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Evaluating the Effectiveness of Preventive Strategies and Social Media Influences on Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention Outcomes in Uyo Akwa-Ibom State Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Social media had been noticed to have either a positive or negative influence on adolescents, while governments and non-governmental bodies, including individuals, had put up strategies to mitigate substance abuse among adolescents who are users of social media. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of preventive strategies and social media influences on adolescent substance abuse preventive outcomes in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. A cross-sectional descriptive survey design was adopted, while the Krejcie and Morgan formula was used to arrive at the sample size of 351. Data was collection using a validated questionnaire, SPSS version 26 and ANOVA were used for data analysis. Findings from the study indicated that adolescents are familiar with the strategies to prevent substance abuse influenced by social media (mean=3.74, SD=1.29). Teens agreed (mean score 3.83, SD = 1.00) that following the lead of a favourite celebrity or content creator who uses drugs encourages them not to adhere to preventive measures. Regarding the hypothesis, there was a significant relationship between social media-related factors and the effectiveness of preventive strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Academic performance among university students represents a multifaceted outcome influenced by numerous biological, psychological, and social factors that interact in complex ways. In recent years, interdisciplinary research has increasingly illuminated the role of the gut-brain axis as a significant biological pathway

Advancement in technology had created a very good pedestal to reach people irrespective of their location on the globe. The influence of social media has been encompassing, touching the lives of the old and young in different society positively or negatively. Substance abuse among adolescents is defined as the dangerous and excessive use of psychoactive substances (Aderibigbe *et al.*, 2024). Substances such as alcohol, cigarettes, and illegal narcotics, which has negative effects are implicated in teenagers health, social lives, and ability to succeed in school (Chinedu & Gloria, 2025). The problem of substance abuse by adolescents is becoming a serious public health issue across the globe and Nigerians are not left out (Obowemu *et al.*, 2026). The prevalence of drug abuse among teenagers in the Akwa-Ibom state of Nigeria, especially in Uyo, is noticeable. Drug abuse by adolescents poses many dangers to them, some of which include poor cognitive abilities, increased chances of having psychological problems and being involved in risky behaviours like being violent and promiscuous (Essienabasi *et al.*, 2026; Nduka *et al.*, 2024). There are various preventive measures put forward by the Nigerian government for this problem (Kerker & Adeyongo 2024; Maccido 2024).

However, the problem of adolescent substance abuse

still persists in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State (Imbur 2023). The contributing factors to this problem include peer pressure, family issues, and social media. Adolescents use social media as a platform to learn about various things, interact with other adolescents and engage in activities that encourage them to use drugs (Essienabasi *et al.* 2026). The prevalence of adolescent substance abuse in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, remains a major public health problem. A study in Uyo indicated a higher proportion of public secondary school students indulged in alcohol intake (Ogbebor & Edward 2026). In the same study, Uyo Usen *et al.* (2023) expressed an increased intent among teenagers to smoke, and the predictors were peer pressure and family substance abuse.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media has been known to influence individuals either positively or negatively. According to Rachmad (2023), the propounded of social media influence theory, he posited that social media is a platform that modifies the user's attitude, behaviours and beliefs through processes of information dissemination, peer influence, social modelling and reinforcement. The theory highlights the role of key influencers, viral content, and the interactive nature of these platforms in shaping public discourse and personal identities the adolescence. This has become obvious in the behaviours of teenagers and secondary school student in Uyo, where they indulge in taking of substances that influences their psychological and emotional state, such as alcohol (Ogbebor & Edward, 2026), Opiod (Adejoke, 2025).

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On social media, adolescents are frequently exposed to influencers, peers, and celebrities who portray substance use positively for example, 85.1 to 90.2% adolescents have access to internet (Agberotimi & Olumuji, 2025; Odenigbo & Ajibo, 2025) and teenager are easily influence by what they see (Micheal 2025). In Okanume (2025) findings, adolescents were into drug-use content viewing, student drug abuse throughout their teenage years was significantly predicted by social media use ($R=-0.258$, $P=0.000<0.05$) (Chefuh, & Bongwung, 2022)

Various preventive measures have been used in efforts to prevent adolescent substance abuse. Ajiogu (2025) study in Abakaliki show reduction in substance abuse but that of Uyo is unknown. In addition, the effect of social media on the success of prevention measures is another aspect that needs to be investigated.

