

## **Perceptions of Digital and Parental Communication's Influence on Drug Abuse by Selected Junior Public Secondary School Students in Abeokuta, Nigeria**

**MAKU, Babatunde Stephen**

Federal College of Agriculture, Ishiagu, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

[babatundemaku@gmail.com](mailto:babatundemaku@gmail.com).

### **Abstract**

In the last few years in Ogun State, Nigeria, the spate of secondary school students' sheer display of acts of hooliganism was alarming; a development that is presumed to be due to negative influence of drug abuse, and linked to poor communication interaction between the students and their parents on one hand, and the influence of digital media technology, on the other. Therefore, this study investigated the perception of junior students of selected public secondary schools in Abeokuta, of parents' communication, and digital media technology's influence on the health behaviour of the students to drug abuse. The study, which was hinged on social penetration theory, adopted a purposive sampling technique, where some public secondary schools within Abeokuta, were purposively selected as samples. Data gathered were subjected to evaluation, using Pearson Correlation Coefficient statistical test, at 95% significance level. Findings revealed that, 87.5% of the respondents (as contained in Table 8), agreed that, if the level and type of communication (drug-abuse related) between them and their parents are high, then, the bad practice of drug abuse will be reduced. The study also concluded that, there is a significant positive relationship between exposure to digital media technology and involvement in drug abuse, with the results showing a positive correlation value of 17.2%. The study, therefore, recommended among other things, that parents should establish closer communication interaction with their children, and be involved in the online interface activities of these children as much as possible, especially on health-related matters, such as drug abuse.

**Keywords:** perception, interpersonal communication, drug abuse, digital media technology

### **Introduction**

Developing nations, such as Nigeria, is bedeviled with a lot of daunting challenges that are potent enough to undermine the realisation of the set objectives of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (S.D.Gs), by the year 2030. One of such challenges is the alarming rate of involvement of youth in drug abuse; a disturbing health behaviour, which seemingly intoxicates

and influences them into perpetrating social vices, such as hooliganism, rape, indiscipline, assault, etc., in societies globally.

There have been several advocacies, campaigns, policies, regulations, and intervention programmes, that have been put in place by governmental and non-governmental agencies alike, to address this phenomenon; but it appears all these efforts are insufficient, and unfortunately, the ugly trend still stares us in the face across all cultures.

A lot of factors can be adduced to this appalling level of involvement of youth in drug abuse. One of such is assumed to be low level or near absence of communication interaction between these youth and their parents on health-related subjects, particularly, drug abuse. Substance abuse and its consequences has its roots in the kind of relationship that exists in a family, particularly, parent-child relationship (Hemati *et al.*, 2020).

The harsh Nigerian economic reality, a compelling factor which has arm-twisted many parents in different homes to make ends meet at heavy cost for the welfare and survival of their families, has consequently made them to jettison their social and cultural responsibilities of communicating morals and values to their children.

Equally, the rampaging downsides of digital media technologies cannot be overlooked, despite the myriad of opportunities such technologies portend for their users, and the obvious paradigm shift from conventional media to various digital means of producing, distributing and consuming media contents.

A large chunk of online media users are more likely to be the youth. They rely heavily on the new media technology for their social and economic interactions, as well as their political communications. Therefore, it will not be out of place to presume also, that the youth's high level of exposure to these digital media technologies, using various online media platforms for their communications and other human interactions, can influence them to be involved in substance/drug abuse.

Social media is one of the major media outlets through which teenagers are influenced into substance/drug dependency. Overtime, social media usage has become popular among teenagers and young adults, and has made them vulnerable to drugs and alcohol-related contents (Ajilore & Abdul, 2019).

The youth in Ogun State, and by extension, Nigeria, is not immune to these two possible aforementioned variables (lack/low communication between parents and children, and digital media influence) that can be responsible for the involvement of these youth in substance/drug abuse; an act, which may ultimately lead them into violent disturbances, and other unhealthy behaviour in our society.

On 28th October, 2021, *The Punch* Newspaper, in its report, titled: “Ogun Reads the Riot Act to Hoodlums, Students”, published the Ogun State Government’s directives to students and school authorities in the State, in order to curb the growing trend of assault, and acts of hooliganism against teachers in particular, and the unsuspecting members of the public in general.

