

Effect of Health Education on Attitude towards Illicit Drug Use among Secondary School Students in Diobu, Rivers State

Onyejeke Josephine Nwadiemkpa^{1*}, Prof. J. E. F. Okpako¹, Prof. E. U. Asogwa¹

¹Department of Health Promotion, Environmental and Safety Education, University of Port Harcourt, Choba, Nigeria

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*Corresponding author: Onyejeke Josephine Nwadiemkpa

Department of Health Promotion, Environmental and Safety Education, University of Port Harcourt, Choba, Nigeria

Abstract

This study investigated the effect of health education on attitude towards illicit drug use among secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State. Two (2) objectives, two (2) research questions and one (1) hypothesis guided the study. Quasi-experimental design was adopted. The researcher purposively selects the sample size of 148 students in their intact class from the population of 532 senior secondary school students from the selected senior secondary school in Diobu, Rivers State. A structured and validated instrument titled "Effect of Health Education on Knowledge of Illicit Drug Use Questionnaire" (AIDUQ) with a reliability coefficient of 0.82 was used to collect data. Descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while inferential statistics of chi-square and ANCOVA were used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance. It was found that most of the respondent performed better in the post-test stage as there was change in attitude towards illicit drug among the students. This implies that intervention has a significant effect on the secondary school students. Subsequently, the finding showed that age do not significantly affect the effect of health education on attitude towards illicit drug use among secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State. Based on the findings, the study concluded that health education had positive effect on secondary school students' attitude towards illicit drug use. Finally, the study recommended among others that schools in Diobu should collaborate with drug law agencies/drug educators to conduct quarterly seminar for students on the risk of illicit drug to ensure a change in attitudes, also age were not significant in this study, further studies should be conduct on age bracket using a larger sample size and government should involve parents and community leaders in health education programs to provide a supportive environment for students and reduce peer pressure influences.

Keywords: Health Education, Attitude, illicit drug use, Secondary School Students.

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INTRODUCTION

The term "drug" can have different meanings depending on the context, but broadly speaking, a drug is any material that may enter the body and, if ingested, change certain physiological functions. Drugs can be used to treat, diagnose, or prevent illness (Richard, 2014). Any chemical that, when taken, alters an organism's physiology, including its psychology, is classified as a drug according to the 2014 edition of Stedman's Medical Dictionary. According to Rang *et al.*, (2011), a drug is a chemical compound that usually has a recognized structure and when given to a live creature, causes a biological impact.

Illicit drug use is the use, possession, or distribution of drugs that are illegal or regulated by law because of the risks associated with overuse, potential for

misuse, and possible repercussions on society (Giade, 2011). These chemicals are frequently referred to as restricted substances, illicit drugs, or illegal drugs. The term also refers to a variety of psychoactive drugs that have the ability to change one's mood, perception, and awareness, potentially harming both individuals and society as a whole. International drug control treaties have outlawed the non-medical use of illicit drugs, which are psychoactive substances that are thought to pose an intolerable danger to the health of users (Babor *et al.*, 2018). Nutt, King and Blakemore (2012) defined illicit drugs as substances with significant potential for addiction, overdose, or other health harms. This definition emphasizes public health concerns that illicit drugs alter mood, perception, or cognitive function.

Young people are using more illicit substances because they want to escape the pressures in their lives

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by abusing narcotics. Some people, notably secondary school students, appear to have turned to drug usage as a means of openly defying established authority, while others utilize it to stay awake and improve their reading and assimilating. According to Oshodi, Aina, and Onajole (2010), peer pressure, social pressure, and curiosity are the main drivers of substance abuse. Equally, people who lack social skills and are bored will occasionally use drugs to prepare themselves, help them deal with awkward situations, enhance their confidence, and make them more appealing. Some parents use drugs equally with their kids as a means to bond with them (Obiamaka in Balogun *et al.*, 2020).