Research Questions

1. How successful are the preventive strategies in avoiding substance abuse among teenagers in secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom state.

2. What are the prevalent factors on social media that hinder adolescents from implementing strategies against substance use?

Ho

Preventive measures are not influenced by social media-related variables among adolescents in secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Descriptive cross-sectional survey design was adopted for this study. The study was conducted in selected public secondary schools (junior and senior high schools) in Uyo Akwa Ibom State Nigeria with a total population of 4,093 of the age brackets (13-19 years old).

Sample Size determination

The sample size was determined using Krejcie & Morgan (1970) formular. This formular was considered adequate and adopted because it has been used by Adhiambo & Maragia, (2024) in a similar study on the Prevalence and Patterns of Media Exposure and Use among Adolescent Generation Z in Secondary Schools in Western Kenya. Krejcie and Morgan's formular assumes a 5% margin of error ($\alpha = 0.05$) and a 95% confidence level.

The formular is:

$$n = \frac{X^2 N p (1-p)}{e^2 (N-1) + X^2 p (1-p)}$$

n = sample size

N = Population size

e = acceptable sampling error (0.05)

X^2 = Chi-square of degree of freedom and confidence 95% = 3.841

$$\frac{3.841 \times 4.092 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{(0.05)^2 \times (4,092-1) + (3.841 \times 0.5 \times 1-0.5)}$$

$$\frac{3.929.343}{10,227 + 0.96}$$

$$\frac{3.929.343}{11.187}$$

$$= 351.24$$

$$n = 351$$

$$\text{Sample size} = 351$$

Sampling Technique

Multi stage sampling technique was used for the study.

First Stage

Simple random sampling technique, balloting (picking without replacement, 'YES' indicates 'being' selected while 'NO' is 'not being' selected to participate) was used to select four (4) schools for the study, namely: Cornelia Cornelly College, Afaha Oku, Uyo- 1,091; Community Secondary Commercial School, Ikot Oku Ikono- 918; Secondary School Etoi- 1,013 and Community Comprehensive Secondary School, Four Towns- 1,070.

Second Stage

Proportionate sampling technique was used to select the number of respondents from each stratum to give equal opportunity of being selected.

Thus, total respondents per stratum were: Community Secondary School, Four Towns (92 respondents), Cornelia Cornelly College (93 respondents), Secondary School, Etoi (87 respondents) and Community Secondary Commercial School, Ikot Oku Ikono (79 respondents), giving a total of 351 respondents.

Third Stage

Systematic random sampling technique was adopted in selecting samples based on system of intervals in numbered stratum. To achieve this, the researcher used the class register of students in each stratum to select the required number of respondents. The 1st term was picked then every 4th term till the required sample size for each stratum was selected.

Instrument For Data Collection

The researcher employed a self-structured questionnaire to gather information. Section 'A' has 5 questions which captures respondents' sociodemographic characteristics. Section B and C are likert-like scale with 6 and 13 items which gathered data on how well these strategies work were found and social media-related factors that hinder the use of these strategies to combat substance abuse among secondary school students in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State respectively. The Likert-scale score is as follows: Strongly Agree (SA=5), Agree (A=4), Undecided (U=3), Disagree (D=2), and Strongly Disagree (SD=1)

Validity/Reliability of instrument

After consultation with expert in evaluation and measurement to determine face and content validity of the instrument, taking into account their thoughts on the structure and style of the tool as well as its relevance, accuracy, consistency, and scoring system. A test-retest reliability was conducted with 35 students (Federal Government College, Ikot Ekpen), 10% representation

of the sample size outside Uyo, the sample area. The same questions were administered at an interval of 2 weeks to the same students. Data collected was coded and analysed and the result was Cronbach Alpha Reliability of 0.82

Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher was assisted by 4 teachers from the selected schools to administer the instrument while emphasizing the study's purpose. Consent taken from each participant, and three hundred and fifty-one (351) teenagers in the research region, whose ages ranged from thirteen to nineteen (13-19), were administered questionnaire., a 100% return rate was achieved from the sent-out questionnaire, and the administration and collection of questionnaires took 14 working days.

