

Social Environmental Factors Associated with the Recent Surge in Psychoactive Substance Abuse among Youths in a Selected Semi-Urban Community in South-South Nigeria.

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Abstract

*The study was on social environmental factors associated with the recent surge in psychoactive substance abuse and suggested preventions among youths in a selected semi-urban community in Bayelsa State Nigeria. The aim of the study was to ascertain the social environmental factors associated with the recent surge in psychoactive substances abuse among youths in Amassoma. The study employed mixed method research design. Population consisted of 100 male and female youths selected purposely by Snow Ball method. Living and schooling or working in Amassoma Community at the time of study were the inclusive criteria. Data were collected by means of questionnaire, in-depth interview and focused group discussions. Data collection instruments were structured by the investigator, validated and subjected to reliability test by means of split half method. **Ethical approval was obtained from relevant authorities.** Data were analysed by frequencies, percentages, Mean scores, NIVIVO and Chi-square statistical techniques at a level of 0.05 of significance. Results show that alcohol and tramadol were the commonest among the abused psycho-active substances 28(33.7%) and 13(21%) respectively. Peer pressure was the leading cause of psycho-active substance abused, 46(55.4%) unemployment, poverty, frustrations, availability of these substances in the neighborhoods were all associated with the surge in psycho-active substance abuse. The study concluded that substance abuse among youths is a threat to the community in particular and to the society at large. Suggested preventive interventions include Health education and advocacy. Based on the finding it was recommended that the parents, school authorities and the media should be involved in advocacy and health education programmes aimed at preventing psycho-active substance abuse among the Youths in order to help preserve posterity of responsible citizens.*

Key words: Social Environmental Factors, Psychoactive Substance Abuse, Youths, Semi-Urban Community, Bayelsa State

Introduction

Globally, the upsurge in the use of psycho-active substance among the youths has become a huge public health concern. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and World Health Organization (WHO) 2016 reports, it was estimated that 246 million people and/or 1 out of 20 persons between the ages of 15 and 65 have used an illicit/psychoactive substance in 2013. Volkow (2005) estimated that 9% of the global population aged 12 or older are classified with dependence on psychoactive substances. Furthermore, WHO report for 2015, reported that, psychoactive drug use is responsible for more than 450,000 deaths per year among the youths. According to Winstock (2014), alcohol is the most widely used psychoactive substances globally, accounting for 90.8% consumption. Except for the United States of America, Brazil, Mexico, Denmark and Spain where cannabis use ranked second, tobacco is the second most commonly consumed drug in most countries (Winstock, 2014). And this is similar across different part of Africa (Babalola, Ogunwale & Akinhanmi, 2013; Olashore, Ogunwobi, Totego & Opondo, 2018).

Psychoactive Substance are psychopharmacological or psychotropic drugs. They are chemical substance that changes brain function and results in alteration in perception, mood, consciousness, cognition or behaviour (Chukwujekwu; 2017).

Psychoactive Substance are often times associated with changes in consciousness and mood that the user may start feeling the need for continual use and so it is often easily addicted to. The youth and people use these substances for many reasons ranging from: medical reason as for therapeutic purposes such as analgesics, anaesthetics, antidepressants, anxiolytics, antipsychotics and stimulants. They can also be used for recreation as in sports to enhance performance among others. The youths can as well use these substances to alter their conscience

and mood to perform criminal activities as armed robbery, rituals, rape and occult activities (Wonguppa & Kanato; 2017).

Psychoactive Substance (PS) uses among the Youths have been associated with much unhealthy behaviour in the society. World Health Organization (WHO; 2017) noted that misuse or abuse of psychoactive substance are associated with unhealthy behaviour that exposes youths to significant health and social problems. The bottom line of the health consequences of psychoactive substance abuse is that more youths are at risk of developing mental health related illness/disorders. Therefore, there is need to control and prevent the use of these substances among the youths. The youthful period is life stage between childhood and maturity. Youth period has no universal definition but varied between 15-35years (National Youth Policy;2010). This population segment is very important and contributes to economic workforce (UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA;2008). The future of any country lies on the country's youths, therefore youths whose future are at the risk of psychoactive substance abuse will impact negatively on both health, economy and societal life of the country. Therefore, there is urgent need to investigate and suggest interventions aimed at addressing the surge of psychoactive substance abuse among the youth to prevent the associated personal, family and social problems.

