
INFLUENCE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE ON CLASS PARTICIPATION AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NASARAWA STATE

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Article Received: 26 April 2026

Article Revised: 16 May 2026

Published on: 05 June 2026

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DOI: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijrpa.5427>

ABSTRACT

The study sought to investigate the Perceived Influence of Substances Abuse on class participation of Senior Secondary School Students in Nasarawa State of Nigeria. The study was guided by two objectives, two research questions to guide the study and one hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey design with the population of one hundred and forty eight thousand, four hundred and ninety seven (148,497) persons and a sample size of seven hundred and forty four (744) participants were used for the study. The study employed questionnaire as an instrument for data collection and the data were analyzed using chi-square test statistics of mean and standard deviation. Findings showed that substance abuse has significant influence on class participation among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, these negative influence on participation indices such as note taking, study time. In conclusion, it is therefore, clearly a need for specific intervention programs for substance abusers among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State to discourage substance abuse and improve on their academic performance. It is recommended that there should a need for constant awareness programs on the dangers of substance abuse on academic performance of senior secondary school students if required action/education would be taken or given on time the students of Senior Secondary Schools may perform well academically without taking any substances.

INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as an important instrument for national development and individual growth because it equips learners with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values

needed for productive living. Secondary schools in Nigeria are established to provide students with academic and social experiences that prepare them for higher education and responsible citizenship. In achieving these educational goals, schools expect students to participate actively in classroom and school-related activities that enhance effective teaching and learning. Active involvement of students in classroom activities is therefore considered essential for meaningful learning and educational success. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014), education should encourage the development of individuals into effective and useful members of society through active participation in learning activities.

The emphasis on active involvement in learning activities makes class participation an important aspect of the educational process. Class participation refers to the degree to which students engage in classroom activities such as answering questions, asking questions, contributing to discussions, expressing opinions, and interacting with teachers and classmates during lessons. Active class participation enhances understanding of subject matter, improves communication skills, and promotes critical thinking among students. Students who participate effectively in classroom activities are more likely to develop confidence, remain attentive during lessons, and achieve better learning outcomes (Fassinger, 2015). Effective class participation, however, depends largely on students' behaviour, emotional stability, concentration, and willingness to learn.

Students' behaviour and emotional stability are strongly influenced by their developmental stage, particularly during adolescence. Most senior secondary school students fall within the adolescent age bracket of approximately fourteen to nineteen years, which is characterized by physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes. Adolescents are often curious, adventurous, and eager to experiment with new behaviours and experiences. During this stage, peer influence and the desire for social acceptance may expose students to risky behaviours such as substance abuse. Such behaviours may negatively affect students' concentration, emotional balance, and level of participation in classroom activities (Santrock, 2018). One of the risky behaviours increasingly observed among adolescents today is substance abuse.

Substance abuse has become a major social and educational problem affecting adolescents across the world. Substance refers to psychoactive drugs such as alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, heroin, nicotine, amphetamines, opioids, and other harmful substances that affect the functioning of the brain and alter behaviour (World Health Organization [WHO], 2014). Substance abuse refers to the repeated or excessive intake of these substances in ways that negatively affect an individual's physical, psychological, emotional, and social functioning.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2023), substance abuse among adolescents has continued to increase globally, thereby posing serious threats to students' educational development and future productivity. The growing involvement of adolescents in substance abuse has therefore become a source of concern to parents, teachers, school administrators, and society at large.

The concern about substance abuse among adolescents arises from its numerous negative effects on students' behaviour and academic engagement. Students who abuse substances often experience poor concentration, emotional instability, aggression, lack of motivation, memory problems, and poor interpersonal relationships. These behavioural and psychological problems interfere with students' ability to function effectively in school and participate actively in classroom activities. Bagley (2023) noted that adolescents involved in substance abuse frequently become inattentive during lessons, lose interest in academic activities, and exhibit disruptive behaviours that hinder effective learning. Such behavioural challenges therefore have direct implications for students' class participation.

