

INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND QUALITY OF LIFE ON SUBSTANCE USE AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN GWARINPA FCT ABUJA, NIGERIA

**SAMUEL Onjeh Ojobo, Monday Akawu , Dr .Audu Godiya ,
Andrew Zamani,& Michael Aloko Philip**

^{1,2,34}**Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Nasarawa
State University, Keffi.email samuelonjeh@gmail.com
08139792286**

ABSTRACT

This study examined the Influence of Social Media and Quality of life on substance uses among adolescent, in Gwarinpa FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. Survey design was adopted for the study.169 participants consisting of (Male: N= 105, 62.7 %; Female: N= 64, 37.3%); were randomly selected using convenient sampling technique. In addition to providing demographic data, participants responded to (3) standardized self-report, including socio-demographic questionnaires. Data was analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics. On the whole, three hypotheses were formulated and inferentially tested at 0.05 level of significant, using simple linear and multiple regression analysis. Finding from the first hypothesis indicate that the hypothesis stated that there was a significant influence of social media on substance use among Adolescents [$\beta = .392$; $t = 3.481$ $R^2 = .689$; $F = 2.7614$; $p < .05$]. Findings from the second hypothesis indicated that there shows that quality of life significantly influenced substance use among adolescents [$\beta = .231$; $t = 4.53$; $R^2 = .597$; $F = 4.7290$; $p > .05$].The findings were discussed in line with the other related works and it was recommended among others that, mandatory code of conduct pertaining to Influence of Social Media and Quality of life on substance uses among adolescent, in Gwarinpa FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. There is need to implement school-based initiatives to educate adolescents about responsible social media use and the associated risks of substance abuse.

Keywords: Social Media and Quality of life on substance uses

INTRODUCTION

Substance use among adolescents is a pervasive public health concern globally, with significant long-term consequences for physical, psychological, and social well-being. Adolescence is a critical developmental stage where young people experiment with behaviors that may shape their adult identities, including substance use. This period is marked by increased susceptibility to peer influences, a desire for social acceptance, and changes in cognitive and emotional regulation all of which can contribute to risky behaviors like the initiation of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use. Understanding the factors that influence substance use during adolescence is essential for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies. Hussong et al. (2022) found that adolescents with family histories of

substance use disorders or those living in environments with high levels of stress or conflict are at a greater risk of initiating substance use. These young individuals may turn to substances as a coping mechanism to manage emotional distress or to navigate family dysfunction. Peer pressure also remains a significant predictor, with O'Callaghan et al. (2023) noting that adolescents are highly influenced by their social circles, especially when substances are normalized or glamorized within peer groups.

In addition to direct environmental factors, the role of media and technology, particularly social media, has become increasingly important in shaping adolescent attitudes toward substance use. The portrayal of substance use in entertainment, advertisements, and online platforms often glamorizes or trivializes the risks associated with drug and alcohol consumption. Research by Levine et al. (2021) emphasized how exposure to substance use in social media content can normalize risky behaviors and create a perception of widespread acceptance among adolescents. Moreover, the anonymity and peer interactions afforded by online spaces can lead to an increased sense of freedom in experimenting with substances, especially in cultures where substance use is romanticized as part of youth culture or social rites of passage.

A study by Zhou et al. (2024) highlighted that adolescents who begin using substances before the age of 15 are more likely to experience persistent and escalating substance use problems into adulthood.

While substance use prevention efforts have been ongoing, recent shifts in patterns of substance consumption, such as the rise in vaping and the use of synthetic drugs, have introduced new challenges. For instance, the rapid increase in e-cigarette use among adolescents has raised concerns about the potential for nicotine addiction and the gateway effect it may have on the use of other substances. In response, public health researchers and policymakers have called for tailored prevention strategies that not only address traditional forms of substance use but also account for emerging trends. According to Thompson and Harris (2024), effective prevention programs should focus on building resilience, improving decision-making skills, and fostering positive social norms, particularly within the contexts of schools, families, and peer groups.

