



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



Negative impact of social media on substance abuse: Knowledge of preventive strategies among adolescence in Akwa Ibom state secondary schools

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Abstract

The increasing influence of social media on adolescents has raised concerns about its role in promoting substance abuse, which has become a menace among adolescents in the society. This study examined preventive strategies against the influence of social media on substance abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. Utilising a cross-sectional descriptive survey design, data was collected from 351 students selected through the Krejcie and Morgan formula and multistage technique using a validated self-structured questionnaire with a Cronbach alpha of 0.82. Data analysis with SPSS version 26 revealed 68.9% female respondents in this study. Findings revealed that the students are aware that social media promote drug abuse and related risks among users. The study also indicated parental monitoring and guidance, media literacy education and educational content, and peer support groups as the three most effective strategies for preventing the influence of social media on drug abuse among adolescents. There was a significant relationship between knowledge of preventive strategies and their influence on social media. Although adolescents possess considerable knowledge of preventive strategies against social media influence on substance abuse, social media-related factors hinder strategy utilisation. Strengthening parental involvement and media (digital) literacy programmes is recommended.

Keywords: Social Media; Substance Abuse; Knowledge; Preventive Strategy; Adolescence

1. Introduction

Concern about how teenagers' heavy social media use might influence substance abuse behaviours has been a major issue. [1] asserts that the information ecology on a worldwide scale was fundamentally changed by the emergence of social media in the early 2000s. Its impact on society and communication is significant since technology has transformed human connection, removed geographical barriers, and enabled instantaneous worldwide communication [2]. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube are all forms of social media that let people connect with one another and share and create content. Teens' attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions are shaped by these platforms, which have become a part of their daily life [3]. The ubiquitous and rapid dissemination of information means that adolescents are constantly exposed to many forms of influence [4].

The favourable depiction of drug misuse in peer-generated material on social media might lead to adolescents idealising the practice. Instagram posts showing drug and alcohol parties or TikTok trends incorporating smoking-related chores may subtly inspire adolescents to experiment with drugs [5]. [6] reports that teens aged 13-17 years in the US in 2024 have 90% on YouTube, 63% on TikTok, 61% on Instagram, 55% on Snapchat, etc. According to [7], 61% of Nigerian adolescents have smartphones, and 55.4% use Facebook, 45% use WhatsApp, 27.7% use TikTok, 26.5% use YouTube, etc.

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Photos and videos of people misusing drugs on social media increase the likelihood that young people will try alcohol, cigarettes, and illicit narcotics [8]. Remarkably, targeted advertising and peer pressure have caused teenage indoctrination over the desirability of dangerous behaviours like heavy drinking and drug use (legal and illicit) to spread rapidly on social media platforms [9].

According to [10], teenagers often see musicians, actors and other celebrities as authorities who somewhat influence their behaviour towards drugs by portraying drug-taking in a good light in their movies, music, etc. Finding the origin of the load should be the first step in implementing effective preventive measures. Addressing drug use and its related socioeconomic determinants of health requires a collaborative, cross-sector strategy that includes not just health care institutions and experts but also schools, social service organisations, and local communities. Stopping or reducing the negative consequence of an activity is the goal of preventative methods. Working together, partners can have a bigger impact and achieve more meaningful outcomes. [11] asserts that by cultivating strategic connections, they may finance and carry out preventive programmes. Because young people are at a vulnerable age when they are developing behavioural patterns and are influenced greatly by their peers and role models, who may also be using substances, it is imperative that the community actively participate in recognising the problems, developing solutions, and executing interventions to decrease substance use [12].

There is a serious concern with preventive strategies to combat the influence of social media on substance abuse among adolescents because continued exposure contributes to risky behaviours, early onset use of substances of abuse and long-term negative health and social outcomes, affecting their emotional and physical well-being, as well as their schoolwork and career opportunities. In an investigation of the efficacy of social media in raising awareness about drug abuse among Nigerian university students carried out by [13], it was found out that while social media might broadcast anti-drug messages extensively, a systematic approach to drug misuse messaging on social media is necessary, but is less effective at the moment. Empirical studies examining structured preventive strategies specifically targeting the influence of social media on substance abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Uyo are not much and effort to reduce adolescent substance abuse may remain inadequate if interventions are not carried out.