Class participation is one of the major educational activities that may be negatively influenced by substance abuse among students. Effective class participation requires attentiveness, confidence, interest in learning, emotional stability, and meaningful interaction during lessons. Students who abuse substances may become withdrawn, inattentive, fearful, or disruptive in the classroom environment. Some may avoid answering questions, contributing to discussions, or engaging in collaborative learning activities with classmates. Others may display poor communication skills, low self-esteem, and reduced motivation toward learning. These behaviours can limit effective classroom interaction and reduce students' opportunities for academic growth and social development (Rocca, 2017). The influence of substance abuse on class participation is therefore an issue that deserves serious educational attention.

Educational concern about substance abuse is increasingly evident in many parts of Nigeria, including Nasarawa State. In recent years, teachers, parents, counselors, and school authorities in Nasarawa State have expressed concern about the growing involvement of secondary school students in the use of harmful substances such as alcohol, cigarettes, cannabis, opioids, and other psychoactive drugs. Observations by the researcher as a teacher indicate that some students involved in substance abuse often demonstrate poor classroom behaviour, lack concentration during lessons, and contribute less to classroom discussions. Some students also appear emotionally unstable and uninterested in learning activities, which negatively affects effective classroom participation and interaction.

Despite increasing awareness about substance abuse among adolescents, many students still engage in the practice without fully understanding its educational consequences. Several previous studies have examined substance abuse and students' academic behaviour in different parts of Nigeria. However, limited studies have specifically focused on the influence of substance abuse on class participation among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State. This gap in literature therefore creates the need for the present study to investigate the influence of substance abuse on class participation among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

Statement of the Problem

Substance abuse among adolescents has become a major concern in many societies across the world because of its negative effects on students' behaviour, health, and educational development. In Nigeria, the increasing involvement of secondary school students in the use of substances such as alcohol, cannabis, cigarettes, opioids, and other harmful drugs has generated concern among parents, teachers, school counselors, and government authorities. The abuse of these substances among students poses serious threats to their emotional stability, social adjustment, and effective participation in school activities.

The concern about substance abuse becomes more serious when its effects on classroom behaviour and participation are considered. In Nasarawa State, many students who abuse substances appear to demonstrate poor concentration, inattentiveness, emotional instability, and low interest in classroom activities. Some students become withdrawn during lessons, while others display disruptive behaviours that interfere with effective teaching and learning. Such behaviours reduce students' willingness and ability to participate actively in classroom discussions and other learning activities.

The researcher has also observed increasing adventurous behaviours among senior secondary school students, which may expose them to substance abuse and negatively affect their level of classroom participation. Despite efforts by parents, teachers, and school authorities to discourage substance abuse among students, the problem appears to persist in many secondary schools within the state. There is therefore the need to investigate the influence of substance abuse on class participation among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to assess the influence of substance abuse on class participation among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Identify the substances commonly abused by senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.
2. Ascertain the perceived influence of substance abuse on class participation among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

Research Questions

1. What are the substances commonly abused by senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State?
2. What is the perceived influence of substance abuse on class participation among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant influence of substance abuse on class participation among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the influence of substance abuse on class participation among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State. The design was appropriate because it allows the collection of data from a large population to describe existing conditions and respondents' perceptions. According to Emaikwu (2015), descriptive survey design is useful for explaining variables within a defined population. It was therefore used to obtain information on commonly abused substances and their perceived influence on students' class participation.

The study was conducted in Nasarawa State, located in North-Central Nigeria, consisting of thirteen Local Government Areas under three senatorial zones. The study area was selected due to increasing concerns about substance abuse among secondary school students and its possible impact on classroom participation.

The population of the study comprised 148,497 teachers and students from 284 public senior secondary schools in Nasarawa State (Nasarawa State Ministry of Education, 2019). A sample of 744 respondents, made up of 369 teachers and 375 students from 166 schools, was selected using the Taro Yamane sampling formula. A multi-stage sampling technique was

used, while simple random sampling ensured equal opportunity of selection for respondents across the senatorial zones.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled *Perceived Influence of Substance Abuse on Class Participation of Senior Secondary School Students Questionnaire (PISACPSSSQ)*. The instrument contained 35 items divided into sections. Section A covered demographic data, while Section B addressed substance abuse and its perceived influence on class participation, grades, assignment completion, and class attendance. A four-point Likert scale (SA = 4 to SD = 1) was used.