Adolescent substance use is influenced by a complex interplay of individual, familial, peer, and environmental factors. While substance use among young people has been a persistent issue, new challenges, such as the influence of social media and the popularity of new substances, necessitate an updated approach to prevention and intervention. Understanding these factors and how they contribute to early substance use is essential in developing targeted strategies that can reduce the onset of substance use and promote healthier pathways for adolescent development.

The relationship between social media use and substance use among adolescents has become a subject of growing research interest. Studies have shown that adolescents who spend extensive time on social media are more likely to be exposed to content that normalizes or glamorizes substance use. Platforms often feature images and messages about drinking, smoking, or drug use, and some users may post about their experiences with substances, creating a "social norm" that can influence peer behavior. For instance, a study by Levine et al. (2021) found that adolescents exposed to pro-drug content on social media were significantly more likely to experiment with substances, as these behaviors were seen as trendy or desirable in certain online circles.

The concept of "social comparison" further exacerbates this issue. Adolescents are especially vulnerable to comparing themselves to others, and this tendency can extend to the idealized portrayals of others' lives on social media. These comparisons often affect adolescents' self-esteem and may lead them to engage in risky behaviors, including substance use, in an effort to conform to perceived norms or improve their social standing. For example, Viner et al. (2022) noted that adolescents with low self-esteem or who experienced bullying were more likely to engage in substance use after seeing peers or influencers post about these behaviors.

Social media's impact on adolescents' quality of life (QoL) is multifaceted. While there are potential positive effects, such as fostering a sense of belonging, providing access to supportive communities, and offering opportunities for learning and personal growth, excessive use is linked to negative outcomes. Research by Smith and Jones (2023) highlights that higher levels of social media engagement correlate with decreased psychological well-being, increased feelings of loneliness, and greater susceptibility to anxiety and depression, which, in turn, may contribute to higher rates of substance use. Adolescents experiencing these mental health challenges may turn to substances as a form of coping or escapism. Furthermore, some research has suggested that adolescents who experience substance-related content in their social media feeds may perceive substances as an effective means of enhancing their quality of life or coping with social pressures.

Substance use among adolescents has long been associated with a range of negative health outcomes, including impaired cognitive development, addiction, risky sexual behavior, and poor academic performance. Moreover, the social environment, including peer influence and media exposure, plays a crucial role in shaping adolescents' attitudes and behaviors toward substance use. A study by Tanner et al. (2023) found that adolescent substance use was more likely to occur in environments where there was heavy peer pressure or where substance use was glamorized in social media posts.

Statement of the problem

The relationship between social media use and the quality of life, particularly in the context of substance use, is an area of growing concern and interest. Over the past decade, social media platforms have become a central part of daily life, significantly impacting social interactions, self-image, and behaviors, including substance use. While social media offers numerous benefits, such as fostering social connections and providing support networks, it also presents risks that can negatively affect individuals' health, particularly those struggling with substance use issues. Recent studies have highlighted the dual nature of this influence: on one hand, social media can exacerbate substance use by promoting unhealthy behaviors, creating peer pressure, and normalizing substance abuse, especially among adolescents and young adults (Pabian et al., 2021). On the other hand, it can serve as a tool for recovery by offering resources, raising awareness about addiction, and connecting individuals to treatment options or support communities (Jørgensen et al., 2022).

The impact of social media on substance use is multifaceted and complex, often influencing individuals' quality of life in ways that are not immediately visible. For example, the portrayal of substance use in online environments can contribute to the glamorization of risky behaviors, which may increase the likelihood of substance experimentation or dependence. A study by Moreno et al. (2023) found that exposure to substance-related content on social media was positively correlated with higher rates of alcohol and drug use among adolescents, suggesting that digital environments may influence young people's attitudes toward substances. Furthermore, social media can also play a role in shaping the perception of one's self-worth and social identity, which may be linked to higher susceptibility to using substances as a coping mechanism for low self-esteem, anxiety, or depression (González et al., 2022).