Amassoma Community is the headquarter of Southern Ijaw LGA in Bayelsa state, South-South Nigeria. It is a rapid developing, semi-urban area with estimated population of 6,970 people (CDC; 2016) The community play host to Niger-Delta University, as well as several other primary and secondary schools, both government and private owned. The community inhabitants are multi-national and multi-ethnic, and are mainly students, civil servants and business people. The community is chosen for this study on the basis of its social and demographic characteristics that suit the variables of the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to ascertain the social environmental factors associated with the recent upsurge in psychoactive substances abuse among youths in South-South of Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought for the relationship between social environmental factors and psychoactive substances abuse among youths.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey. Population for the study consisted of 100 youths both males and females living in Amassoma Community and between the ages of 15-35 years, selected purposively by snow balling. Snowball method is used when target characteristics are not easily accessible (Naderifer, Goli, & Ghajjaei; 2017), as it were in this study. Data were collected using structured questionnaire, interview schedule and focused group discussion guide. Data collection instruments were structured by the investigator based on literature and observations. Questionnaire part comprised of five sections, A-E. Sections A: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, Sections B, **Prevalence of psychoactive substances among youths in Amassoma Community**, Sections C **Social environmental factors! Influencing misuse of psychoactive drugs among youths** Sections D, **Perceived effect of drug abuse on respondents' academic performance** and Sections E, Perceived effect of drug abuse on respondents' social behavior. Questionnaire was validated and subjected to reliability test using split half method which yielded reliability index of .95. **Ethical approval was obtained from relevant authorities.** Respondents were encounter in their homes, at club houses in the community, and in the in the University campus. Informed consent was to respond to the questionnaires. The consented respondents were also interviewed. Four FGDs were held in Boys and Girls Hostels, Community Town Hall and in one of the Community Club Houses. The FGD consisted of 6-8 persons per group at different times totaling 28 FGD discussants. Data collection took six weeks. Data obtained from the questionnaire were sorted and 83 were properly responded to while 17 were discarded accounting for 83 per cent return rate. FGDs were tape recorded and was transcribed into four themes: the prevalence of psycho-active substance abuse among the youths in the community, the influence of social environment on psycho-active substance abuse, perceived effect of psycho-active substance abuse on academic performance and perceived effect of psycho-active substance abuse on social behaviour of the youths. Data were analysed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 22 and interpreted with descriptive and inferential statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages. NIVIVO statistical package was used to transcribe the audio tapped FGD and the interview data which were interpreted inductively and deductively, while Chi-square was used to test the association between dependent and independent variables at a level of 0.05 of significance. Result presented in tables as follows:

Table 1: Socio Demographic Characteristics of the respondents (n=100)

Question/Response	Frequency	Percentage
Sex:		
Male	75	75.0
Female	25	25.0
Age:		
15-20	26	26.0
20-25	31	31.0
25-30	26	26.0
30-35	17	17.0
Religion:		
Christian	86	86.0
Muslim	10	10.0
Traditional	4	4.0
Occupation:		
Student	52	52.0
Worker	42	42.0
Unemployed	6	6.0
Marital status:		
Single	60	60.0
Married	35	35.0
Divorced	5	5.0
Father's occupation:		
Civil servant	55	55.0
Pensioner	4	4.0
Self-employed	31	31.0
No response	10	10.0
Mother's occupation:		
Civil servant	25	25.0
Self-employed	23	23.0
Pensioner	8	8.0
No response	7	7.0
Are you from a Polygamous family?		
Yes	53	53.0
No	47	47.0
Do you live with your parents?		
Yes	45	45.0
No	55	55.0

Table 1 above shows that based on their sex, 75(75.0%) are male while 25(25.0%) are female, showing that the greater percentage of respondents are males; age distribution shows that 26(26%) were within the ages of 15-20, 31(31%) were within the ages of 20-25, 26(26%) were within the ages of 25-30, while 17(17%) within the ages of 30-35; majority 86(86%) of the respondents were Christians, 10(10%) were Muslims, while 4(4%) were traditionalists; 52(52%) were students, 42(42%) were workers, while 6(6%) were unemployed; majority 60(60%) were single, 35(35%) were married, while 5(5%) were divorced. 55(55%) of respondents' fathers were civil servants, 4(4%) were pensioners, 31(31%) were self-employed, while 10(10%) of respondents did not respond to this item; 25(25%) of respondents' mothers were civil servants, 23(23%) were self-employed, 8(8%) were pensioners while 7(7%) of respondents did not respond to this item; 53(53%) of respondents were from polygamous families while 47(47%) were from non-polygamous families; 45(45%) of respondents live with their parents while 55(55%) do not live with their parents.