Research has demonstrated that the use of illicit drugs such as cocaine, marijuana, Heroin and others can lead to adverse physical, social, mental and psychological health effects such as disturbed sleep, decreased appetite, restlessness, irritability, suicidal thoughts, ecstatic paranoia, hallucinations, panic attacks, sensory disorientation, and even death. Furthermore, it was discovered that Persons, who had previously acknowledged using heroin, suffered from "psychological abnormalities caused by blood-borne viruses, dependence" (Njoku *et al.*, 2017). Illicit drugs lead to societal instability, which in turn fuels the recurrence of crimes, uprisings, and acts of terrorism in society at large. Most of these social transgressions were done while under the influence of illicit drugs. Depending on how frequently they take drugs, secondary students are at risk for mental retardation and disorders, which can vary from moderate neuroses to severe psychoses. Illicit drug use on a regular basis can also lead to substance use disorders, which manifest as restlessness, sleeplessness, visual and auditory hallucinations, and other symptoms. Drug use and addiction are influenced by a number of factors, including drug overdoses, which can result in early death and the disintegration from society (Link in Akpabio *et al.*, 2019).

Health education is the primary inherent and complementary component of health promotion, according to Woynarowski *et al.*, in Gracova (2015). Its goal is to increase awareness, broaden knowledge, develop skills, and mold a health-oriented attitude in specific people who are seen as components of a society.

The attitude towards illicit drug use describes how teenagers who are still in secondary school feel about using and becoming dependent on illegal drugs. It has been suggested that a number of factors affect people's views toward drug usage and dependency (Tahpour *et al.*, 2023). These include, among other things, class, geography, age, and gender. An individual's attitude is a consistent way of thinking or feeling that is reflected in their actions. It can be good or negative depending on the nurture provided by parents. It is also thought that an individual's attitude results from their own experiences or from seeing other people, such

as parents, friends, or famous people. Several factors shape secondary school students' attitudes towards illicit drugs which include: knowledge, misconceptions, peer pressure, social norms, media portrayal, family dynamics, parental attitudes and individual risk factor (Ogochukwu *et al.*, 2022). The use of substances that are prohibited for distribution, production, or possession is referred to as illicit drug use. These substances are usually categorized as such due to their great potential for misuse and addiction, as well as the serious health concerns they may provide to users.

It is therefore imperative to clarify the difference between illicit drug use, drug abuse and drug misuse. Illicit drug use refers to the use of drugs that are illegal to possess, manufacture, or distribute according to the laws of a particular country or region. Even if used responsibly, possessing or using these drugs carries legal consequences. Drug misuse on the other hand generally refers to using any drug (legal or illegal) in a way that differs from its intended purpose or recommended dosage. While drug abuse, refers to the harmful or hazardous use of a drug, regardless of its legality. This often involves using drugs to get high, cope with emotional distress or self-medicate (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNODC, 2011).

According to a report published in 2004 by the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), between 3.3 and 4.1 percent of the world's population uses illicit drugs. However, what's more concerning is that, in the words of the UNDCP executive director, the age at which people become addicted to drugs is getting younger and younger every year. According to a data from Pakistan, for instance, the percentage of people who first used heroin between the ages of 15 and 20 has increased to over 24 percent of those surveyed. According to reports, drug use is rising in China while the average age of new users is declining. According to a poll conducted in the Czech Republic, teens between the ages of 15 and 19 made up 37% of new drug users. Around 6% of a sample of secondary school pupils in Egypt reported to having tried drugs, with heroin usage in particular becoming a severe problem. According to the UNDCP, cannabis accounted for 85% of consumption and opium for 10%.

Ojonuba, AbdulRahman and Mohd Zulkefli (2023) examined the effectiveness of an empowerment education intervention for substance use reduction among inner-city adolescents in Nigeria. Random selection placed adolescents into intervention and control conditions, and assessment was conducted at baseline, post-test, and 3-months follow-up intervention. After pre-test, the intervention group engaged in an empowerment education intervention of 11 sessions. In a post-test of three months, results show significant and positive changes among adolescents in substance use, including a notable reduction in positive attitudes toward drugs. In other words, the results showed adolescents

reported less depression and substance use as well as higher peer support, parental support, social competence, and self-esteem at post-test and 3-month follow-ups as compared to the pre-intervention period. In addition, at both post-test and the 3-month follow-up, the intervention group performed better than the control group on peer support, parental support, social competence, and self-esteem. This study presents a new indication that the empowerment education intervention effectively reduces substance use among Nigeria's inner-city adolescents.