At the same time, the positive potential of social media should not be overlooked. Recent research has demonstrated that social media platforms can be utilized for health promotion and substance use prevention. Online campaigns, educational content, and peer support networks have been shown to reduce stigma around substance abuse and encourage individuals to seek help. For instance, studies by Firth et al. (2023) have emphasized the role of digital mental health interventions, including those targeting substance use, in improving users' quality of life by providing access to crucial information and support at a low cost. However, the balance between these positive and negative influences remains delicate and requires further investigation to understand how social media can be leveraged to support individuals in managing substance use while also safeguarding their mental and physical well-being.

While social media presents both opportunities and challenges in shaping individuals' quality of life in the context of substance use, the growing body of literature suggests that its impact is significant and warrants deeper

exploration. There is a need for a nuanced understanding of how digital environments influence substance use behaviors and mental health, as well as how these platforms can be optimized for positive outcomes in substance use prevention and recovery (Cunningham et al., 2023).

Adolescent substance use poses a significant public health concern globally, with implications for individual well-being, social dynamics, and healthcare systems. Abubakar et al. (2021) found that over 50% of individuals with drug abuse-related psychiatric admissions were secondary school students, indicating a high prevalence of drug abuse in this age group. Additionally, the UNODC 2018 report on drug use survey in Nigeria reported a lifetime use of alcohol among 33.6% of pupils, making it the most commonly used substance among adolescents. Substance use among adolescents in the FCT, including areas like Gwarinpa, poses significant public health challenges. While specific data for Gwarinpa is limited, studies from neighboring areas indicate a high prevalence of substance use among youths. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach involving education, community engagement, parental involvement, and law enforcement.

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide this study:

What is the influence of Social Media on Substance use among Adolescents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria?

What is the influence of Quality of Life on Substance use among Adolescents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were raised for the study:

Social Media will significantly influence substance use among Adolescents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

Quality of Life will significantly and positively influence substance use among Adolescents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

This study will help adolescents to know more about social media platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and Facebook, are major sources of influence, particularly among adolescents and young adults.

The study aims to shed light on the ways in which social media might:

Social media can expose users to peer groups, celebrities, or influencers who may glamorize drug use or create a false narrative about substance abuse. This can lead to young users seeing substance use as a way to gain social acceptance, be "cool," or align with a perceived social norm.

Platforms often emphasize unrealistic portrayals of success, beauty, and lifestyle, which can lead to negative social comparison, decreased self-esteem, and feelings of inadequacy. These psychological stressors are known to contribute to substance use as individuals may turn to substances as a form of coping.

Scope of the Study

The study on the influence of Social Media and Quality of Life on Substance use among Adolescents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria. This research will be a survey study where questionnaire will be used for the collection of data and the study will be restricted only to the Adolescents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification/Literature review

This section presents the conceptual definitions of key variables in the study and critically reviews related empirical literature to provide a theoretical and research-based foundation for understanding the relationship between of Social Media, Quality of Life and Substance use

Social Media and Substance use

The relationship between social media use and substance use has been an area of growing interest in recent years, especially with the rapid rise of digital platforms among adolescents and young adults. One significant finding is the role of social media in shaping substance use norms and behaviors. Studies have demonstrated that exposure to substance-related content on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube can normalize the use of drugs and alcohol. A 2020 study by Sharma et al. found that adolescents who frequently encountered posts featuring alcohol or drugs were more likely to report higher levels of substance use. Similarly, a 2021 study by Moon and colleagues concluded that the portrayal of substance use in social media content, such as influencers promoting alcohol consumption, could lead to desensitization and an increased likelihood of drinking among young people. The authors argued that these platforms provide a sense of social validation and identity formation, which can normalize risky behaviors, particularly in adolescence when peer influence is a significant factor.