Fig 1: Prevalence of psychoactive substances among youths in Amassoma Community

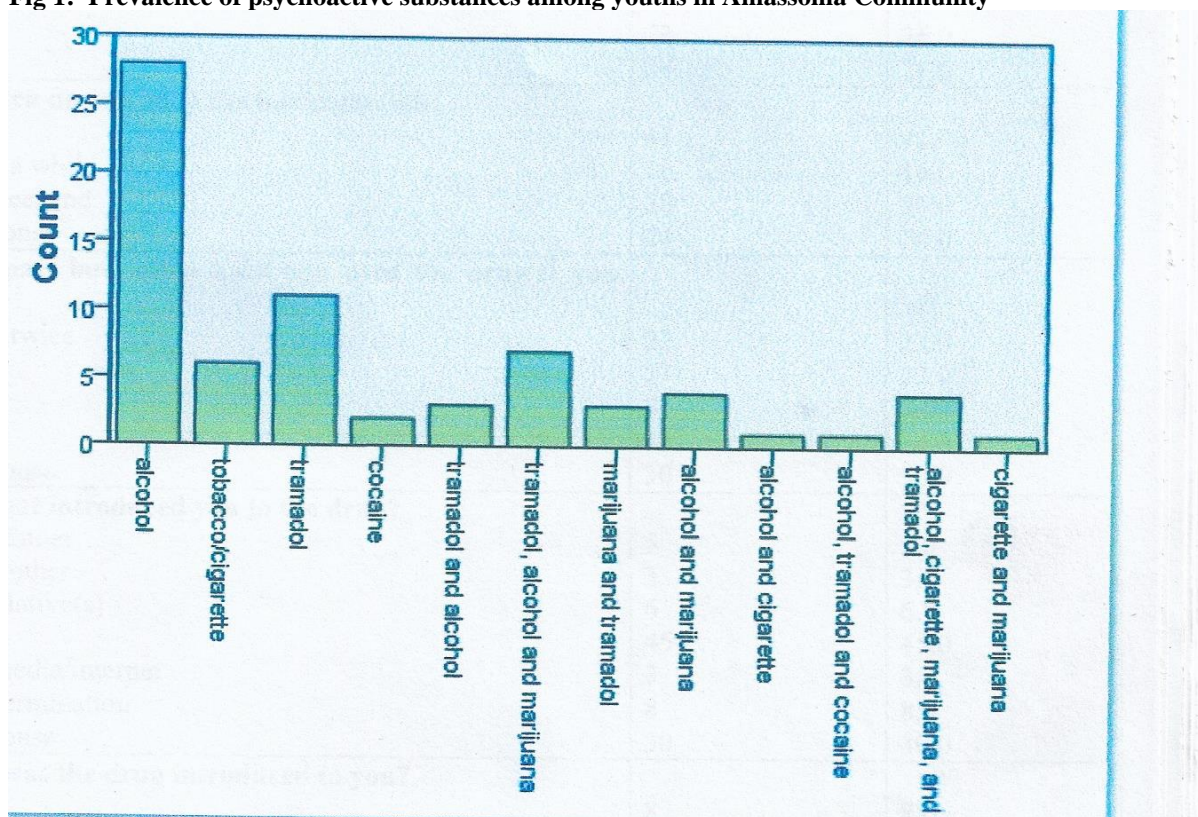


Fig. 1 shows the distribution of intake of psychoactive substances among the research participants who responded to the questionnaire (83 of them), 17 person declined response on this section. Data shows that 28(33.7%) consume alcohol singly. 13(21.7%) take tramadol singly, 8(9.6%) take both alcohol, tramadol and marijuana. See figure 3.

