



PERCEIVED STRESS AND MOTIVES FOR DRUG USE AS PREDICTORS OF DRUG DEPENDENCY AMONG STREET YOUTHS IN IBADAN METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

This study explored drug use determinants in Ibadan's street youth by examining perceived stress and motives for drug use. A cross-sectional survey collected data from 125 youths sampled from various locations, including clubs, bars, brothels, and drug-selling and consumption spots. Most respondents (76.4%) were males, with age distribution as follows: 38.2% aged 14-25 years, 36.6% aged 26-35 years, 22.0% aged 36-45 years, and 3.3% aged 46 years and above. Analysis employed t-tests, multiple regression, and ANOVA at a 0.05 significance level. Results showed a significant positive link between fun and getting high motives ($r = .22, p < 0.05$) and drug dependency. Perceived stress, life event stressors, peer pressure, and reputation motives, as well as fun and high motives, exhibited significant positive relationships with drug dependency ($p < 0.01$). Perceived stress and drug use for fun and being high were significant predictors of drug dependency ($R^2 = .55, F = 28.85, p < .01$). Age also significantly predicted drug dependency ($\beta = -.48, p < .05$). Nonetheless, there was no joint influence of age, gender, marital status, and educational status on drug use ($p > .05$). In summary, motives for drug use and life stressors were identified as predictors of drug use among Ibadan's street youth. The study recommends early implementation of comprehensive, multi-component prevention programs with adequate duration, scope, and intensity to address substance abuse in this population.

Keywords: Perceived Stress, Motives for Drug Use, Street Youths, Drug Dependency, Substance Abuse Prevention

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INTRODUCTION

Drug use and substance abuse among youth represents a major public health issue worldwide (UNODC, 2018). In Nigeria, a country with a large youth population, drug use has been described as an epidemic, with rates of drug use and dependency escalating in recent years (Osa-Edoh & Egbochuku, 2012). The most commonly abused substances by Nigerian youth include cannabis, codeine-based cough syrups, tramadol, and alcohol (UNODC, 2018). Substance use disorders have been linked to numerous negative consequences including health problems, impaired cognitive and academic functioning, risky sexual behaviors, delinquency, and violence (Buckner et al., 2006; Chassin et al., 2002). Given the high prevalence and adverse impacts, there is an urgent need to understand the factors that drive and maintain drug use among Nigerian youth. A number of psychological and social factors have been implicated as risk factors for youth substance use, including perceived stress, stressful life events, peer influences, and motivations or reasons for using drugs (Chassin et al., 2002; Siqueira et al., 2000, 2001). Perceived stress refers to the extent to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful or overwhelming

(Cohen et al., 1983). Life events stress encompasses major stressful experiences like death of a loved one, divorce, job loss, etc. (Dohrenwend et al., 1978). Both perceived stress and stressful life events have been associated with increased substance use, often as a way of coping with distress (Siqueira et al., 2000, 2001; Wills & Hirky, 1996). Motives for drug use represent another key factor linked to problematic substance use (Cooper et al., 1995). Common motives include using drugs to cope with negative emotions, to enhance positive emotions, for social reasons like bonding with peers, and to conform to peer pressure. Of these, coping and enhancement motives tend to be most strongly tied to heavy, problematic patterns of use (Cooper et al., 1995; Simons et al., 2005). While perceived stress, life stress, and motives have been studied extensively in relation to youth substance use in Western countries, less is known about these factors in non-Western contexts like Nigeria. The current study aimed to address this gap by examining perceived stress, life events stress, and motives for drug use as potential predictors of drug use and dependency among youth in the Ibadan metropolis region of Nigeria.