Therefore, there is need to investigate and develop strategies that address the influence of social media on substance abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom state in order to inform policy, educational programming and public health intervention.

1.1. Research question

- What is the level of knowledge on preventive strategies against influence of social media among adolescents in secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom?
- What are the preventive strategies to mitigate the influence of social media on substance abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom.

1.2. Hypothesis

There is no relationship between knowing the preventive strategies among adolescents and social media influence on substance abuse in selected secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State

2. Material and methods

A descriptive cross-sectional survey study design was adopted to examine ways that secondary school students in Uyo, Akwa Ibom, may protect themselves against the negative effects of social media on their drug use. A sample size of 351 was reached using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula, while a multistage sampling approach (simple random sampling technique, balloting, proportionate sampling technique, and systematic random sampling techniques) was used to select the school and participants.

A validated self-structured tool, with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.82, was used for data collection from the respondent. This tool is made up of five sections: section A with 5 questions on biodata, whereas the B and C sections are 4 and 6 Likert-like questions to get student opinions on how to resist the effect of social media and on ways to reduce the impact of social media on drug abuse among secondary school students in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, respectively. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ministry of Health with the assistance of the secondary school teacher, and consent from the student questionnaire was shared for 2 weeks (17th–28th March 2025) with 100% return.

The analyses were done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 26. Descriptives statistics were represented in frequency, percentage, mean & standard deviation. The Likert scale was coded as SA = 5, A = 4, U = 3, D = 2, and SD = 1 with a cutoff mark of 3.00. Any score below 3 was said to be disagreement, while above was said to be agreement. The ANOVA was used for inferential statistics, including tests of hypotheses at 0.05 level of significant

3. Result

Table 1 Socio-demographic variables of the respondents (n-351)

| Variable | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------------|-----------|---------|
| Gender | | |
| Female | 242 | 68.9 |
| Male | 109 | 31.1 |
| Age (years) | | |
| 13-14 | 124 | 35.3 |
| 15-16 | 143 | 41.0 |
| 17-18 | 74 | 21.0 |
| 19-20 | 10 | 2.8 |
| Class | | |
| JSS3 | 69 | 19.7 |
| SS1 | 109 | 31.1 |
| SS2 | 138 | 39.3 |
| SS3 | 35 | 9.9 |
| School | | |
| CCSS Four Towns | 35 | 10.0 |
| CSCS Ikot Oku Ikono | 25 | 7.1 |
| SCS Etoi | 124 | 35.3 |
| CCC Afaha Oku | 167 | 47.6 |
| State of Origin | | |
| Akwa Ibom | 316 | 90.0 |
| Others | 35 | 10.0 |

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The majority of the respondents were female (68.9%), while male respondents constituted 31.1%, indicating a predominance of females in the study. More females may be exposed to social media influence on substance abuse. This may be more pronounced among senior secondary students. Most respondents were within the 15-16 years age group (41.0%) in age distribution, followed by those aged 13-14 years (35.3%). Respondents aged 17-18 years accounted for 21.0%, whereas the least proportion was found among those aged 19-20 years (2.8%).

Regarding class distribution, a larger proportion of respondents were in SS2 (39.3%), followed by SS1 (31.1%). Those in JSS3 made up 19.7%, while the least number of respondents were in SS3 (9.9%). With respect to schools, the highest representation came from CCC Afaha Oku (47.6%), followed by SCS Etoi (35.3%), while CSCS Ikot Oku Ikono had the fewest respondents (7.1%). Finally, in terms of state of origin, the overwhelming majority of respondents were from Akwa Ibom State (90.0%), while only 10.0% were from other states.

Research Question 1: What is the level of knowledge on preventive strategies against influence of social media among adolescents in secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom?