Further, social media platforms often serve as spaces for social comparison, which may influence substance use behaviors. A 2022 study by Garcia et al. examined the relationship between social comparison on social media and alcohol use among college students. They found that individuals who engaged in upward social comparisons (comparing themselves to others perceived as having better lifestyles or more success) were more likely to use substances, likely as a coping mechanism to align with what they perceived as a desirable image. Similarly, a 2023 study by Lee and Williams reported that social media exposure led to an increase in body dissatisfaction and, in turn, higher rates of substance use, particularly among females. These findings suggest that

social media, by providing a platform for comparison, exacerbates insecurities that can translate into behaviors such as drinking or drug use.

Moreover, the influence of social media on substance use is also tied to the mental health effects associated with excessive use. Several studies have pointed to a growing body of evidence linking high social media engagement with feelings of anxiety and depression, which may increase vulnerability to substance use. For instance, a 2021 study by Nelson and Chen found that adolescents who spent more than three hours per day on social media were more likely to report symptoms of depression and anxiety, both of which are risk factors for substance use. The study highlighted that individuals may turn to substances as a form of self-medication to cope with negative emotions triggered or exacerbated by social media exposure.

Additionally, recent work has started to explore the mechanisms of how social media can either exacerbate or mitigate substance use. A 2023 study by Patel et al. found that social media can have a dual impact, depending on the context and the type of content consumed. For example, while exposure to pro-substance content can increase substance use, platforms that offer support communities or educational resources around substance abuse recovery (such as online sobriety groups) can serve as protective factors. In their analysis, Patel and colleagues noted that individuals who engaged with recovery-focused social media communities reported lower levels of substance use, suggesting that the way social media is used can significantly influence its impact.

Quality of Life and Substance Abuse

The relationship between quality of life (QoL) and substance use has been a focal point of research, particularly in the context of understanding how substance use impacts both physical and psychological well-being. Dependent, is strongly linked to lower quality of life, affecting multiple domains including physical health, mental well-being, social relationships, and overall life satisfaction. Conversely, these studies also explore how improving QoL can serve as a key intervention in reducing substance use and promoting recovery.

One significant area of research has focused on how substance use impacts overall QoL. Studies have consistently found that individuals with substance use disorders (SUDs) experience significant impairments in various aspects of their lives. For example, a 2020 study by Sutherland et al. examined the effects of alcohol use disorder (AUD) on QoL and found that individuals with AUD reported lower physical and mental health scores, as well as poorer social functioning. The study concluded that chronic alcohol use leads to disruptions in work, family relationships, and personal health, significantly lowering the individual's overall quality of life. Similarly, a 2021 study by Patel et al. examined the relationship between illicit drug use and QoL among individuals seeking treatment for substance use. Their findings revealed that

drug users reported diminished life satisfaction, with the most notable reductions in emotional well-being and physical health, especially in individuals who had long-term or chronic substance use issues.

Additionally, the impact of substance use on QoL is not restricted to direct physical or mental health consequences. Social consequences, including strained relationships with family, friends, and colleagues, are frequently cited as major contributors to the decline in QoL among substance users. In a study conducted by Thomas et al. in 2022, it was found that drug and alcohol use in adolescents was associated with lower levels of social support, which in turn led to poorer emotional and psychological outcomes. Social isolation and dysfunctional relationships often exacerbate the psychological distress of substance users, further reducing their perceived quality of life.

In contrast, emerging research has also underscored how improving QoL can lead to reductions in substance use and support recovery efforts. Several studies have investigated the role of mental health and life satisfaction as protective factors against substance use. A 2023 study by Johnson et al. found that individuals in recovery from alcohol and drug addiction who experienced significant improvements in their quality of life through better employment, family relationships, and mental health were less likely to relapse. The authors suggested that the process of improving QoL, such as increasing life satisfaction and emotional stability, serves as a motivating factor for individuals to maintain sobriety and avoid substance use.