Table 2: Social environmental factors! Influencing misuse of psychoactive drugs among youths (n=100)

Question/Response	Frequency	Percentage
Do you usually visit the bar/nightclub?		
Yes	76	76.0
No	24	24.0
How often do you go to the bar/nightclub?		
Daily	41	41.0
Once in a while	16	16.0
Every weekend	20	20.0
No response	24	24.0
In the past, how often have you used the drug(s) that you indicated?		
Once or twice	22	22.0
Daily	27	27.0
Weekly	7	7.0
Monthly	14	14.0
No response	30	30.0
Who/what introduced you to the drug?		
Parent	5	5.0

Siblings	3	3.0
Close relative(s)	6	6.0
Friends	45	45.0
Social media	3	3.0
Self-determination	8	8.0
No response	30	30.0
Where was the drug introduced to you?		
Home	8	8.0
School	10	10.0
Neighbourhood	13	13.0
Bar	14	14.0
Nightclub	17	17.0
No response	38	38.0
For what reason did you take the drug?		
To get "high" when depressed	18	18.0
To have sex	22	22.0
To stay awake	10	10.0
To work longer hours	15	15.0
To sleep	5	5.0
No response	30	30.0
Do you use more than one drug at a time?		
Yes	26	26.0
No	44	44.0
No response	30	30.0

Table 2 above shows that majority, 76(76%), of the participants visited bar/nightclub., 40(40%) went to bar/nightclub daily, 16(16%) once in a while, 20(20%) every weekend, majority 27(27%) of the participants have been taking those drug(s) they indicated to have been taking daily, 22(22%) once or twice, 7(7%) weekly, 15(15%) used them monthly. majority 46(46%) of the respondents got introduced to the drug(s) they take through their friends, 8(8%) took the , drug(s) by themselves, 5(5%) got introduced by their parent, 3(3%) by their siblings, 6(6%) by their close relative(s), 3(3%) got introduced through social media/internet, the drug(s) were introduced to the participants at home, 8(8%), at school, 13(13%), in their neighborhood, 15(15%), at the bar, 3(13%), and at nightclub, 15(15%), 18(18%) said they took drugs to get "high", 25(25%) to have sex, 7(7%) to stay awake, 15(15%) to work, 5(5%) to sleep, 26(26%) of respondents subscribed to using more than one drug at a time.

Table 3: Perceived effect of drug abuse on respondents' academic performance (n=100)

If you are a student, has your use of drugs reduced your participation level in class?		
Yes	20	20.0
No	32	32.0
No response	48	48.0
Have you ever skipped a class because of your use of drugs?		
Yes	15	15.0
No	37	37.0
No response	48	48.0
Have you missed a test or exam because of your use of drugs?		
Yes	10	10.0
No	42	42.0
No response	48	48.0

Have you failed a test or exam because of your use of drugs?		
Yes	10	10.0
No	42	42.0
No response	48	48.0

Table 3 shows that 20(20%) of the student-participants have had reduced class participation level because of use of drugs, 15(15%) had skipped a class because of their use of drugs, 10(10%) said they have missed a test or exam because of their use of drugs, 10(10%) said they have failed a test or exam because of their use of drugs,

Table 4: Perceived effect of drug abuse on respondents' social behavior

Question	Frequency	Percentage
Have you ever had a fight with your classmate while under the influence of drugs?		
Yes	17	17.0
No	35	35.0
No response	48	48.0
Have you ever had a fight with your teacher/lecturer while under the influence of drugs?		
Yes	12	12.0
No	40	40.0
No response	48	48.0
If you are a worker, have you gotten into fight(s) at work while under the influence of drugs?		
Yes	12	12.0
No	36	36.0
No response	52	52.0
Do you own a vehicle (bicycle, okada, or car)?		
Yes	28	28.0
No	41	41.0
No response	31	31.0
Do you drive while under the influence of drugs?		
Yes	15	15.0
No	24	24.0
No response	61	61.0
Have you ever been arrested for driving while under the influence of drugs?		
Yes	10	10.0
No	28	28.0
No response	62	62.0
Has a friend or relative expressed concern about your use of drugs?		
Yes	37	37.0
No	30	30.0
No response	33	33.0
Has your use of drugs created problems between you and your family?		
Yes	44	44.0
No	23	23.0
No response	33	33.0
Has your use of drugs created problems between you and your girlfriend/boyfriend or wife/husband?		
Yes	29	29.0
No	11	11.0
No response	60	60.0