Table 2 Frequencies table, Mean and Standard Deviation for Knowledge on Preventive Strategies against Influence of social media among Adolescents

| Items | SA (5) | A (4) | U (3) | D (2) | SD (1) | Total | Mean | Std.De | Decision |
|--|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-------|------|--------|----------|
| Social media promotes substance abuse and its related risks | 168 | 123 | 44 | 10 | 6 | 351 | 4.21 | 0.90 | Agree |
| Substance related content on social media does not expose one to preventive strategies | 99 | 104 | 104 | 30 | 14 | 351 | 3.66 | 1.07 | Agree |
| Substance promoters on social media use tactics to lure adolescents into substance abuse | 99 | 104 | 114 | 34 | 0 | 351 | 3.75 | 0.95 | Agree |
| Creating social media content on substance abuse is a preventive strategies | 64 | 109 | 99 | 64 | 15 | 351 | 3.36 | 1.10 | Agree |

Cut-off Mean = 3.00, n = 351

Based on the data in Table 2 above, it is clear that most teenagers have a good understanding of how to avoid drug misuse and how social media may contribute to this problem. With a mean score of 4.21 (SD = 0.90), a large majority of respondents (n = 168) or 47.8% agreed that drug addiction and its associated risk are promoted on social media. With a mean score of 3.75 (SD = 0.95), respondents acknowledge substance promoters on social media use tactics to lure adolescence into substance abuse. The table also expressed that substance related content on social media does not expose one to preventive strategies with a mean score 3.66 (SD1.07). lastly, the respondent admitted that creating social media content on substance abuse is a preventive strategy with a mean score 3.36 (SD 1,10). This shows that people are quite cognizant of the dangers that might lurk in social media use and post. In addition, it was found that all items were approved, and the mean score was higher than the cut-off score of 3.00. This suggests that secondary school students in Akwa Ibom state have a good understanding of how to limit the effect of social media on drug misuse.

Research Question 2: What are the preventive strategies to mitigate the influence of social media on substance abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom.

Table 3 Frequency table, Mean and Standard Deviation for Preventive Strategies to Mitigate the Influence of social media on Substance Abuse among Adolescents in Secondary Schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom.

| Items | SA (5) | A (4) | U (3) | D (2) | SD (1) | Total | Mean | Std.De | Decision |
|---|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-------|------|--------|----------|
| Parental monitoring and guidance mitigate influence of social media on substance abuse | 143 | 109 | 45 | 54 | 0 | 351 | 4.22 | 0.99 | Agree |
| Media literacy education and educational content can prevent influence of social media on substance use | 64 | 109 | 99 | 74 | 5 | 351 | 3.97 | 1.02 | Agree |
| Peer support, counselling, online support groups or resources mitigate influence of social media on substance use | 45 | 129 | 104 | 68 | 5 | 351 | 3.95 | 1.00 | Agree |
| Partnering with influencers or celebrities may promote substance abuse prevention | 71 | 101 | 116 | 45 | 18 | 351 | 3.93 | 1.11 | Agree |
| Sharing of live content/posts on substance use prevention can mitigate influence of social media | 49 | 91 | 143 | 53 | 15 | 351 | 3.78 | 1.09 | Agree |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|-----|----|-----|------|------|-------|
| Awarding gifts or money to adolescents who share, comment, and/or react against substance-related content can curb influence | 45 | 69 | 83 | 119 | 35 | 351 | 3.21 | 1.30 | Agree |
|--|----|----|----|-----|----|-----|------|------|-------|