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Statement of the Problem

Drug use and dependency pose significant challenges among Nigerian youth, yet the underlying factors propelling these behaviors remain inadequately understood, particularly concerning psychological and motivational drivers (Umukoro et al., 2016; Aguocho & Nwefoh, 2021). Comprehending the psychological and social determinants of drug use is imperative for devising effective preventive and intervention strategies (Adelekan et al., 1993; Oshodi et al., 2010). By delineating the specific roles of perceived stress, stressful life circumstances, and motivations for drug use, the current investigation can offer insights crucial for devising targeted approaches to diminish risks and alleviate the ramifications of substance use among Nigerian youth. This understanding is pivotal for crafting tailored interventions that address the unique challenges faced by this demographic in the Nigerian context. This

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations

The current study is grounded in stress and coping theories of substance use (Wills & Hirky, 1996) as well as motivational models of alcohol and drug use (Cooper et

study aims to address this gap by examining the influences of perceived stress, life events stress, and motives for drug use on the levels of drug use and symptoms of dependency among a sample of youth in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study were:

- 1) to examine the associations between perceived stress, life events stress, motives for drug use, and levels of drug use and dependency symptoms among youth in Ibadan;
- 2) to determine which factors (perceived stress, life events stress, motives) are the strongest predictors of drug use and dependency in this population; and,
- 3) to explore potential moderating effects of demographic factors like age and gender on these associations.

al., 1995). Stress and coping perspectives propose that individuals may use drugs as a way to cope with stress, negative affect, and difficult life circumstances when other coping resources are lacking. Motivational models emphasize the importance of the

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specific reasons or motives driving substance use, with coping and enhancement motives being particularly predictive of heavy, problematic use patterns. The biopsychosocial model (Engel, 1977) is also relevant, highlighting the interplay of biological, psychological,

and social factors in health and illness. In the context of substance use, psychological factors like stress, motives, and cognitive appraisals may interact with social influences (e.g. peers) to increase vulnerability to drug use and addiction.

Conceptual Framework

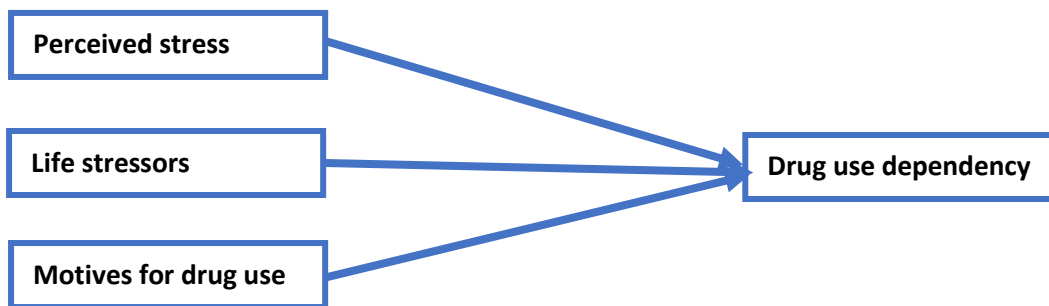


Fig. 1: Conceptual model figure depicting the hypothesized relationships between perceived stress, life events stress, motives for use, and drug use/dependency, as well as potential moderators like age and gender.

Drug Use, Dependency and Its Manifestations

The term "drug use" refers to the consumption of psychoactive substances like cannabis, opioids, stimulants, and other illegal or controlled substances. Drug dependency is a chronic, relapsing disorder characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use despite negative consequences (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Substance use disorders are associated with a range of adverse effects including impaired brain function, mental health problems, accidents and injuries, violence and criminal behavior, and strained

interpersonal relationships (NIDA, 2018). Among Nigerian youth, the most commonly used substances include cannabis, codeine-containing cough syrups, tramadol, cocaine, heroin, and alcohol (UNODC, 2018). Rates of drug use appear to be rising, with the 2018 Nigeria Drug Use Survey reporting past-year prevalence rates of 14.4% for any drug use and 10.6% for cannabis use among those aged 25 and younger (UNODC, 2018).

Perceived Stress

Perceived stress refers to an individual's subjective evaluation that environmental

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demands exceed their ability to cope (Cohen et al., 1983). It is a psychological construct that incorporates feelings about the uncontrollability and unpredictability of one's life, how often one has to deal with irritating hassles, how much change is occurring, and confidence in one's ability to cope with problems. Perceived stress has been consistently linked to greater substance use, with individuals often turning to drugs and alcohol as a way to cope with overwhelming stress (Siqueira et al., 2000; Wills & Hirky, 1996). The stress-coping model posits that substance use may initially serve as a way to regulate negative affect when other coping resources are lacking.