Table 4 above shows that 17(17%) have had a fight with their classmate while under the influence of drugs, 12(12%) have had a fight with their teacher/lecturer while under the influence of drugs, 12 (12%) of worker-

participants have gotten into fight(s) while under the influence of drugs, 36(36%) had not, 28(28%) of respondents own a vehicle, 15(15%) have driven their vehicles while under the influence of drugs, 10(10%) of respondents have been arrested for driving while under the influence of drugs, 28(28%), 37(37%) of respondents has had a friend or relative express concern about their use of drugs, 44(44%) of respondents said that their use of drugs has created problems between them and their family members, because of the use of drugs, 39(39%) have had problems in relationships (their girlfriend/boyfriend or wife/husband)

Hypothesis one: There is no statistical significant association between **psychoactive substances abuse of and age of the respondents.**

Table 5: Chi-Square Summary of association between Psychoactive Substances Abuse and Age of the Respondents

Variable	O _f	E _f	df	χ^2 Value	Table χ^2 Value	Decision
Age						Hypothesis rejected
15-19 years	26	25	1	0.04	3.84	
20-24 years	31	25	1	1.44	3.84	
25-29 years	26	25	1	0.04	3.84	
30 yrs and above	17	25	1	2.56	3.84	
Total	100			p-value =1.02		

Table 5 above shows the association **between Psychoactive Substances Abuse and age of the participants**

χ^2 Value = 1.02 < Table χ^2 value which is 3.84 at 0.5 level of significance, indicating that Hypothesis is rejected and that there is a significant association between the age of the respondent and psycho-active substance abuse.

Hypothesis Two: There is no statistical significant association between psychoactive substances abuse and the gender of the respondents.

Table 6: Chi-Square Summary of association between Psychoactive Substances Abuse and Gender of the Respondents

Variable	O _f	E _f	df	χ^2 Value	Table χ^2 Value	Decision
Gender						Hypothesis rejected
Male	75	50	1	1.0	3.84	
Female	25	50	1	-2	3.84	
Total	100	100		P = -1	$\chi^2=3.84$	

Table 6 shows the **association between psychoactive substances abuse and Gender of the participants. Finding shows that p- value = -1 < cal. Table χ^2 value = 3.84 at 0.5 level of significance, indicating that there is a significant association between gender and psychoactive Substances abuse among the youth.**

Discussion of findings

This study was to ascertain the social environmental factors associated with the recent surge in psychoactive substance abuse and its prevention among youths in Amassoma, Bayelsa State. The results are discussed as follows:

Socio demographic issues

The results presented in table 1 show that a majority of the respondents are males and are between the ages of 20-25. This shows that majority of the respondents are young adults. The parents of the respondents are predominantly civil servants, while a few more are pensioners. Majority of the respondents are Christians; from polygamous families; are students and live alone. Majority are also the first child of their parents. Therefore, age,

occupation/economic status, parental status and position in family influence substance abuse, probably having link with coping abilities of the individuals as laid in the foundation of their upbringing from the family.

Social environmental factors influencing psychoactive substance abuse among youths in Amassoma

The findings show that many interrelated social environmental factors influence youths in Amassoma to abuse psychoactive substances. One of them is peer pressure- this is evident from the fact that majority of the respondents were introduced to the drugs they abuse by their friends. This is supported by Oshodi, Aina and Onajole (2010) report that curiosity, social pressure and peer group influence are noted to be primary social factor influencing substance abuse. Another factor identified by one of the FGD participant is the permissiveness of some of the respondents' parents about their children's use of alcohol. This is evidenced by some of the respondents' answer during interview to the question "who introduced you to the drug?" Some said their parents did. This is in line with the discovery of Chikere and Mayowa (2011) that in a number of school and college surveys in Nigeria, alcohol use is the most common among students, with many drinking students having had their first drink in family settings.

Another factor that was observed was that majority of the respondents' parents are civil servants and pensioners. Now, the present economic situation in the state and indeed Amassoma community has put civil servants and pensioners a little below average economic status due to the fact that their salaries and gratuities do not get to them on time as it should. This contributes to the use and abuse of psychoactive substances by youths in Amassoma because their parents are not able to provide them with the necessary financial support they need. The respondents, especially those who are still in school need the financial support of their parents to buy textbooks and other necessary materials they need at school. When this is not met, youths roam about idly in the company of their friends and abuse these substances just to stay or keep themselves busy.