Lucchese *et al.*, (2016) looked at health education for alcohol and drug users. The study's goal was to examine how information is acquired in health education groups by individuals undergoing substance misuse recovery. Research on convergent care was created with patients who were admitted to therapeutic communities. The amount of pre- and post-intervention knowledge was analyzed using a self-administered, semi-structured questionnaire. Between August 2013 and February 2014, data were gathered. The research included twenty-eight male users of various psychoactive drugs. Participants' definitions of the effects, knowledge of rehabilitation techniques, and categorization and use of substances all increased. The pre- and post-intervention responses differed in terms of depth and quality, according to a qualitative study. Health education improved people's comprehension of the fundamentals of drug and alcohol misuse, their relationship to behavior, and how to contextualize and think about rehabilitation.

In Nigeria, according to Mohammad (2014), many people, primarily young ones (adolescent group), consume medications without a doctor's prescription. This misuse often paves way for illicit drug use. The sustainability of Nigeria's youth development program is threatened by the approximately 11% of young people who are addicted on drugs in some way. Adult, adolescent, and child substance addiction has reached alarming levels (Dankani, 2012). The most widely used illicit drugs in Nigeria, excluding alcohol and other substances, have been divided into six classes: stimulants, cannabis, hallucinogens, sedative-hypnotics (Sedative), opioids and inhalants (Ahmed, 2012; Dankani, 2012).

Statement of the problem

From the literature reviewed, National research conducted in Nigeria shows that adolescents and secondary school students in Enugu, South-Eastern Nigeria, have a lifetime prevalence of illicit substance use of 29.5%, while Osun, South-Western Nigeria, has a lifetime prevalence of 26.4%, and Port-Harcourt, South-South Nigeria, has a lifetime prevalence of 27.1% (Settipiani *et al.*, 2018). The constant police arrest of adolescent age bracket within the study environment and unnecessary argument, quarreling and fight among peers and abusive insults on parents and elder ones within the

study area is alarming. These unhealthy behaviours are linked to the use of illicit drugs.

This study intends to bridge the gap discovered in the previous studies focused on the impact of implementing a preventive program in schools on the typical rise in drug use among student bodies by Boussat, Gaillet and Fournier (2023) and the effectiveness of an empowerment education intervention for substance use reduction among inner-city adolescents in Nigeria by Ojonuba, AbdulRahman and Mohd Zulkefli, (2023) which shows substantial decrease in amount of alcohol consumed and less depression as well as higher peer, parental support but did not include the differentiate between drugs that can abused, misuse, illicit drug use and preventive measures to overcome the use of hard substances.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine the effect of health education on attitude towards illicit drug use among secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. find out the effect of health education on the attitude towards illicit drug use among secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State
2. find out the effect of health education on the attitude towards illicit drug use among secondary school student in Diobu, Rivers State based on age

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study

1. What is the effect of health education on the attitude towards illicit drug use among secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State?
2. What is the effect of health education on the attitude towards illicit drug use among secondary school students in Diobu, River State based on age?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are postulated to guide the study.

1. There is no significant effect of health education on the attitude towards illicit drugs use among secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State based on age

METHODOLOGY

The quasi-experimental research design was adopted in the study. This research design was chosen because the investigation would compare the outcome variable before and after the intervention. The population of the study consists of 532 senior secondary school students in community secondary schools Nkpulu-Oroworukwo, Diobu. The sample size for the study was

a total of 148 students. Simple random sampling technique was employed to randomly selects one arm with 50 students, out of four arms in a class since they are already in their strata (SS1, SS2, and SS3). The instruments for data collection was a researcher-structured instrument titled: "Attitude towards Illicit Drug Use Questionnaire (AIDUQ). The AIDUQ was made up of two sections namely: A and B. Section A is the demographic data of the respondents which include Age, gender, and Class. On the other hand, section B contains 23 items that measure the level of Attitude toward illicit drug use among students. The questionnaire was designed after the modified 4-point Likert scale of strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) for attitude. They are rated 4, 3, 2, and 1 for positively keyed items and 1, 2, 3, and 4 for negatively keyed items.

With assistance from other health education professionals, the researcher developed a programme and created the lesson plans that were used to mount the developed programme. The lesson plans were created to

be used for 40 minutes at a time. The experts in health promotion and other specialists like programme developers, NDLEA etc. vouch for the validity of this programme and lesson plan. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity while Cronbach alpha was used to check the internal consistency of the instrument to guarantee the use of the instrument for the study. The reliability coefficients obtained for the instruments was 0.82.