Prior to the publication of this riot act, there had been a series of attacks on the teachers by these students in many parts of the state for disciplining them. The teachers were molested, beaten, and injured on a slightest provocation; thereby, disrupting teaching and learning activities in schools (punchng.com. 2021).

Barely a month after, *The Tribune* Newspaper in a different report, published another story that highlighted how some public secondary school students within Abeokuta metropolis, in the same state, attacked a divisional police officer. It should be emphasized here that, the disturbing incident was largely perpetrated by teenagers, among the students, who are categorized as minors by law, and who, in effect, could not be arrested, but only be detained and counselled, after which they will be released. (tribuneonlineng.com 2021)

Therefore, it is imperative that this growing problem of unruly behaviour, now prevalent among secondary school students, (teenagers inclusive) and which disrupts public order and peace in Ogun State, be tackled headlong; as this may portend a devastating danger for the future of these students, and the country in general, if left unchecked. It is to this effect, that this study, among other objectives, sets out to investigate on one hand, the level and type of communication between some selected public junior secondary school students (who are teenagers), in Abeokuta, Ogun State, and their parents; in order to determine whether the communication pattern/level by their parents, influence their health behaviour to drug abuse.

Likewise, the study also sought to find out, if the exposure of these students to digital media technology, was also related to their involvement in drug abuse; an unhealthy behaviour, which is

hypothesized in this study, to be likely cause of what trigger students' unrest and indiscipline in Nigerian public secondary schools.

Several studies like extant literatures and empirical studies, in the past, have explored this thematic discourse, by investigating Nigerian senior secondary school students in the context of this study, but none seems to have interrogated the junior students, especially the teenagers, on the same theme, particularly in Ogun State, and by extension, Nigeria. Thus, this is the area of knowledge gap this study intends to bridge.

It is no gainsaying that abuse of substance or drug has its attendant consequences on those who engage in the practice, as well as the society at large. Apart from the physical and mental health challenges that this act poses to the abusers, they also constitute nuisance to the society through myriad of anti-social behaviour

In October 2021, Ogun State Government read the Riot Act over what it described as unruly behaviour of students and parents who engage in beating and injuring teachers for any slight issue, thereby disrupting the teaching and learning activities in schools. ([www.punchng.com](http://www.punchng.com). 2021)

Barely a month after this, the Ogun State government took a more drastic approach by ordering the closure of 12 schools which are notorious for the spate of violent attacks and acts of hooliganism among students in the state. The students were asked to go on compulsory holiday ahead of the December 10th vacation date, in order to prevent gathering of students which could trigger any violence. ([www.vanguardngr.com](http://www.vanguardngr.com). 2021). The pertinent question to be asked, therefore, is: what are the likely fundamental factors that propel these students into these acts of thuggery, indiscipline, unrest and unwholesome behaviour, when they are supposed to be in their classrooms learning?

The assumption of this study is placed on the premise that, lack of low communication between parents and their children; as well as exposure to digital media technology, influence the health behaviour of these students to engage in drug abuse; and which ultimately lead to the unruly behaviour exhibited by them.

To this end, this study investigated on one hand, whether the level and type of communication between parents and their teen children influence their health behaviour to drug

abuse; and on the other hand, the study sought to find out if exposure to digital media technology influence the involvement of these students in substance/drug abuse.

### **Objectives of Study**

The study has the following research objectives:

- i. Investigate whether the level and type of communication between parents and their teen children influenced their health behaviour to drug abuse.
- ii. Find out whether the exposure of the students to digital media technology, influenced their health behaviour to drug abuse.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The study is guided by the following hypotheses:

**H<sub>0</sub>1:** The level and type of communication between parents and their teen children will not influence their health behaviour towards substance/drug abuse.

**H<sub>0</sub>2:** Exposure of students to digital media technology will not influence their involvement in substance/drug abuse.

### **Operational Definition of Terms**

- i. Junior students. This refers to the students in junior classes of year one to year three in public secondary schools.
- ii. Level of discussion with parents. This makes reference to the degree of discussion that takes place between the students and their parents that can be evaluated using a measuring index of: 'high', 'very high', 'low' and 'very low'.
- iii. Extent of discussion with parents. This refers to the frequency with which the discussion between the students and their parents take place; and this is measured using parameters as: 'often', 'occasionally', 'once a while' and 'not at all'.
- iv. Parents. This term is used to address both the biological and foster parents of the students. In other words, it refers to the biological father and mother of the students or their guardians or foster parents whom they live with and take care of them.