Motives for Drug Use Among Youth

Motivational models of substance use propose that the specific reasons or motives driving drug use behavior are critical determinants of use patterns and consequences (Cooper et al., 1995). Four main categories of motives have been identified:

1) coping motives - Using drugs to avoid or regulate negative emotions like stress, anxiety, depression;

2) enhancement motives - Using drugs to increase positive emotions and experiences;

3) social motives - Using drugs to increase social affiliation and bonding; and,

4) conformity motives - Using drugs due to social pressure or to "fit in".

Of these, coping and enhancement motives tend to be most strongly predictive of heavy, problematic patterns of drug use (Cooper et al., 1995; Simons et al., 2005). Using drugs to cope with negative affect and escape distress is considered a particularly risky motivation that can reinforce and perpetuate addictive behaviors.

Empirical Review

Numerous studies have documented links between stress, motives, and substance use among youth and young adults in Western countries. Siqueira and colleagues (2000, 2001) found that adolescents who used more disengagement and avoidance coping strategies in response to stress were more likely to initiate marijuana use. Wills et al. (2001) showed that both perceived stress and negative life events predicted increased alcohol, cigarette, and cannabis use in a sample of urban adolescents, with coping motives partially mediating these effects.

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Cooper et al. (1995) demonstrated that coping and enhancement motives were uniquely associated with heavy alcohol use and alcohol-related problems in college students, over and above social and conformity motives. Similar findings have emerged for other substances like cannabis (Simons et al., 1998). In Nigeria and other African contexts, there has been less research directly examining psychological factors like stress and motives in relation to youth substance use. However, some studies provide relevant background. Oshodi et al. (2010) found that perceived stress was correlated with alcohol use

among Nigerian university students. Dada et al. (2018) reported that using drugs to cope with depression and other negative states was a common motive endorsed by patients entering drug treatment in Nigeria. The current study extends this literature by comprehensively examining the roles of perceived stress, major life stressors, and key motivational factors (coping, enhancement, social, conformity) in predicting drug use and dependency symptoms among youth in the Ibadan region of Nigeria.

METHOD

Design

The study employed a cross-sectional, correlational design using self-report survey methods to assess the variables of interest in a sample of youth in Ibadan, Nigeria. The independent variables were perceived stress, life events stress, and motives for drug use, while the primary dependent variable was level of drug use and dependency symptoms.

Participants

The sample consisted of 348 youth aged 18-30 years ($M = 23.4$, $SD = 3.6$) residing in

the Ibadan metropolitan area, including 92 males and 232 females (26% and 67%, respectively). The remaining participants did not disclose their gender. Participants were recruited from tertiary institutions, clubs, bars, brothels, and other locations where drug use was known to occur using a combination of purposive, snowball, and accidental sampling techniques. To be included, participants had to self-report current or past drug use. Additional demographic characteristics of the sample were: 41% currently enrolled students, 32% employed, 27% unemployed; 58% had completed secondary education, 31%

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tertiary education, 11% primary education or less; 67% single, 24% married, 9% other marital status.

Instruments

Sociodemographic questionnaire: Participants provided basic demographic information including age, gender, educational status, marital status, living situation, and employment.

Drug Use/Dependency

The Texas Christian University (TCU) Drug Screen 5 (TCU Drug Screen, 2014) was used to assess current drug use and symptoms of drug use disorder. This 19-item self-report screening tool is based on the DSM-5 criteria for substance use disorders. Sample items include "I have had problems concentrating at work/school because of my drug use" and "I have tried to cut down on my drug use but couldn't do it." Items are rated on a 3-point scale (0=Never, 1=Yes in the past 12 months, 2=Yes, and still a current problem). Scores range from 0-37 with higher scores indicating more severe drug use and related problems. The TCU Drug Screen 5 has shown excellent reliability ($\alpha = .92$) and validity in previous research (Houser et al., 2018). In this sample, the Cronbach's alpha was .89.

Perceived Stress

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen et al., 1983) was used to measure the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful. This 10-item scale includes items like "In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?" and "In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?" Items are rated on a 5-point scale from 0 (Never) to 4 (Very Often). Higher total scores indicate greater perceived stress. The PSS has demonstrated good reliability and validity across a range of samples (Lee, 2012). Cronbach's alpha in this study was .82.