The instrument was validated by experts in Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation. A pilot study involving 84 respondents from NasarawaEggon Local Government Area established reliability using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, yielding a coefficient of 0.90.

Data were collected by the researcher with the help of trained assistants and analyzed using mean and standard deviation, with a 2.50 cut-off point. Chi-square was used to test hypotheses at 0.05 significance level.

RESULTS

The data collected for each research question is analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions.

Research Question One

What are the commonly abused substances among secondary school students in Nasarawa State?

Answer to this research question is presented in Table 1

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Commonly Abused Substances among Secondary School Students.

S/N	Items	N	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Std.D.	Decision
1.	Codeine is commonly abused by students	744	377	330	12	35	3.44	0.56	Accept
2.	Heroin is commonly taken by students	744	60	103	306	275	1.93	0.83	Reject
3.	Students in my school abuse madrax	744	33	12	530	169	1.88	0.41	Reject
4.	Students commonly abuse opium	744	43	120	306	276	1.90	0.75	Reject
5.	Benylin is commonly abused by students	744	620	120	3	1	3.83	0.16	Accept
6.	Tradyl is commonly abused	744	48	248			2.44	0.42	Reject

	by students				432	16			
7.	Tramadol is abused by students	744	638	96	9	1	3.84	0.16	Accept
8.	Students commonly abuse Tutolin	744	536	181	22	5	3.68	0.46	Accept
9.	Valium is commonly taken by students	744	520	180	39	5	3.63	0.38	Accept
10.	Students commonly take designer drugs	744	74	150	417	103	2.26	0.46	Reject
11.	Cocoa leaf is commonly abused	744	20	60	530	134	1.95	0.37	Reject
12.	Students commonly abuse Marijuana	744	570	155	11	8	3.31	0.47	Accept
13.	Tradyl is commonly abused by students	744	523	186	8	35	3.63	0.55	Accept
14.	Students commonly sniff solution	744	207	300	175	62	2.88	0.83	Accept
15.	Cigarette is commonly taken by students	744	375	211	152	6	3.28	0.66	Accept
	Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation						2.82	0.50	

The data presented in Table 1 shows the commonly substances among secondary school students in Nasarawa State. Responses on item 1 showed that, codeine having mean scores with corresponding standard deviations of 3.44 (0.56) was commonly abused among students. Item 5 indicated that, benylin having mean scores with corresponding standard deviations of 3.83 and 0.16 was among commonly abused substances. Item 7 showed that, tramadol with mean of 3.84 and standard deviation of (0.16) is another substance commonly abused among students. Similarly, respondents indicated on item 8 that, tutolin having mean scores with corresponding standard deviations of 3.68 and 0.46 was also commonly abused by students, Item 9 showed that, Valium having mean scores with corresponding standard deviations of 3.44 (0.56) was commonly abused among students. Responses regarding items 12 on marijuana (hemp), 13 on solution, 14 on alcohol and 15 on cigarette with respective means and their corresponding standard deviations of 3.31 (0.47); 3.63 (0.55); 2.88 (0.83) and 3.28 (0.66) all maintained that marijuana, solution, alcohol and cigarettes were commonly abused among students. The table shows that items 2 on heroin, 3 on madrax, 4 on opium, 6 on tradyl, 10 on designer drugs and 11 on cocoa leaf with mean scores and corresponding standard deviations of 1.93 (0.83); 1.88 (0.41); 1.90 (0.75); 2.44 (0.42); 2.26 (0.46); and 1.95 (0.37) respectively were all rejected by respondents as common among the students. This means that, codeine, benylin, tramadol, tutolin, Valium, marijuana, solution, alcohol and cigarette are substances commonly abused among secondary school students

4.1.2 Research Question Two

What is the perceived influence of substance abuse on class participation among secondary school students in Nasarawa State?

Answer to research question two is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Influence of Substance Abuse on Class Participation among Secondary School Students.