- v. Drug abuse. This refers to the use of drugs or drug related substance in the manner other than as they are prescribed, and for the purpose over and above the functions for which such drugs are meant for.
- vi. Digital media. This is used to make reference to all forms of digital media technologies in machine-readable formats, the contents of which can be viewed, modified, communicated and preserved on any electronic digital device.

### **Teenagers and Drug Abuse: Parental Communication Role**

Drug abuse is defined as the use of mood modifying substance in dosage many times in excess of those used medically, and over length of time, impacting negatively on individuals, society and family (Adoga, 2018). Invariably, drug abuse refers to the flagrant, wrong use and persistent self-administration of drugs for purposes other than what those drugs were medically intended for.

Drug abuse is the use of psychoactive drugs to the extent that they interfere with the physical health, social relationship or vocational function of an individual. (Bolu-Steve & Adeboye, 2016) cited in Adoga (2018). Also the World Health Organisation, (WHO, 1995), cited in Adoga (2018) defines drug abuse “as persisted or sporadic excessive drug use that is inconsistent with or unrelated to acceptable medical practices”. Narcotic drugs can make one’s senses to be dull, reduces pain and aid sleep and most of the times, they create feeling of euphoria too (Adoga, 2018). Some of these drugs that are abused by these teenagers or adolescents include, but not limited to: amphetamines, caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines, tramadol, etc.

Students, whether teenagers or adolescents, abuse drugs for many reasons. Some engage in this practice in order to relieve themselves of pains or unpleasant experiences, some to induce sleep, while others get involved to have a feeling of euphoria and become artificially ecstatic.

In tackling the challenge of drug abuse, many scholars have underscored the significance and relevance of effective interpersonal communication between parents and their children. The fight against this scourge should be collaborative, and all hands of the stakeholders should be on deck. To this end, Adoga (2018), opines that the communication interaction between parents and their children should be considerably improved and that anti-social peers’ influence should also be reduced.

In line with the above position, Toumbourou, Duff, Bamberg and Blyth (2003), in their Prevention Research Evaluation Report, titled: “Family Intervention in the Prevention of Drug-related Harm”, emphasized in the summary of their findings the need for family intervention for the prevention of drug-related harm among youth.

In a study carried out by Abdulraheem, Raimi & Abasiokong (2018), findings suggest that the highest percentage of those that are prone to drug abuse are those that do not experience mutual and cordial relationship with their fathers (46.8%). Similarly, the highest percentage of those that are susceptible to drug abuse are those who do not enjoy cordial relationship with their mothers (37.7%). In summary, the results of their study revealed that majority of the respondents do not have cordial relationship with their fathers and mothers. They concluded by emphasizing the importance of effective social interaction between parents and their adolescents, as failure in doing so portend a risk factor in adolescents’ involvement in drug abuse.

In its own submission, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2004, unedited), underscores the significant role parents can play in terms of communication interaction, in curbing the menace of substance abuse. According to them the role of parents as primary educators can be recognized and supported by schools by working in partnership with parents. Partnership with parents and community help to integrate consistent and relevant health messages into the home and the community, improve student health and promote a greater awareness of health issues among students and their families. The UN office further highlighted certain measures parents should take in order to prevent drug use among their children. These include, but not limited to adequate parent-child communication and maintenance of affectionate relations among family members.

In their submission, Manning, (2020) encapsulates the importance of interpersonal relationship by emphasizing that effective interpersonal communication takes place when there is a high degree of trust, self-disclosure, and mutual affection between participants. Therefore, it becomes imperative that parents should take into cognizance all these important elements of effective interpersonal communication for communication interaction with their children to be positively impacted.

## **Digital Media Technology and its Effects**

Digital media refers to the media that are encoded in machine readable formats. Digital media is one which can be created, viewed, modified, communicated, and preserved on digital electronic devices, which include software, digital videos, images, social media, web pages, databases, digital audio and E-books. Digital media is opposite to print media and other traditional or analog media. (Abraham, 2020)

Abraham (2020) further explains digital media technology as an innovation in media technology space, which permits digitized contents to be transmitted over the internet or computer networks. It is no gainsaying that the new media technology, enabled by the internet, has drastically revolutionized the mode of media contents production, dissemination, and consumption; as well as the media practice in general.