Life Events Stress

The Life Events Scale for Urban Adolescents (LESUA; Allison et al., 1999) assessed exposure to major stressful life events in the past 12 months. This 41-item scale covers events across several domains including family, peers, economics, violence/crime, and other major life events. Example items include "You moved to a new home/apartment," "A family member or close friend was arrested/went to jail," and "You were physically assaulted or beaten." Participants indicate whether each event occurred (1=Yes, 0=No) and how

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stressful it was on a 5-point scale. The total Life Events Stress score sums the subjective ratings of stressfulness for all endorsed events. The LESUA has shown good reliability and validity with multi-ethnic urban adolescents (Allison et al., 1999). In this Nigerian sample, the Cronbach's alpha was .87.

Motives for Drug Use

The Drinking Motives Questionnaire-Revised (DMQ-R; Cooper, 1994) adapted for drug use was used to assess motives for using drugs. This 20-item self-report measure has four subscales: coping motives (e.g. "To forget your worries"), enhancement motives (e.g. "Because it gives you a pleasant feeling"), social motives (e.g. "To celebrate a special occasion with friends"), and conformity motives (e.g. "So you won't feel left out"). Participants rate how often they use drugs for each motive on a 5-point scale from 1 (Almost never/Never) to 5 (Almost always/Always). The DMQ-R has shown good reliability and validity in prior research (Cooper et al., 1995). In this sample, Cronbach's alphas were: coping = .89, enhancement = .87, social = .81, conformity = .79.

Procedure

The study was approved by the University of Ibadan ethics review board. The researcher obtained permission from authorities overseeing the various recruitment sites. Participants were approached at these locations, provided information about the study's purpose, and invited to participate. Those who gave verbal consent completed the anonymous self-report questionnaires. Participants received small incentives like toiletries or snacks. The researcher and trained research assistants administered and collected questionnaires on site.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 20.0. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies) were calculated for all study variables. Zero-order correlations examined bivariate associations between perceived stress, life events stress, motives for use, and drug use/dependency. Multiple regression analysis was used to evaluate perceived stress, life events stress, and motives as predictors of drug use, controlling for demographic covariates. Potential moderating effects of age and gender were

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explored through moderated multiple regression.

Results

The first hypothesis stated that Perceived stress, life events stress and motives for drug use will be significant

correlates of drug use among youth involve with drugs in the Ibadan metropolis. This hypothesis was analysed using Pearson linear correlation analysis and the result is presented in Table 4.1:

Table 4.11: Zero order correlation showing the relationship between perceived stress, life event stressor, peer pressure and reputation and having fun and being high on drug use

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Drug use	8.67	6.24	1	.150	.040	.161	.220*
Perceived stress	24.67	6.36		-	.481**	.425**	.605**
Life event stressor	51.86	21.44			-	.454**	.742**
Peer pressure and reputation	7.42	5.07				-	.710**
Having fun and being high	29.85	14.99					-

** $P < .01$, * $P < .05$

Table 4.1 shows that there was significant positive relationship between having fun and being high ($r = .22$, $p < 0.05$) on drug use. While perceived stress ($r = .15$, $p > 0.05$), life event stressor ($r = .04$, $p > 0.05$) and peer pressure and reputation ($r = .16$, $p > 0.05$) did not significantly influence drug use. This result shows that increase or decrease in perceived stress, life event stressor, peer pressure reputation did not

significantly influence drug use. The hypothesis is thus supported.

The second hypothesis stated that Perceived stress, life events stress and motives for drug use will be significant correlates of drug dependency among youth involved with drugs in the Ibadan metropolis. This hypothesis was analysed using Pearson linear correlation analysis and the result is presented in Table 4.2:

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Table 4.2: Zero order correlation showing the relationship between perceived stress, life event stressor, peer pressure and reputation and having fun and being high on drug dependency

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Drug dependency	8.25	3.09	-	.549**	.528**	.552**	.727**
Perceived stress	24.67	6.36		-	.481**	.425**	.605**
Life event stressor	51.86	21.44			-	.454**	.742**
Peer pressure and reputation	7.42	5.07				-	.710**
Having fun and being high	29.85	14.99					-

** $P < .01$, * $P < .05$

Table 4.2 shows that there was significant positive relationship between perceived stress ($r = .55$, $p < 0.01$), life event stressor ($r = .53$, $p < 0.01$), peer pressure and reputation ($r = .52$, $p < 0.01$) and having fun and being high ($r = .73$, $p < 0.01$) on drug dependency. This result shows that increase in perceived stress, life event stressor, peer pressure reputation and having fun and being high will tend to significantly

increase drug dependency. The hypothesis is thus supported.