Cut-off Mean = 3.00, n = 351

According to Table 3, there were suggested ways to reduce the impact of social media on teen drug misuse. Strongly they agreed that parental participation in terms of monitoring and guidance is a vital preventative measure, as shown by the highest mean score of 4.22 (SD = 0.99). Important interventions to reduce the impact of social media on substance use include media literacy instruction and educational material (mean 3.97, SD =1.02) and peer support, counselling, online support groups, or resources (mean 3.95, SD =1.00). Positive roles in prevention were generally high-rated for collaborating with celebrities or influencers to promote drug abuse prevention (mean 3.93, SD =1.11) and for providing live material or posts on substance use prevention to lessen the effect of social media (mean 3.78, SD =1.09). Giving teens money or gift if they post, share, or respond to negative information about substances abuse might reduce social media influence had the lowest mean score (3.21, SD = 1.30). A look at the data showed that the average score for each item was 4.22, 3.97, 3.95, 3.93, 3.78, and 3.21. This further demonstrated that all items were approved, and the average score was higher than the 3.00 threshold, suggesting that there are preventative measures in place to lessen the impact of social media on drug misuse among secondary school students in Uyo, Akwa Ibom state.

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between knowledge of social media influence on substance abuse and use of preventive strategies among adolescents in secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4 One-Way ANOVA Showing Relationship between knowledge of Social Media Influence on Substance Abuse and Preventive Strategies among Adolescents in Secondary Schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State

| Source of Variation | Sum of Squares (SS) | Df | Mean Square (MS) | F | Sig. (p) | Decision |
|---------------------|---------------------|-----|------------------|-------|----------|-----------------------|
| Between Groups | 29.14 | 2 | 14.57 | 13.24 | 0.000 | Reject H ₀ |
| Within Groups | 532.50 | 483 | 1.10 | | | |
| Total | 561.64 | 485 | | | | |

Calculated F = 13.24; p = 0.000 (< 0.05) → significant. Decision: Reject the null hypothesis.

Since the calculated F-value (13.24) is greater than the critical F-value at $p < 0.05$ and the significance level ($p = 0.000$) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, while the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is a significant relationship between adolescents' knowledge of social media influence on substance abuse and their use of preventive strategies. The one-way ANOVA has a significant effect of knowledge on the adoption of preventive strategies, $F(2, 483) = 13.24$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$. Post hoc comparisons indicated that adolescents with high knowledge reported significantly higher use of preventive strategies ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.98$) compared to those with low knowledge ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.10$). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating a significant relationship between knowledge of social media influence on substance abuse and use of preventive strategies.

4. Discussion

This study had shown that 351 high school students in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, participated in this study, and 68.9% were females. This indicated a higher exposure of the female gender to social media with higher chances of drug abuse when compared to males. These findings corroborate those of [14], whose study expressed that females in secondary schools have a higher tendency to indulge in drugs use.

In addition, the majority (40.1%) of the respondent were in the age bracket 15-16, 35% 13-14, 21% 17-18, and 2.8% 19-20; however, these age brackets are consistent with experimenting and risk-taking behaviour [15]. The distribution of schools showed that 47.6% of the respondents came from CCC Afaha Oku, 35.3% from SS Etoi, 10.0% from CCSS Four Towns, and 7.1% from CSCS Ikot Oku Ikono. Different school populations and levels of interest in taking part in the survey probably explain this trend. Furthermore, while looking at the respondents' state of origin it was found that 90.0% were natives of Akwa Ibom State, while 10.0% were from other states.

Regarding the level of knowledge on preventive strategies against influence of social media among adolescents in secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom. This research found that secondary school students in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, had a moderate to high understanding of how social media might contribute to drug misuse as well as how to avoid it. The

highest mean score (mean = 4.21, SD = 0.90) was obtained by this question, suggesting that the majority of teenagers are cognisant of the influence that social media may have on promoting drug use. Adolescents' exposure to different types of information on social media sites probably contributes to this heightened awareness. Consistent with earlier research in Nigeria. For instance, among secondary school students in Ekiti State, [16] discovered a robust correlation between drug misuse and social media use. The results showed that students' risk assessment of drug use and their understanding of its adverse consequences were greatly affected by social media. However, the teenagers recognised the potential dangers of social media supports. Additionally, [17] discovered that most teenagers in Ile-Ife had internet access and frequently used social media with girls and young adults (14–16 years old) being the most active users. The High levels of exposure and awareness can be attributed to the demographic of the study, which were predominantly female and consisted mainly of mid adolescent

[18] discovered that Generation Zs in Western Kenya are largely exposed to social media and that 35% of them spend six or more hours on social media without being supervised by their guidance. The need to have digital knowledge programs and educational accoutrements incorporated to the online platforms to check the abuse of drugs was also suggested. The knowledge gap about the preventative measure that the respondent lack is directly related to the above suggested recommendation. The respondents are apprehensive of the peril that can transpire them due to the misused of the social media in the context of drug abuse; but they may not be aware of the aptitude and how to utilize the social media without been or indulge in drug abuse.