The diffusion of the innovation of new media technology is not only experienced in the media space, but has also made incursions into virtually all sectors of human life and endeavours: economy, social, politics, business, trade, religion, education, etc. The combination of digital media with internet, as well as personal computing has brought innovations into the art of publishing, journalism, public relations, entertainment, education, commerce and politics (Abraham, 2020).

Digital media technology's impact on culture and society cannot be over-emphasized, and it is broad and complex. However, despite all the positive impacts that the new media technology has recorded in the media space, it is not without its challenges and attendant consequences, especially among youths and teenagers, who seem to heavily and readily rely on the technology as an interface for most of their social activities on social media platforms, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, etc.

Buttressing this position, Abraham (2020) underscores the challenge of social disconnect that manifests itself among people as a result of heavy dependence on digital media devices rather than real life contact to communicate and interact.

In a similar vein, Hartogsohn & Vudka (2022) also posit that the use of smart phones for social media activities on different digital media platforms has become a source of growing concern, especially as it increases the tendency for addiction and habit formation. The use of smart



phones is increasingly becoming an issue of social concern in the last twenty years. There have been grim accounts decrying the habit-inducing potency of modern digital media technology (Alter, 2017; Clement & Miles 2017; Eyal, 2014; Kardaras, 2017; Twenge, 2017a) in Hartogsohn & Vudka, (2022).

Also, Nwafor, Ezema & Igwebuike (2021), in their study, sought to ascertain the extent to which social media use encourage drug abuse among youth in South-East, Nigeria. Their findings revealed that, social media is a strong catalyst that motivated these young ones into substance abuse; although they pointed out that social media might not be the only intervening variable responsible for this practice.

Attesting to the above assertion, Wakoli (2018), in a study, revealed that most of the respondents (27%), agreed that drug-related messages shared on social media sites have increased the abuse of drugs among secondary school students. Sharing this view, Umar & Idris (2018), also highlighted the effect of exposure to digital media technology on our youth and society at large to include but not limited to: cyberbullying, drug abuse promotion, restlessness and unhappiness.

In the light of some of the highlighted negative effects that digital media technology has on its users, as espoused in extant literatures and studies, it will not be out of place to posit that exposure of students to digital media technology can influence the students' involvement in the practice of drug abuse; and which may ultimately lead to various social vices such as indiscipline, assault, misconduct and other unhealthy behaviour.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the bedrock of social penetration theory. The social penetration theory was propounded by Irwin Altman and Dalmis Taylor in 1973. The theory was developed to explain how information exchange functions in the development and dissolution of interpersonal relationships. Social penetration describes the process of bonding that moves a relationship from superficial to more intimate. (Altman & Taylor, 1973) cited in Carpenter & Greene, (2016).

Central to the assumptions of this theory are the principles of self-disclosure and the norm of reciprocity. The concept of self-disclosure dictates that for social penetration to be successful, there must be a purposeful process of revealing information from one party to the other, and vice-versa; (which is the norm of reciprocity) in communication interaction.

Justifying the adoption of this theory further, it is assumed in this study also that when parents engage in the process of bonding mutually with their children by utilizing the principles of self-disclosure and reciprocity in communication exchanges, parents will be able to influence positively the health behaviour of their children to drug abuse.

## **Methods**

The population of this study consisted of all public secondary schools in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and a purposive sampling technique. Eight secondary schools (that their schools are peculiar and notorious for unruly behaviour) were purposively selected for the study. 400 students in JSS 1 & 2 classes (since the study focused on teenagers) were also purposively selected as the sample size, out of which a total of 376 questionnaire returned were useful.

The study employed the use of a 36-item questionnaire as its research instrument to gather data from the respondents. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire was validated by a test and measurement expert, after which a pre-test interview was conducted for a few students from the selected schools, (outside the sample cases) by administering the questionnaire to them to gather some preliminary data.

Some teachers of these schools were engaged as research assistants in administering the questionnaire to the respondents after thorough explanation to both the assistants and the respondents; and the whole exercise was strictly supervised by the researcher.

Data collected were analyzed using simple percentage and table frequency method, as well as the application of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient statistical test, at 95% significance level

## **Results**

A total of four hundred (400) questionnaires were distributed and three hundred and seventy-six (376) were returned fully filled. The results are presented below.