The third hypothesis stated that perceived stress, life events stress and motives for drug use will be significant joint and independent predictors of drug dependency among youth involved with drugs in the Ibadan metropolis. This hypothesis was tested using multiple regression and the result presented in Table 4.3:

Table 4.3: Step-wise Regression Showing the influence of drug use, perceived stress, life event stressor and reasons on drug dependency.

	Model I			Model II		
	β	t	Sig.	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)		15.720	.000		2.731	.007
Drug use	.203	2.285	.024	.040	.625	.533
Perceived stress				.173	2.218	.028
Life event stressor				-.016	-.165	.869
To have fun and to be high				.576	4.474	.000
Peer pressure and reputation				.070	.791	.431
R		.20			.74	
R ²		.041			.55	
R ² Δ		.041			.511	
F		5.219			28.85	
Df		1, 221			5, 117	

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Table 4.3 above reveal that when the first model was tested, perceived stress, life events stress and motives for drug use predicted 20% of the change observed in drug dependency ($R^2=.04$, $F = 5.22$, $df = 1$, $p < .01$). In the second model drug use, perceived stress, life event stressor and reasons when added to the drug dependency, the model predicted 55% change observed in drug dependency ($R^2=.55$, $F = 28.85$, $df = 5$, $p < .01$). Conclusively, perceived stress and using drug to have fun and feelings of being high

were the major predictor of drug dependency. The third hypothesis is thus supported.

Hypothesis four stated that age, gender, marital status and educational status will jointly and independently predict drug dependency among youths involve drugs in the Ibadan metropolis. This hypothesis was analysed using multiple regression analysis statistics and the result presented in Table 4.4:

Table 4.4: Summary of Multiple Regression table showing joint and independent influence of age, gender, marital status and educational status on drug dependency

Predictors	B	t-value	P	R	R ²	F	P
Gender	.07	.806	> .05				
Age	-.48	-4.23	<.05	.406	.165	5.837	< .05
Marital status	.14	1.25	>.05				
Educational status	.03	.29	>.05				

Table 4.4 shows that there was significant joint influence of age, gender, marital status and educational status were joint significant predictors of drug dependency [$F(4,118) = 5.84$, $R^2 = .165$; $p < .05$]. age, gender, marital status and educational status were jointly accounted for 17% of the variance in

drug dependency. Further results show that age ($\beta = -.48$; $p < .05$) significantly predict drug dependency while gender ($\beta = .07$; $p > .05$), marital status ($\beta = .14$; $p > .05$) and educational status ($\beta = .03$; $p > .05$) did not significantly predict drug dependency. The third hypothesis is thus supported.

Discussion

This study examined the Perceived stress, life events stress and motives for

drug use as predictors of drug use and dependency. The findings of this study

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highlight the importance of addressing perceived stress and recreational drug use in interventions aimed at reducing drug dependency among youth in Ibadan. The first hypothesis tested that perceived stress, life events stress and motives for drug use will be significant correlates of drug use among youth involved with drugs in the Ibadan metropolis supported. The only relationship recorded was significant positive relationship between drug motives of having fun and being high on drug use. This is in line with Terry-McElrath (2009) who demonstrated that social/recreational reasons for drug use such as “to get high”, “to have a good time”, and “to experiment” consistently remained the most frequently cited reasons for the use of most substances. The second hypothesis stated that Perceived stress, life events stress and motives for drug use will be significant correlates of drug dependency among youth involved with drugs in the Ibadan metropolis was also supported. Result demonstrated that there was significant positive relationship between perceived stress, life event stressors, motives for peer pressure and reputation and having fun and being high on drug dependency. This result shows that increase in perceived stress, life event stressor, motives of drug use due to peer pressure reputation motives having fun