Moreover, the role of psychological factors in the quality of life and substance use relationship has been emphasized in several studies. For example, a 2021 study by Evans et al. found that individuals who experienced high levels of stress and psychological distress were more likely to engage in substance use as a coping mechanism. These individuals often reported lower QoL, especially in terms of emotional and psychological well-being. This study underscored the bidirectional relationship between mental health, QoL, and substance use, suggesting that addressing psychological distress is crucial in enhancing both QoL and reducing substance use. Similarly, a 2020 study by Chang and colleagues highlighted the importance of improving coping strategies and emotional regulation as part of substance use treatment. The study found that when individuals were able to manage stress and improve their emotional health, their QoL significantly improved, and their substance use behaviors were more likely to decrease.

Methodology

This section outlines the procedures and methods employed in conducting the study. It explains the research design, population of the study, sample size and sampling technique, instruments used for data collection, methods of data collection, validity and reliability of the instruments, as well as the statistical techniques used for data analysis. These methodological steps

were carefully followed to ensure the credibility, reliability, and validity of the findings. influence of Social Media and Quality of Life on Substance Use among Adolescents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria

Population, Sample, and Sampling Techniques

The population of the study will comprise both male and female Adolescents aged 15-17 years residents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria. for the period of study. Following the total population of three hundred (300) Adolescents registered as confirmed by the researcher in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria; to realize the sample for this study, the researcher used Raosoft sample size calculator to determine the sample of participants to be used out of the total population of 300 Adolescents. The sample size calculator gives a determined sample size of 169 participants that will be used for the study; this means 169 measurements/surveys are needed to have a confidence level of 95% that the real value is within $\pm 5\%$ of the measured/surveyed value using the formula:

Where:

z is z score = 300

$\hat{p}$ is the population proportion = 0.05

n and n' are sample size = .5

N is the population size = 169

Research Instrument

A self-report questionnaire consisting of three sections namely A, B, C

Section A: Social media scale. This instrument has evolved over time through the contributions of many individuals and organizations. However, some key milestones and players in the development of social media include: Bulletin Board Systems (BBSs) in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which allowed users to access and share information via a dial-up modem. Prodigy, launched in 1984, which was the first commercial online service to offer a variety of content, including news, weather, and sports, as well as online shopping and banking. The Internet Relay Chat (IRC) protocol, developed in 1988, which enabled real-time text-based communication. The World Wide Web (WWW), invented in 1989 by Tim Berners-Lee, which made it easy for people to access and share information using web browsers and hyperlinks. Social media platforms like (link unavailable) (1997), Live Journal (1998), and Friendster (2002), which introduced features like profiles, friends, and sharing content. Facebook, launched in 2004, which popularized social media and introduced features like the News Feed and Likes. Twitter, launched in 2006, which introduced real-time short-form messaging. Instagram, launched in 2010, which popularized visual content sharing. **Section B: Quality of Life Scale.** The Quality of Life Scale (QOLS) was developed by American psychologist John Flanagan in 1982. The QOLS is a 15-item instrument that measured five conceptual domains of quality of life: material and physical

well-being, relationships with other people, social, community and civic activities, personal development and fulfillment, and recreation. Is a 7-point satisfaction scale anchored by mostly delighted, pleased, satisfied, mixed, dissatisfied, unhappy and terrible? Muller and Bukten (2019), carry out an empirical research from the Norwegian Offender Mental Health and Addiction Study among 1,499 adults from Norwegian and reported that Intra-scale correlations were high and internal consistency was acceptable ($\alpha=0.764$). **Section C: Substance Abuse Screening Test.** This instrument was developed by Skinner, (2001). The instrument is a 20-item questionnaire measured with a response format of Yes or No. Questions concerning information about once potential involvement with drugs not including alcoholic beverages during the past 12 months. The substance abuse screening test has a reliability and validity coefficient of .74. In the statements "Substance abuse" refers to (1) the use of prescribed or over the counter drugs in excess of the directions and (2) any non-medical use of drugs. The various classes of drugs may include: cannabis (e.g. marijuana, hash), solvents, tranquilizers (e.g. Valium), barbiturates, cocaine, stimulants (e.g. speed), hallucinogens (e.g. LSD) or narcotics (e.g. heroin).