The instrument was administered to the students by the researcher, assisted by two trained research assistants. Copies of the instruments were retrieved after students had given their responses. Data collected were analyzed using frequency, mean, and standard deviation to answer the research questions while the chi-square as well as analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 significance level.

Research Questions 1: What is the effect of health education on the attitude towards illicit drug usage among secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State.

Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation analysis on the effect of health education on the attitude towards illicit drug usage among secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State

		N	Pre-Test		Post Test		Mean gain
			Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
1	Illicit drug use is a personal choice that doesn't affect others	148	2.37	0.78	2.91	0.63	0.54
2	Illicit drugs can help people relax and have a good time	148	2.09	0.86	2.05	0.64	-0.04
3	Taking illicit drugs brings about maturity	148	2.78	1.06	2.36	1.04	-0.42
4	Most people who use illicit drugs hardly quit on their own	148	2.43	1.02	2.95	1.06	0.52
5	Using illicit drugs will make someone not to fall sick in life	148	2.16	1.12	2.06	0.78	-0.1
6	Using illicit drugs is a normal part of growing up and to belong to peer group	148	1.59	1.12	1.95	1.16	0.36
7	Taking illicit drugs brings about social standing with friends	148	2.26	1.10	1.77	1.13	-0.49
8	Using illicit drugs is an acceptable way to cope with stress or problem	148	1.92	1.20	1.96	1.01	0.04
9	Illicit drugs can enhance creativity and performance.	148	2.62	1.25	1.57	0.98	-1.05
10	There is no need to avoid friends who use illicit drugs.	148	2.54	1.03	2.32	1.30	-0.22
11	The legal penalties for using illicit drugs are too harsh.	148	2.87	1.00	2.07	0.92	-0.8
12	There is little reason to fear addiction from using illicit drugs.	148	2.94	1.05	2.72	1.15	-0.22
13	It is unfair to stigmatize people who use illicit drugs.	148	2.12	0.93	2.59	1.21	0.47
14	Trying illicit drugs is a normal part of growing up.	148	1.98	1.09	2.18	0.81	0.2
15	The government should not interfere with individuals' decisions to use illicit drugs.	148	2.42	1.04	2.44	1.07	0.02
16	Education about illicit drugs is unnecessary because everyone knows the risks.	148	2.47	0.79	2.19	1.03	-0.28
17	Using illicit drugs can be a way to escape from problems.	148	2.78	1.15	2.20	0.86	-0.58
18	The social benefits of using illicit drugs can outweigh the health risks.	148	2.95	1.22	2.89	1.08	-0.06
19	People who use illicit drugs should be given support rather than punishment.	148	2.83	1.36	2.55	1.30	-0.28
20	Using illicit drugs can be a positive way to experience new sensations.	148	3.03	1.08	2.53	1.31	-0.5
21	The impact of illicit drug use on mental health is minimal.	148	2.88	1.11	2.72	1.13	-0.16
22	Using illicit drugs is not as harmful as people claim.	148	2.07	1.07	2.49	1.20	0.42
23	Using illicit drugs is an acceptable way to cope with stress	148	2.54	1.03	1.45	0.75	-1.09
	Average Mean		2.46	1.06	2.30	1.02	-0.16

Table 1 indicated that the respondent has change in attitude towards illicit drug use with mean scores of 2.46 and 2.30 at the pre-test stage and the post-test stage respectively. The mean difference between the posttest score and pre-test is -0.16 indicating a change in

attitude toward illicit drug use, this is as a result of the positive effect of health education intervention.

Research question 2: What is the effect of health education on the attitude towards illicit drug usage among secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State based on age.

Table 2: Mean and Standard deviation analysis on the effect of health education on the attitude towards illicit drug usage among secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State based on age

Age	12-13yrs (N=6)		14-15yrs (N=57)		16yrs & above (N=85)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-Test	39.00	9.72	44.79	12.80	49.41	15.40
Post Test	57.17	18.45	49.11	14.05	51.96	14.58
Mean Gain	18.17		4.32		2.55	

Table 2 shows the effect of health education on the attitude towards illicit drug usage among secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State based on class level. The table reveals the mean score of students within the age range of 12-13year at the pretest stage is 39.00 with a corresponding standard deviation of 9.72, while at the post-test stage, the mean score was 57.17 and a standard deviation of 18.45. Again, the mean score of students within the age range of 14-15years at the pretest stage was 44.79 with a corresponding standard deviation of 12.80, while at the post-test stage, the mean score was 49.11 and a standard deviation of 14.05, while the mean score of students 16years and above at pretest stage is 49.41 with a corresponding standard deviation of 15.40, while at the post-test stage the mean score was 51.96 and a standard deviation of 14.58.