and being high will tend to significantly increase drug dependency. This is in agreement with Gordon, (2002) that people seek psychological succour through drug consumption, a palliative escape from their condition, using mechanisms of negative reinforcement. This finding agrees an association has been found between psychological stressors and the consumption of drugs: conflict in the work and/or marriage sphere (Lindenberg et al., 1999), belonging to an ethnic minority (FelixOrtiz & Newcomb, 1999), psychological distress (Newcomb, Vargas-Carmona, & Galaif, 1999), divorce (Agrawal & Lynskey, 2009), family conflicts (Brook, Duan, Brook, & Ning, 2007; McCuller, Sussman, Dent, & Teran, 2001; Wu, Lu, Sterling, & Weisner, 2004), social anxiety (Buckner, Mallott, Schmidt, & Taylor, 2006; Buckner, Schmidt, Bobadilla, & Taylor, 2006), perceived stress and/or negative events in life (Anderson, Ramo, & Brown, 2006; Mooney et al., 2008; Siqueira, Diab, Bodian, & Rolnitzky, 2000).

The third hypothesis stated that perceived stress, life events stress and motives for drug use will be significant joint and independent predictors of drug dependency among youth involved with

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drugs in the Ibadan metropolis. Perceived stress and using drug to have fun and feelings of being high were the major predictor of drug dependency. However, the results of a direct relationship between stress and drug consumption are, (Furukawa et al., 1998). In the same vein, Wills and Hirky (1996) considered that coping strategies could decrease or increase the risk of drug consumption. In other studies, a direct association has been found between coping strategies and drug consumption (Brook et al., 2007; Mooney et al., 2008; Siqueira, Diab, Bodian, & Rolnitzky, 2001; Wu et al., 2004). This is in line with Terry-McElrath (2009) who demonstrated that social/recreational reasons for drug use such as “to get high”, “to have a good time”, and “to experiment” consistently remained the most frequently cited reasons for the use of most substances.

The fourth stated that age, gender, marital status and educational status will jointly and independently predict drug dependency among youths involve drugs in the Ibadan metropolis was also supported. Age was demonstrated to be the significant independent predictor of drug dependency while gender, marital status and educational status were not significant. This finding is in agreement with the because individuals

who use drugs early in life are more likely to become dependent, according to early onset theory (McBride, VanderWall, Terry-McElrath, 2003; Schroeder, Giordana, Cernkovich, 2007; Green, Doherty, Stuart, & Ensminger, 2010), it is expected that those with an early onset of drug use will be more likely to be arrested for substance related crimes. . Furthermore, since there is a strong correlation between drug dependence and age.

Implications of findings

The findings align with stress and coping theories of substance use, highlighting the role of stress and coping motives in driving drug use behaviors. They also support motivational models of substance use, emphasizing the significance of specific reasons for using drugs in understanding and predicting use patterns. The study extends these theoretical frameworks to a Nigerian context, providing empirical support for their applicability across diverse cultural settings. Interventions targeting youth substance use in Nigeria should consider the motivational factors identified in this study, particularly coping and enhancement motives. Strategies that address alternative coping mechanisms, enhance emotion regulation skills, and provide healthier sources of pleasure and

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social connection may be effective in reducing drug-related harm. Additionally, efforts to reduce environmental stressors and increase resilience to stress may help prevent the onset of problematic drug use behaviors.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the current study provides valuable insights into the roles of perceived stress, life events stress, and motives for drug use in predicting drug use and dependency among youth in Ibadan, Nigeria. The findings underscore the importance of addressing motivational factors, particularly coping and enhancement motives, in substance use prevention and intervention efforts. By targeting these underlying motivations and addressing environmental stressors, stakeholders can work towards reducing the burden of substance use disorders among Nigerian youth. Strategies focusing on stress management and providing

alternative recreational activities may be effective in preventing drug-related issues. Additionally, age-specific interventions targeting vulnerable age groups may be beneficial in curbing drug abuse. The cross-sectional design of the study limits conclusions about causality and temporal relationships between variables. Longitudinal research is needed to better understand the developmental trajectories of drug use and dependency among Nigerian youth. The reliance on self-report measures also raises concerns about social desirability bias and underreporting of sensitive behaviors like drug use. Future studies could employ objective measures of drug use (e.g., urine toxicology screens) and include more diverse samples to enhance generalizability. Further research is warranted to explore additional factors influencing drug-related behaviors and to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention programs in this population.

DECLARATIONS:

Declaration of Originality: "I declare that this manuscript is our original work and has not been submitted or published elsewhere. We have reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript".

Conflict of Interest: "I declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper."

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