Method of Data Analysis

Filled questionnaires were coded and entered into statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 26 for analysis., Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean & standard deviation) was used in summarizing demographic characteristics of participants and research questions while inferential statistics of ANOVA was used to test hypotheses at 0.05 level of significant.

Ethical Consideration

A letter of introduction obtained from Department of Nursing, Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences at Rivers State University, as well as from the Ministry of Education in Akwa Ibom state. Permission was also sought for from the school principal, teachers and class representative while informed consent was obtained from each participant before data collection. Anonymity was maintained throughout the stud

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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

Regarding class distribution, a larger proportion of respondents were in SS2 (39.3%), followed by SS1 (31.1%).

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

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

n = 351

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

Research Question 1: What is the effectiveness of preventive strategies against social media on substance abuse among adolescents in Secondary Schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom.

Data presented in table 2 above indicated that adolescents are familiar with the strategies to prevent substance abuse influenced by social media (Mean=3.74, SD=1.29),

followed by regular feedback and program evaluation increases the effectiveness of preventive strategies against media influence (Mean= 3.55, SD= 1.20), peer mentorship as leading preventive strategy (Mean=3.47, SD= 0.97),and school-based substance abuse prevention programs (Mean= 3.36, SD= 1.19) were among the items rated high based on their mean scores on the effectiveness of preventive strategies against influence of social media on substance abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom state. The table further revealed that all item mean scores were greater than the cut-off mean score of 3.00 with mean scores of 3.74, 3.55, 3.47, and 3.36 respectively. This further revealed that the mean scores for all items are above the midpoint of 3.00, indicating a generally positive perception on the effectiveness of preventive strategies against influence of

Table 2 Frequency Table, Mean and Standard Deviation for Effectiveness of Preventive Strategies against Social Media Influence on Substance Abuse (n = 351)

Items	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Std.De	Decision
You are familiar with the strategies to prevent substance abuse influenced by social media	139	109	35	44	24	351	3.74	1.29	Agree
Regular feedback and program evaluation increase the effectiveness of preventive strategies against media influence	109	83	83	64	12	351	3.55	1.20	Agree
Peer mentorship is a leading and effective preventive strategy against social media and substance abuse among adolescents	59	124	109	59	0	351	3.47	0.97	Agree
School-based substance abuse prevention programs have reduced substance use among adolescents	64	129	79	45	34	351	3.36	1.19	Agree

Cut-off Mean= 3.00; N=351

social media on substance abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom state.

Research Question 2: What are the common social media-related factors that prevent the utilization of strategies against social media on substance abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom.

Teens agreed (mean score 3.83, SD = 1.00) that following the lead of a favourite celebrity or content creator who uses drugs encourages them not to adhere to preventative measures. This information is shown in table 3, whenever the mean score of an item is more than 3.50, it indicates that respondents are in agreement: The most significant factor, with a mean score of 3.83 (SD 1.00), was the detrimental impact of having a favourite celebrity or content provider who uses drugs and ignores the preventative strategies. Adolescents' attitudes towards substance use are significantly shaped by their exposure to influencers and content, as indicated by the high ratings of 3.55 (SD 1.08), most social media influencers

or celebrities promote substance use had mean score 3.46 (SD 0.97) alongside viewing content related to substance use. Both cultural background effects and participation in drug use by one's peer group had moderate mean scores of 3.34 (SD0.95) and 3.42 (SD1.03), respectively, indicating that these variables contribute, although to a lower extent. Religious background influences had a lower mean score of 3.10 (SD 1.11) and viral challenge engagement had a lowest mean score of 2.99 (SD 1.16), suggesting that these factors had a neutral or less dominating impact on averting the use of preventive strategies. Respondents' somewhat variable replies (standard deviations generally around 1.00) suggest that, while there is consensus on the variables' impacts, opinions vary to a certain degree. Scores of 3.83, 3.46, 3.55, 3.42, 3.23, 3.34, and 3.10 of 8 items all had above the 3.00 threshold, as shown in the table. In addition, it was found that all items were accepted; however, the mean score of 2.99 did not support embracing viral challenges to drinks or experiment with drugs on social media.