S/N	Items	N	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Std.D	Decision
16.	Substance abuse reduces students enthusiasm for participation in class activities	744	537	199	5	3	3.70	0.24	Accept
17.	Substance abuse shortens attention span of students and affects their participation in class activities	744	560	159	16	9	3.71	0.32	Accept
18.	Substance abuse creates a feeling among students that participating in class activities is stressful	744	525	123	55	41	3.52	0.73	Accept
19.	Substance abuse among students leads to withdrawal from class activities	744	720	24	0	0	3.97	0.03	Accept
20.	Substance abuse creates emotional instability among students that limits their participation in class	744	709	41	0	0	3.94	0.05	Accept
	Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation						3.77	0.27	Accept

The data presented in Table 2 shows the influence of substances abuse among secondary students in Nasarawa State. Responses on item 16 having mean scores of 3.70 with corresponding standard deviations 0.27 showed that, substance abuse reduces students' enthusiasm for participation in class activities. Responses on item 17 having mean scores of 3.71 with corresponding standard deviations of 0.32 indicated that, abuse of substances among students shortens attention span of students and affects their participation in class activities. On item 18 with mean scores of 3.52 with corresponding standard deviations of 0.73 respondents indicated that, abuse of substances among students makes them feel that, participating in class activities is stressful. Responses on item 19 with mean of 3.97 and standard deviation of 0.03 showed that, substance abuse among students lead to withdrawal from class activities. Similarly, respondents indicated on item 20 having mean scores of 3.94 with corresponding standard deviations and 0.05 that,

substance abuse creates emotional instability among students that limits their participation in class. A cluster means of 3.77 with a corresponding standard deviation of 0.27 indicated that, substance abuse influences class participation among secondary school students.

Hypothesis One

Substance abuse has no significant influence on class participation among secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

The result of this hypothesis is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Chi-Square Test of Significant of Influence of Substance Abuse on Class Participation among Secondary School Students in Nasarawa State.

	N	χ^2	Df	Sig.	α	Decision
Substance abuse has no significant influence on class participation among Senior Secondary School Students	744	507.30 ^a	12	.000	0.05	Rejected

($P < 0.05$)

Table 6 presents a summary of chi-square (X^2) test on influence of substance abuse on class participation among secondary school students. The result shows that, X^2 calculated value of 507.30 is greater than the critical value of 21.03 at 0.05 level of significance at 12 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that substance abuse has no significant influence on class participation among secondary school students is rejected. This indicates that, substance abuse has significant influence on class participation among secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Finding revealed that Substance abuse has significant influence on class participation among Senior Secondary School Students in Nasarawa State. This finding is in line with Abisola and Sanni (2015), who in their study on sub abuse, class participation and academic performance of secondary school students in Uyo found out that drug abuse, had significant negative influence on participation indices such as note taking, use of library resources, study time and academic performance. The finding also affirms by Muoti (2014) who revealed the influence of drug on students to include participation in learning activities. The researchers indicate that drug abuse leads to poor interpersonal relationships among senior secondary school students, often resulting in hostility, rudeness, aggressiveness, and increased incidents of school unrest. They observed that students engaged in drug abuse tend to have irregular class attendance

due to impaired cognitive function, decreased endurance, absenteeism, declining health, poor academic performance, and ultimately, school dropouts. This poor academic performance is linked to various factors such as lessened concentration, diminished memory, and reduced cognitive abilities due to substance misuse. They stated several factors that contribute to substance abuse among youth to include peer pressure, media influence, stress relief, curiosity, accessibility of drugs, influence from family members, poor parenting, and school-related issues. The vulnerability of the students are from the senior secondary schools is attributed to peer influence and the desire for social acceptance, the consequences of substance abuse among senior secondary school students, indicating issues such as low grades, class absenteeism, and difficulty meeting academic responsibilities. However, findings disagree with Abdu-Raheem (2013) who found significant relationship between family background, peer influence, family cohesion, and substance abuse. The reason for the difference in the results of the study does not erode the fact that substances has influence on academic performance of senior secondary school students. This is explained on the basis that substance abuse brings cognitive and behavioral problems that are obstacle to learning. It gives drug abuse a social and emotional focus at the expense of all other learning activities including participation in class. This leads to poor academic performance.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are made: Substance abuse has been found to have significant influence on academic performance variables such as class participation, earned grades in examinations. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendation was made: Ministry of education officials through regular awareness campaigns should continue to emphasize the perceived influence of substance abuse on class participation of senior secondary school students so that by avoiding such negative influence, they will achieve their goals of academic performance.

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