The findings also show that some of the respondents are unemployed young graduates, and because they are idle, they have so much time to hang out with their friends most of who abuse these psychoactive substances and hence invite them to join in. Another factor is the availability of these substances in their neighborhood, at the bars and nightclubs they regularly visit and even at school. The findings show that majority of the respondents visit bars/nightclubs every day. The finding is in line with the report of Wonguppa, Kanato, (2016) who studied prevalence and associated factors of new psychoactive substance use : A 2016 Thailand national household survey. And Mossie, Gebre, Michael, Ayele, (2015) who studied Magnitude of Psychoactive Substance Abuse among University Students, Adigrat, in North Ethiopia:

Reasons for using psychoactive substances

Alcohol intake top the list of 28(33.7%). This may be link to the fact that the community members brew their own local gin (ogogro) and so social drinking of the alcohol seems to be a culture among the indigenes. This is in line with the report of Mossie, Gebre, Michael, and Ayele, (2015), who studied magnitude of psychoactive substance abuse among University students in Adigrat, North Ethiopia.

During interview, majority of those interviewed stated that they take these substances, especially tramadol, to have sex, work for longer hours without getting tired, to stay awake and in order not to sleep, while reading for examinations. Taking drugs to have sex ranked first in their reasons. Getting "high" was the second highest reason why youths in Amassoma abuse psychoactive substances.

Perceived effects of psychoactive substance abuse on the academic performance of youths in Amassoma Community

The findings showed that majority of the respondents take psychoactive substances on a daily basis. Alcohol was the most abuse substance, followed by tramadol. Majority of the respondents also take multiple drugs, with those consuming alcohol, tramadol and marijuana (weed) ranking highest. The findings also showed that majority of the respondents are students, some are still in their secondary education while some are in the university. Majority of the interviewee attested to abuse these substances because they are frustrated. The use of psychoactive substances was pointed out by the participants in FGDs as being responsible for skipping classes, missing tests, failure in continuous assessment tests and end of semester examinations, as well as indulgence in other behaviours they would otherwise have been avoided but for the use of those drugs. Such behaviour as joining unhealthy associations to do unwholesome activities as rubbery, killing of persons, militancy, defrauding others, rape among others.



Perceived effects of psychoactive substance abuse on the social behavior of youths in Amassoma

The findings showed that there is a statistical significant relationship between the abuse of psychoactive substances and the social behavior of youths in Amassoma. Some participants attested that they fought with their classmates and their teachers/lecturers while under the influence of drugs. Some have been arrested for unusual behavior while under the influence of drugs. Some have even engaged in illegal activities in order to obtain drugs. A few participants who engaged in menial works also attested to have experienced problems at their workplace because of their abuse of psychoactive substances. The findings also showed that some of the participants own vehicles, which they drive while under the influence of drugs. Their unusual behaviors following the use of these substances made majority of their friends and relatives to worry and express concern.

Summary

This study was carried out in Amassoma to ascertain the social environmental factors associated with psychoactive substance abuse and its prevention among youths in Amassoma. Literature was reviewed on the various social environmental factors influencing youths to abuse psychoactive substances. The research design was a descriptive survey; data was collected by means of a questionnaire, FGD, and Face to face interview. Collected data were analyzed using of frequencies, percentages and Chi-square and results presented in tables, pie chart and bar charts. The findings show that majority of the respondents consume psychoactive substances daily, with alcohol and tramadol topping the list. Majority of the respondents were influenced by their friends into abusing drugs, thus giving rise to the "peer pressure" factor. Another identified social environmental factor associated with substance abuse in Amassoma is availability of drugs in the community, including in their neighbourhood, schools, and bars/nightclubs. Others include unemployment of young graduates, inadequate financial support from their parents, and permissiveness of some parents in Amassoma towards the consumption of alcohol by their youngsters. The research findings showed that although the abuse of psychoactive substances does not significantly affect the academic performance of youths in Amassoma, it does affect their social behavior greatly.

Conclusion

Abuse of psychoactive substances from this study is predominant among young adults who are expected to constitute the work force of any productive nation. This risky behaviour constitute a threat to the economic and social life of the society and therefore need urgent intervention.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that the Youths should be provided with a stable environment: one with a high degree of motivation and engagement in healthy activities, from the home background, in schools and even in work places. This will enable them to develop stress coping mechanism that will enable them to cope with various challenges in life and so prevent use and dependent of psychoactive substances and its consequences.

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