Table 2: Extent of Discussion between Students and Their Parents

Discussion frequency	Response Frequency	Percent
OFTEN	209	55.6
OCCASIONALLY	63	16.8
ONCE A WHILE	83	22.1
NOT AT ALL	18	4.8
Total	373	99.2
Missing System	3	.8
Total	376	100.0

Researcher field work 2022

The Table 2 above shows that majority of the respondents often engage in discussion with their parents.

Table 3: Level of Discussion between Students and Their Parents

Level	Frequency	Percent
LOW	38	10.1
VERY LOW	15	4.0
HIGH	154	41.0
VERY HIGH	167	44.4
Total	374	99.5
Missing System	2	.5
Total	376	100.0

Researcher field work 2022

The Table 3 above implies that majority of the respondents have very high communication interaction with their parents.

**TABLE 4: Subject/Topic on Which Discussion/Communication Interaction between the Students and Their Parents Is Based**

Subject/Topic	Frequency	Percent
SOCIAL	73	19.4
HEALTH	48	12.8
RELIGION	92	24.5
OTHERS, PLS SPECIFY	16	4.3
ACADEMICS	136	36.2
Total	365	97.1
Missing System	11	2.9
Total	376	100.0

Researcher field work 2022

The Table 4 above shows that majority of the respondents have discussion with their parents based mostly on academic issues.

Table 5: Extent of Discussion if Communication is Based on Substance/Drug Abuse Issues

Extent	Frequency	Percent
OFTEN	93	24.7
OCCASIONALLY	48	12.8
ONCE A WHILE	169	44.9
ALL THE TIMES	63	16.8
Total	373	99.2
Missing System	3	.8
Total	376	100.0

Researcher field work 2022

The Table 5 above implies that majority of the respondents once a while communicate on substance/drug abuse issues.

Table 6: Opinions on Whether Or Not Bad Practice Of Drug Abuse Will Be Affected By Parental Communication

Options	Frequency	Percent
AGREE	129	34.3
STRONGLY AGREE	200	53.2
DISAGREE	24	6.4
STRONGLY DISAGREE	17	4.5
Total	370	98.4
Missing System	6	1.6
Total	376	100.0

Researcher field work 2022

The Table 6 above implies that majority of the respondents strongly agree to the above statement.

Table 7: Usage Of Digital Media

Type of Social Media	Frequency	Percent
WHATSAPP	140	37.2
INSTAGRAM	25	6.6
TWITTER	7	1.9

	FACEBOOK	110	29.3
	OTHERS	32	8.5
	Total	314	83.5
Missing	System	62	16.5
Total		376	100.0

Researcher field work 2022.

The table 7 above shows that majority of the respondents use WhatsApp digital media.

Table 8: The Level of Involvement in Drug Abuse Will Be High If There Is a High Level Of Exposure

To Digital Media for Discussion on Drug Abuse

		Frequency	Percent
	AGREE	98	26.1
	DISAGREE	56	14.9
Valid	STRONGLY AGREE	129	34.3
	STRONGLY DISAGREE	85	22.6
	Total	368	97.9
Missing	System	8	2.1
Total		376	100.0

Researcher field work 2022

Table 8 above indicates that majority of the respondents agree and strongly agree (60.4%) with the above opinion.

### Hypotheses Testing

Table 9:  $H_01$ : The level and type of communication between parents and their teen children will not influence their health behaviour to substance/drug abuse.

#### Hypothesis One

Correlations		
	LEVEL AND TYPE OF COMMUNICATI ON	HEALTH BEHAVIOUR

LEVEL AND TYPE OF COMMUNICATION	Pearson Correlation	1	0.500
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.918
	N	376	374
HEALTH BEHAVIOUR	Pearson Correlation	0.500	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.918	
	N	374	374

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

( $r = 0.500, p < 0.01$ )

Note:  $r$  = correlation,  $P$  = probability

$P$ -value is significant at 0.01 level of significance

$P$ -value  $< 0.01$  = significant,  $P$ -value  $> 0.01$  = Not significant

\*S= significant and NS = Not significant

### Interpretation

Pearson correlation coefficient value of the hypothesis is showing positive value of 0.500(50%). It shows that there is a positive relationship between the dependent and independent variables with  $r$  value of 0.50 (50%) which is greater than 0.01 (1%). Hence, it is concluded that there is a significant relationship between level and type of communication and health behavior to substance drug abuse. Therefore, the decision would be to reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), which is the level and type of communication between parents and their teen children will not influence their health behavior to substance/drug abuse and accept the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) which is the level and type of communication between parents and their teen children will influence their health behavior to substance/drug abuse.