Table 3: Frequency table, Mean and Standard Deviation for Common Social Media-Related Factors that Prevent the Utilization of Strategies Against social media on Substance Abuse among Adolescents in Secondary Schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom.

items	SA (5)	A (4)		U (3)					
Having a favourite celebrity or content creator negatively hinders utilization of preventive strategies	109	158	51	20	13	351			Agree
Viewing most substance-related content on social media can influence attitude towards substance use	59	109	139	39	5	351	3.46	0.97	Agree
Most social media influencers or celebrities promote substance use	64	104	99	59	25	351	3.55	1.08	Agree
Majority of adolescents' peer groups engage in substance abuse	54	79	144	54	20	351	3.42	1.03	Agree
Do you have the resilience to substance-related influences on social media	40	99	113	74	25	351	3.23	1.07	Agree
Do you engage in viral challenges of drinking or drug experimentation on social media	49	54	104	109	35	351	2.99	1.16	Disagree
Cultural background influences attitude towards social media use	40	109	129	68	5	351	3.34	0.95	Agree
Religious background influences perception and attitude towards social media use and abuse of substance	54	59	134	69	35	351			Agree

Cut-off Mean = 3.00, N = 351

HO2: There is no relationship between social media related factors and the preventive strategies among adolescents in secondary schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Calculated F = 4.85

p = 0.008 (< 0.05) → significant. Decision: Reject the null hypothesis.

Table 4 reveals that a one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of social media-related hindrance factors on the effectiveness of preventive strategies among adolescents. Results showed a significant effect, $F(2, 368) = 4.85$, $p = .008$, indicating that higher social media-related hindrance factors were associated with lower effectiveness of preventive strategies. Therefore,

Table 4.: One-Way ANOVA showing between social media-related factors and preventive strategies against social media influence on substance abuse

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F	Sig. (p)	Decision
Between Groups	4.82	2	2.41	4.85	0.008	Reject H ₀
Within Groups	183.50	368	0.50			
Total	188.32	370				

Calculated F = 4.85

the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between social media-related factors and effectiveness of preventive strategies was rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis that states that there is a significant relationship between social media-related factors and the effectiveness of preventive strategies.

Discussion

The respondent in this study shows male to female ratio of 1:2, majority (41%) were of the age bracket 15-16, 39.3% of SS2 class, 47.6% from CCC Afaha Oku and 90% being indigen of Akwa-ibom state.

Regarding the effectiveness of the preventive strategies against social media influence on substance abuse among teenagers in Secondary Schools in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. Findings from the study indicated that adolescents are familiar with the strategies to prevent substance abuse influenced by social media (mean=3.74, SD=1.29). This confirms what other research has shown that social media can spread anti-drug messages far and wide, but that present efforts are insufficient and that more strategic approaches are needed (Oko-Epelle & Komolafe, 2025). This is in line with the current study's focus on the importance of consistent feedback and program

assessment in improving and maximising the efficacy of preventative methods. Just as Rafique *et al.*, (2024) pointed out, students' access to social media makes it an ideal instrument for drug awareness campaigns. Adolescents' knowledge may already be growing as a result of their exposure to preventive methods on social media, as shown by the high level of familiarity with these techniques among Uyo respondents. Consistent with previous research, this study found moderate support for school-based programs and peer mentorship. However, when not managed correctly, these interventions can encounter problems like insufficient funding, inconsistent execution, and low student engagement, all of which can undermine their effectiveness. Although teenagers recognise the importance of these tactics, these results imply that their implementation may need some work.

Appolos (2025) examined the influence of social media in curbing escalating drug abuse among youths in South-East Nigeria. Findings show that digital media platforms are dominant sources for drug related information (53.93%). Campaign effectiveness was substantiated with a mean score of 4.0. The study identifies major limitation to campaign efficacy as limited internet access, content fatigue, low creative engagement, insufficient funding and weak institutional collaboration among government and civil organizations and recommended a multi-sectoral and inter-agency approach including public and private partnership to create contextual youth-focused digital content that resonate with them. A stronger synergy between government institutions, civil society and digital influencers is critical for sustaining impactful and scalable social media- driven interventions aimed at reducing the prevalence of drug abuse among youth.