The mean gain result of 18.17, 4.32 and 2.55 for each of the age range indicates that there is an increase in the score of students at the post-test stage in all the age groups in attitude towards illicit drug usage compared to the pre-test stage because of the treatment of health education. This implies that health education has an effect on the attitude towards illicit drug use among secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State based on age.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant effect of health education on the attitude towards illicit drugs use among secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State based on age.

Table 3: Summary of ANCOVA on effect of health education on the attitude towards illicit drugs use among secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State based on age

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	525.130 ^a	3	175.043	.823	.483	.017
Intercept	32627.281	1	32627.281	153.475	.000	.516
Pre Attitude	14.044	1	14.044	.066	.798	.000
Age	516.788	2	258.394	1.215	.300	.017
Error	30613.052	144	212.591			
Total	417209.000	148				
Corrected Total	31138.182	147				

a. R Squared = .017 (Adjusted R Squared = -.004)

The results in Table 3 showed that the calculated F-value for age is 1.215 at degrees of freedom of 2 and 144. The calculated F-value is not significant at 0.300 probability level which is greater than 0.05 level of probability ($F=1.215$, $df= 2/144$, $P>.05$). The null hypothesis two was therefore accepted, this implies that there is no significant effect of health education on the attitude towards illicit drugs use among secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State based on age.

Summary of Findings

1. Students have negative attitude toward illicit drug use, this is as a result of the effect of health education

2. Health education has an effect on the attitude towards illicit drug usage among secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State based on age

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Answer to research question 1 indicated that the respondent has negative attitude towards attitude towards illicit drug use with mean scores of 2.46 and 2.30 at the pre-test stage and the post-test stage respectively. The post test mean score is less than the pre-test mean indicating more negative attitude toward illicit drug use, this is as a result of the effect of health education. These findings of this study are in line with that Ojonuba *et al.*, (2023) on the effectiveness of an empowerment

education intervention for substance use reduction among inner-city adolescents in Nigeria which revealed after follow-up proves that the empowerment education intervention successfully lowers drug usage among teenagers living in inner cities of Nigeria. The finding also agrees with that of Lucchese *et al.*, (2016) whose study revealed that health education improved people's comprehension of the fundamentals of drug and alcohol misuse, their relationship to behavior, and how to contextualize and think about rehabilitation

Answer to research question 2 reveals the mean score of students within the age range of 12-13year at the pretest stage is 39.00 with a corresponding standard deviation of 9.72, while at the post-test stage, the mean score was 57.17 and a standard deviation of 18.45. Again, the mean score of students within the age range of 14-15years at the pretest stage was 44.79 with a corresponding standard deviation of 12.80, while at the post-test stage, the mean score was 49.11 and a standard deviation of 14.05, while the mean score of students 16years and above at pretest stage is 49.41 with a corresponding standard deviation of 15.40, while at the post-test stage the mean score was 51.96 and a standard deviation of 14.58. This result indicates that there is an increase in the score of students at the post-test stage in all the age groups in attitude towards illicit drug usage compared to the pre-test stage because of the treatment of health education. This implies that health education has an effect on the attitude towards illicit drug usage among secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State based on age and when these result was further subjected to hypothesis testing, there was no significant effect of health education on the attitude towards illicit drugs use among secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State based on age.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that student attitudes towards illicit drug use in secondary school students in Diobu, Rivers State became more negative after the post-intervention. This is due to effect of health education as it enlighten them on illicit drug and how it can be avoided. Age did not have a significant influence on the effectiveness of the health education program in terms of attitudes toward illicit drug use. These findings align with previous studies that demonstrated the positive impact of educational interventions on attitudes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Schools in Diobu should collaborate with drug law agencies/drug educators to conduct quarterly seminar for students on the risk of illicit drug to ensure a change in attitudes.
2. Also, age were not significant in this study, further studies should be conduct on age bracket using a larger sample size.

3. Government should involve parents and community leaders in health education programs to provide a supportive environment for students and reduce peer pressure influences.

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