Table 10:  $H_02$ : Exposure of students to digital media technology will not influence their involvement in substance/drug abuse.

### Hypothesis Two

#### Correlations

		EXPOSURE TO DIGITAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGY	INVOLVEMENT IN SUBSTANCE/D RUG ABUSE
EXPOSURE TO DIGITAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGY	Pearson Correlation	1	.172**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	376	376
INVOLVEMENT IN SUBSTANCE/DRUG ABUSE	Pearson Correlation	.172**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	376	376

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

$$(r = 0.172, p < 0.01)$$

Note: r = correlation, P = probability

P-value is significant at 0.01 level of significance

P-value < 0.01 = significant, P-value > 0.01 = Not significant

\*S= significant and NS = Not significant

### *Interpretation*

Pearson correlation coefficient Value of hypothesis is showing positive value of 0.172 (17.2%). It shows that there is a positive relationship between the dependent and independent variables with r value of 0.172 (17.2%) which is greater than 0.01 (1%). Hence, it is concluded that there is a significant relationship between exposure to digital media technology and involvement in substance/drug abuse. Therefore, the decision would be to reject the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>), which is: exposure of the students to digital media technology will not influence their involvement in substance/drug abuse and accept the alternative hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) which is exposure of the students to digital media technology will influence their involvement in substance/drug abuse.

### **Discussion**

Research Question 1: To what extent do the level and type of communication between parents and their teen children influence their health behaviour to substance/drug abuse?

It is significant to emphasize here that, despite the high and very high levels of communication between these students and their parents (85.4%), as indicated in Table 3 above; and the extent of such communication which shows “often times” with the highest percentage of 55.6% in Table 2, findings revealed that the type of communication the two parties engaged in discussion often centered on academics, which has the highest percentage of 36.2%, while discussion on health is low (12.8%) as indicated in Table 4.

Also, Table 5, which sought to know how often there is discussion on drug abuse (type of communication) between these students and their parents, findings showed that 169 respondents, which represents the highest (44.9%) indicated that this type of discussion takes place once in a while.

Harping on the importance of effective communication between parents and children on drug education, Malik, (2003), cited in Ghazalli *et al.*, (2017), opine that parents shy away from engaging in drug abuse conversations with their children because they consider drugs as taboo to talk about, and that the parents lack knowledge of the subject-matter.

Furthermore, findings, as revealed in Table 6 which interrogated the students on whether or not they agree on the opinion that the higher the level of communication between them and their parents, the lower will be the risk of their involvement in drug abuse, showed that there is a cumulative 87.5% of those who agree and strongly agree with this opinion.

Therefore, the above findings validate one of the premises upon which this study is predicated, and as such, answers research question 1, that the level and the type communication between parents and their teen children can influence their health behaviour to drug abuse.

Research Question 2: Does exposure of the students to digital media technology influence their involvement in substance/drug abuse?

From table 7, results show highest dependence on WhatsApp platform (37.2%) among other digital media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, etc. that they use. Lending credence to the above findings, Reid & Weigle, (2014), avers that in recent times, the use of social media and



internet among adolescents has been on the increase. They added that teenagers nowadays show heavy online presence than what was obtainable in the past.

In Table 8, majority of the respondents strongly agree (34.3%) and (26.1%) agree, (a combined percentage of 60.4%) to the opinion that a high level of exposure to digital media for discussion on drug abuse will result in high level of involvement in drug abuse. Corroborating the above findings, King & Stones, (2013) cited in Wakoli, (2018) argue that, the sharing of information on the use of drugs among students are now more readily available through the use of social media platforms.

This assertion was more heightened in the findings of Wakoli, (2018), when the results of her study indicated a positive value of (.324). This results implies that there is a correlation between drug abuse behaviour of the students under study and the exposure of these students to mass media (which, of course, encompasses the digital media).

From the above findings, it will be reliable to posit that the assumption in Research Question 2 is valid, therefore, one can conclude that the exposure of these students to digital media technology, influence their involvement in substance/drug abuse. This is a further attestation to the overbearing influence of new media technology on human endeavours.

### **Test of Hypotheses**

H<sub>0</sub>1: The level and type of communication between parents and their teen children will not influence their health behaviour to substance/drug abuse.

