures given by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2013), mental health problems such as depression, developmental lags, apathy, withdrawal, and other psychosocial dysfunctions frequently are linked to substance abuse among adolescents. Substance-abusing youth are at higher risk than non-users for mental health problems, including depression and conduct problems, personality disorders, suicidal thoughts, attempted suicide, and suicide. Marijuana use, which unfortunately is being legalized in some states in the United States and the West, is prevalent among youths around the world. However, this same drug-plant and its derivatives have been shown to interfere with short-term memory, learning, and psychomotor skills. Motivation and emotional aspect of life also may be affected as suggested. Studies have shown that the major risk periods for drug abuse are during the late childhood and early adolescence (Steinberg 2004; Yisa *et al.* 2009; Gardner and Steinberg 2005).

Results in Table 2 and Figures 2 and 3 showed indicated that peer-group influence which could be linked to extraneous factors such as polygamous family background, single parentage resulting from death, divorce among others, parental illiteracy and poorly rated family and low family income levels usually resulted in wrong choices of peer-group selection. Resultant bad peer-groups were prominent factors leading young adults in schools into substance use and abuse. According to Jeffrey *et al.* (2012), students who engaged in substance abuse were often hostile and labeled as such by their peers under whose influence they got a first taste of drugs in the first place. Moreover, adolescents who use drugs and other substances were also said to be part of the influence along the peer-group factor (Steinberg 2004; Yisa *et al.* 2009). Substance abuse is associated with both violent and income-generating crimes by youth who in most cases dropped out of schools. According to Hawkins *et al* (1987) and Yisa *et al* (2009), gang activities, drug trafficking, prostitution, and increasing number of youth's homicides are among the prevalent social and criminal justice problems often linked to adolescent substance abuse in the United States, so is it most developing nations including Nigeria.

The increased fear among community residents were resultant effect of strong evidences of association between drug abuse and delinquent behavior in juveniles. Furthermore, the abuse and misuse of other substances by youth may result in family crises and jeopardize many aspects of family life, sometimes resulting in family dysfunction. Both siblings and parents are profoundly affected by substance and drug abuse in youth (Jeffrey *et al.* 2012; Steinberg 2004; NIDA, 2003; Nowinski, 1990). Earlier research findings revealed that the abuse of substance was Substance abuse can drain a family's financial and emotional resources (Steinberg 2004; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992).

Results of response to parental deprivation and abuse (Table 2) revealed that 72% of the students under this survey had experienced at a time or were experiencing parent deprivation as a result of polygamy, divorce or lack of one or both parents' involvements in their childhood life while the response of 28% did show that they were not facing these problems. In the process some of the respondents retreated to whatever means they thought could fill the one of which unfortunately was drug use and eventual abuse. It can be deduced from the Table 2, Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5 above, that the influence of family patterns and treatment of children brought up under such subjective treatment and denial could be linked to young adults' involvement in drugs. This was corroborated by the reports of the World Health Organization (2001), which stated that at the family level, adolescents who have a positive relationship with their parents and whose parents provide structure and boundaries are less likely to

use substances. However, adolescents in families where there is conflict are more likely to use substances. Studies have shown that the abuse of substance started and continue from late childhood and early adolescence in the local government and there were cases of addiction associated with greater drug involvement. This supports the findings of Spear (2000) that it was important to accentuate that youth should no longer progress in abusing other drugs because the connection between the adolescence and illegal usage of drugs was overwhelming.

Research in various countries and the case studies cited by NIDA (1997) and WHO (2001), identified the risk factors and established that preventive measure and treatment programs should be designed to foster preventive factors and reduce risk factors. Finally it is important to note that many socio-behavioral problems are connected to the same causative factors. Therefore, there should be an incorporation of strategies that may help to minimize the problems.

## 5. Conclusion

Early adolescent years are major transition periods in child's development. While the primary transition for children begins when they leave the security of the family and enter school, major transition continue with what next they chose in priority. When they proceed from primary school to secondary school, they often experience new social environment at each stage along with academic demands and needs within the new environment which may include getting along with wider peer-groups. Starting from this point to early adolescent years, depending on the societal level of morality, children are likely to be exposed to drug use, abuse and other vices as parts of developmental experiences. During the high school, adolescents are faced with additional social, emotional, and educational challenges which could be game-changers in their quest for an unknown future. The highlight in this study and the findings of previous studies in other areas across Nigeria make this research useful for preventive strategies in combatting substance abuse and helping teenagers and young adults confronted with the problems. Students in late childhood and early adolescent stages are in a period of impulsive pressure. These two stages are moment of opportunities for building up bad habits and engage in abnormal behavioral tendencies. Government should introduce curricular events that imbibe the moral codes of self-confidence, self-appraisal, discipline and national spirits in students in their early years in school. Moreover, it is vital that parent and teachers can seize the opportunity of applying behavior modification therapy to juveniles and young adults as the need arises. Generally youths in rural areas especially in remote villages are vulnerable to misinformation and wrong company. Consequent to their curiosity, they fall into the hands of wrong people, drug addicts and people with low moral credibility. Therefore it is the responsibilities of the home, families and the school communities to make sure that at all stages they are not missing out the opportunities of training and enlightening the youth of their responsibility to their families and nations. Finally, it lies with the Government to provide as part of school curricula, programs in which students in the rural communities have access to basic information and moral precepts in ways that individual cultural upbringing is not jeopardized.

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