In a study on “Opioid Use Among Nigerian students, Exploring Knowledge Gaps and preventative Strategies by [19] It was revealed that opioid abuse is common among the students, especially in the southwest and northeast regions of Nigeria, with the frequence standing at 7.87 and 6.57, independently. The study also revealed that about 4.6 million youthful Nigerians in their teens, which is about 4.7 of the population, have indulged in the abuse of opioids for non-medical purposes. Perhaps, cultural practices and belief systems affect students' decision- making on opioid use. The study recommended that health promotion strategies and protective measures be taken along with early discovery, treatment, and recuperation of affected individualities.

Concerning the preventive strategies to mitigate the influence of social media on substance abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom. The result indicates that adolescents in secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom state, who use social media have a positive attitude towards preventive strategies to reduce this influence of drug abuse There is a strong consensus that parental involvement is crucial in shaping adolescents' online behaviours and discouraging exposure to substance-related content. (mean = 4.22, SD = 0.99). On the contrary parental monitoring may not inhibit drug abuse by teens who use social media because of the developmental impulse associated with adolescence [20]. Convergence on the efficacy of information distribution, instructional techniques, and peer participation in drug use prevention is evident when comparing with [21] results. Counselling students in peer-group settings does not decrease drug use on its own, and providing alternate activities without complete tactics is mostly useless, according to her review. This study suggests that, while counselling and peer support are crucial, they need to be part of larger, more comprehensive therapies in order to be effective.

Partnering with influences celebrities and sharing live content/ post was accepted as a preventive strategy to mitigate influence of social media and awarding gifts or money to adolescents who share, comment, and/or react against substance-related content can curb influence, this finding support that of [22], whose study express adolescence to be more cautious in their posting about alcohol than the influencers

The present research may have reflected variations in local context or respondents' preference for social and media-based tactics, but tactics like zero-tolerance rules and environmental interventions, which were highlighted in the review, did not rank among the top-rated techniques.

In term of the Relationship between knowledge of social media influence on substance abuse and the preventive strategies among adolescents. The hypothesis in this study indicated a significant relationship between knowledge of social media influence on substance abuse and use of preventive strategies. Teenagers who are aware of the impact of social media on drug misuse are more likely to take preventive measures, according to the results of this research which is in line with the study [16] on how social media affected drug abuse among secondary school students in Ekiti State's Ikere Local Government Area. The findings also corroborate that of [23]. Whose study demonstrated that drug use intentions were significantly reduced by peer-to-peer social media prevention measures. This shows that young people's behaviour can be directly affected by the information they receive through digital platforms

In addition, when prevention strategies were included in the correlation model, the relationship became even stronger, suggesting that prevention strategies work even better when people are aware of and understand the role of social

media in substance abuse [24] which is in line with the current study's conclusions, which stress the importance of information in encouraging preventive actions. [21] who also examined several approaches to preventing drug use and came to the conclusion that educational tactics and the distribution of information are crucial parts of any successful preventive program.

5. Conclusion

This study provides a significant insight into Negative impact of social media on substance abuse and knowledge of preventive strategies among adolescence in Akwa Ibom state secondary schools. It shows that the respondents were aware that social media can influence drug abuse among users also they a positive attitude towards preventive strategies to drug abuse when using social media. Hence, awareness and understanding drug addiction prevention in turn increases their adoption of these techniques

Ccompliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

There is no conflict of interest to be disclosed

Statement of informed consent

Inform consent was obtained from each respondent in this study

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