The results of this hypothesis are further attestations that underscore the value and significance of communication in every facet of human life. It clearly shows that once there is a disconnect between the two ends that supposed to share meaningful interactions to achieve a communication goal, the aftermath is always unpleasant.

From the findings of this 1st hypothesis, it is also evident that for communication to be impactful, and effect a desired change in behaviour, it will not be enough for parents to just establish communication interaction with their children, but that, such communication interaction should be persuasive, and tailored towards achieving a purpose. The results also indicate that the

level of such discussion should be relatively high, constant and robust for it to address the challenge.

Ngamije &Yadufashije (2016), in their study, lent their voices to the above assertion by emphasizing the role of parents' communication on alcohol and drug abuse in combating the menace. They acknowledged the importance and effectiveness of training programmes for parents and their children in order to address the parent-adolescent communication interaction gap on the abuse of alcohol and other drugs.

Therefore, it suffices to say from the findings of this 1st hypothesis, as revealed in Table 9 that, in the context of this study, for a positive change of behaviour to be effected in our teenage secondary school students in Nigeria, parents should not only initiate and sustain a high level of communication interaction with their teenage children, but they should also situate their discussion to dwell on drug abuse issues, so that these children will be properly informed and guided on the dangers of getting themselves involved in the act; and by so doing, this will, to some extent, curtail the growing trend of the menace.

H<sub>0</sub>2: Exposure of the students to digital media technology will not influence their involvement in substance/drug abuse.

Results of this 2nd hypothesis as shown in Table 10 above, indicate that the new media technology has not only become a "wild fire" that is ravaging our media space, it has also become a medium of choice for all categories of online users in different walks of life. The results also reveal the overbearing influence of the new media and the attendant negative consequences it portends, especially when there is a high exposure to it or heavy reliance on it.

Agreeing with the above results, is the outcome of the findings of the study by Nwafor, Ezema & Igwebuikwe (2021), which avers that, social media is a potent mass media outlet, through which young people, (especially those who expose themselves to digital media advertisements of illicit drugs) can be influenced into the practice of substance abuse, endorsed by celebrities or their role models.

As pointed out in Table 7, that majority of these teenage students are already internet savvy, using various online digital media platforms, especially WhatsApp, often times; the adverse effects

of this, as indicated in the results of the 2nd hypothesis is that, their exposure to these digital media platforms make them to be more prone to social vices such as drug abuse, and eventually imbibe the practice, than those students who rarely depend on digital media for their communication interaction.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study concludes that the level of communication interaction between parents and their teenage children on drug abuse, should not just be very high, but also very deep. Students, who are deprived of close intimacy and discussion on the dangers of engaging in drug abuse by their parents, have a high tendency of imbibing the practice, to their detriment and that of the society at large.

The over-bearing influence of digital media technology on virtually all sectors of life in Nigeria, and globally too, cannot be over-emphasized. The use of some social media platforms, most especially WhatsApp, as communication channels by teenage students, make them vulnerable to such anti-social behaviours, such as substance/drug abuse, which they reconstruct as social realities.

Furthermore, when there is a disconnect or negligence in effective communication interaction on drug abuse, between parents and their teenage children, the attendant consequences, which include these students becoming indiscipline, irresponsible, unruly in schools and larger community, dropping out of school, and hampering their health in the process, become inevitable.

From the findings of this study, this paper, therefore, recommends the following:

1. That parents should strategically create and sustain more communication interactive sessions with their teenage children, by increasing the level of their discussion with them; engaging them in such discussion when they can best get their attention.
2. Also, parents need to create an atmosphere of mutual trust and intimacy in the process of their communication interaction with these children, so that such interaction can achieve the purpose for which it is intended for.
3. Communication efforts of parents on subject-matters, such as social and health issues, especially on drug abuse, should be stepped up, and given equal attention and importance as education and religion, that parents often emphasize on.

4. Parents should be more actively involved in the online experience of their teenage children on social media, and other digital media platforms. Web applications that can synchronize the online activities of these children to that of their parents should be employed across all the digital media devices used by both parties. This will enable the parents to monitor, guide and regulate these children's online activities, thereby, bringing them back to track whenever they want to go astray.
5. Parents should discourage the use of smartphones and other digital media devices by these teenage children until they finish their secondary/high school education. This, to some extent, will reduce the effect of the exposure of these students to digital media technology for communication interaction, at least, at this teen stage of life.

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