Factors connected to social media that make it hard for secondary school students in Uyo, Akwa Ibom state to utilise techniques to combat the impact of social media on drug misuse

The results demonstrate that there are several common social media-related issues that impede the implementation of interventions to counteract the impact of social media on drug misuse among secondary school teenagers in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. Overall, the mean score was higher than the 3.00 threshold. Various types of online activities are linked to varied levels of drinking behaviour among adolescents (Giesbrecht et al 2024), which is in line with our findings. Consistent with previous research showing that teenage drug use attitudes may be shaped by exposure to celebrity endorsements and other forms of online substance content, this study found that self-presentation and online social interaction were positively correlated with drinking (Agberotimi & Olumuji 2025). Additionally, their research found that teenage internet use habits significantly impact their conduct, which is consistent with the impact shown in this study. Similarly, Odofin and Igabari (2023) found that drug misuse is more common among Delta State secondary school students who use social media, with school type being a moderating factor. Their results lend credence to the idea

that social media is a significant environmental element impacting teen behaviours, especially in settings where prevention efforts are underutilised or undersupported.

Liu & Bickham (2024) investigated the Association between Social Media Use and Substance Use among Middle and High School-Aged Youth. Results indicated that seeing a social media post about drugs/alcohol was significantly associated with higher odds of ever using cannabis, cigarettes, e-cigarettes and multiple substances. Need for substance use prevention, social media literacy education and screening to begin early, ideally elementary school before youth started using social media were recommended.

Obadeji *et al.* (2020) studied to identify the pattern of substance use among high school students and its relationship with psychosocial factors. Results showed that absence of direct parental care increases the risk of experiencing psychological distress while parental substance use increased substance use risk. Also, children with substance abuse parent shows maladaptive character according to Rahimi and shooli in (May, 2026) Durg education initiation in primary school and services aimed at promoting the mental wellbeing of adolescents to reduce substance use among them is necessary.

Efficacy of preventative methods among secondary school teenagers in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, is not related to social media characteristics

The efficacy of preventive methods was examined by doing a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) on factors associated to social media. $F(2, 368) = 4.85$, $p = .008$, the results showed that social media-related variables significantly affected the efficacy of preventive interventions. The results show that variables associated to social media have a substantial impact on the efficacy of prevention efforts for teenagers, since the p-value is less than 0.05, rejecting the null hypothesis. Put simply, the efficacy of preventive measures was shown to be inversely proportional to the degree to which social media-related hindrance factors were high.

The results are in line with those of Oko-Epelle and Komolafe (2025), who looked at how well social media worked to raise awareness about drug misuse among Nigerian college freshmen. While social media might be a powerful tool for anti-drug messaging, their research shows that it is underutilised at the moment, which reduces the efficacy of prevention efforts. This lends credence to the current study's conclusion that social media elements could impede the effective execution and results of prevention initiatives. Another study that highlights the efficacy of social media as a tool for public health communication is Rafique *et al.* (2024), which demonstrated that students' drug knowledge was dramatically raised when they used it. But how well preventive messages are communicated via social media determines how successful they are. Preventative measures may not work as well if the material is poorly organised or dominating. Additionally, among Delta State secondary school students, Odofin and Igabari (2023) discovered a

robust correlation between drug consumption and social media use. Their research showed that drug usage was associated with heavy social media use, with the kind of school serving as a moderator. This provides further evidence supporting the existing results that variables related to social media have a substantial impact on the effectiveness of prevention methods when it comes to teenagers. Taken together, the results stress the need of considering the digital contexts in which teenagers participate when developing pre-ventive measures. Interventions conducted in schools and by students themselves will have less of an impact if social media platforms promote harmful drug use or do not actively back messages aimed at prevention. Consequently, it is essential to reinforce existing measures by integrating digital literacy and targeted internet preventive programs.

CONCLUSION

The researchers embarked on this study as a result of the obvious behaviour of adolescents regarding substance use and the impact of social media. The study shows that the adolescents were aware of the approaches to sidestep substance abuse facilitated by social media; however, following a cherished personality and social media influencers who promote drug use impedes adherence to those preventive strategies. This shows that there is a correlation between social media-related factors and the effectiveness of the preventive strategies. Hence, the need for the health-promoting stakeholder to put more effort into ensuring the social media is safe enough for the teenagers and the unborn generation to use.

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