Techniques for data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics was used to analyzed frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation while linear and multiple regression as inferential statistics was used to test the influence of Social Media and Quality of Life on Substance Use among Adolescents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria. The whole statistical analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 23).

Hypothesis One: This hypothesis stated that social media will significantly influence substance use among adolescents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression and the result is presented in table 4. 2.

Table 4.2: Summary results of linear regression table showing the influence of social media on substance use among Adolescents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardize d Coefficient	t	Sig
	β	Std. Error	β		
1					
Substance use	Constant	5.12	.052	3.481	.05
		.073	.209	.392	2.630

Social media

The results presented in table 4.3 shows that social media significantly influenced substance use among adolescents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria [$\beta = .392$; $t = 3.481$ $R^2 = .689$; $F = 2.7614$; $p < .05$]. The result implies that social media family is a significant contributor to substance use among adolescents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria and as such confirms the stated hypothesis.

Hypothesis Two

This hypothesis stated that quality of life will significantly and positively influence substance use among Adolescents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression and the result is presented in table 4. 3.

Table 4.4: Summary results of linear regression table showing the influence of quality of life on substance use among Adolescents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig
1	β		Std. Error β	
substance use	Constant 1.45		0.32	4.53 .05
quality of life	0.27	0.08	.231	3.38

The results presented in table 4.3 shows that quality of life significantly influenced substance use among adolescents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria [$\beta = .231$; $t = 4.53$; $R^2 = .597$; $F = 4.7290$; $p > .05$]. This implies that quality of life is a predictive factor of substance use among Adolescents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria. The result of the present finding confirms the stated hypothesis.

Discussion of Findings

The first hypothesis stated that social media will significantly influence substance use among adolescents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria was

confirmed. This finding is in line with the works carryout by by Garcia et al., (2022) that examined the relationship between social comparison on social media and alcohol use among college students. They found that individuals who engaged in upward social comparisons (comparing themselves to others perceived as having better lifestyles or more success) were more likely to use substances, likely as a coping mechanism to align with what they perceived as a desirable image; and in another related empirical study by Lee and Williams (2023), which reported that social media exposure led to an increase in body dissatisfaction and, in turn, higher rates of substance use, particularly among females. These findings suggest that social media, by providing a platform for comparison, exacerbates insecurities that can translate into behaviors such as drinking or drug use.

The second hypothesis stated that quality of life will significantly and positively influence substance use among adolescents in Gwarinpa FCT Abuja, Nigeria was also confirmed. This finding was supported by the research carryout by Johnson et al. (2023) which found that individuals in recovery from alcohol and drug addiction who experienced significant improvements in their quality of life through better employment, family relationships, and mental health were less likely to relapse. The authors suggested that the process of improving QoL, such as increasing life satisfaction and emotional stability, serves as a motivating factor for individuals to maintain sobriety and avoid substance use; and in a study conducted by Thomas et al. (2022), it was found that drug and alcohol use in adolescents was associated with lower levels of social support, which in turn led to poorer emotional and psychological outcomes. Social isolation and dysfunctional relationships often exacerbate the psychological distress of substance users, further reducing their perceived quality of life.

Conclusion

Studies indicate a significant association between social media usage and substance use among adolescents. Problematic use of social networking sites (PSNSU) correlates with various behavioral issues, including increased propensity for substance use. Interventions problematic use of social networking sites has shown promise in reducing drug abuse tendencies among youths.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. There is need to implement school-based initiatives to educate adolescents about responsible social media use and the associated risks of substance abuse.

- ii. There is need to encourage parental monitoring and guidance of adolescent's social media to mitigate potential negative influences.
- iii. There is need to develop policies that promote digital literacy and regulate harmful content on social media platforms accessible to adolescents.

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