

Substance Abuse as a Determinant of Truancy and Social Maladjustment among Secondary School Students in Ibadan

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Abstract

Adolescent is a pivotal stage in life and young people are subjected to numerous social and environmental factors that might make them vulnerable to substance use. Substance abuse in secondary school students has become a significant social and educational problem because of its bad impact on attendance, academic participation, and the social integration of those who attend school. Contrary to the present effort on, there are still reports that indicate that substances related truancy and social misfit among secondary school students in Ibadan, Oyo State. This study investigates drug abuse as a predictor of truancy and social maladjustment among junior secondary school students in Ibadan. Descriptive research was used in the study. The study population for this research is secondary school students in Ibadan, a sample of 400 respondents was selected through multistage sampling technique. A structured questionnaire entitled Substance Abuse, Truancy and Social Maladjustment Questionnaire (SATSMQ) was used to collect data. Facial and content validity were done on the instrument and it produced a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.83. Using descriptive and inferential statistics, a total of 372 fully completed questionnaires were retrieved and analysed at 0.05 level of significance. Results also showed that with substance abuse there was a positive correlation with truancy ($r=0.62$, $p<0.05$) and with social maladjustment ($r=0.58$, $p<0.05$). Type of school ($t=4.12$, $p<0.05$), accommodation ($F=6.35$, $p<0.05$), and peer pressure ($\beta=0.44$, $p<0.05$) were significant predictors of substance abuse and truancy. Substance abuse, truancy, peer pressure, family factors and school environment together predicted social maladjustment ($R^2 = 0.55$ $F = 92.31$ $p < 0.05$) with substance abuse as the best predictor ($\beta = 0.30$). The study concluded that substance use was a major predictor of truancy and social maladjustment among the participants. The study recommended that schools should bolster counselling and substance abuse prevention programmes, and should parents, along with educational stakeholders, increase supervision, and offer supportive environments to facilitate behavioural adjustments of students.

Keywords: Abuse, Maladjustment, Students, Substance, Truancy

Introduction

Education remains one of the most important instruments for social development, individual growth and national transformation. Beyond the acquisition of academic knowledge, secondary education plays a vital role in shaping adolescents' moral values, social behaviour and emotional development. It is during this stage that young people transition from childhood to adulthood and develop attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that influence their future lives. Schools are therefore expected to provide an environment where students acquire not only intellectual competence but also social responsibility, emotional stability and acceptable behavioural patterns. However, increasing behavioural problems among adolescents have become a major concern for educators, parents, counsellors and social workers in Nigeria. Among these behavioural problems, substance abuse, truancy and social maladjustment have emerged as significant challenges affecting students' academic performance, psychosocial well-being and future development (Omopo, 2025; Oaikhenana & Egbochuku, 2025).

Social maladjustment has become one of the most pressing behavioural problems among secondary school students. It refers to the inability of an individual to adapt appropriately to accepted social norms, school regulations and interpersonal relationships. Socially maladjusted students often display behaviours such as aggression, hostility, disobedience, emotional instability, withdrawal, poor peer relationships and resistance to authority. Such behaviours interfere with effective learning, disrupt school discipline and hinder healthy social interaction. Adolescents experiencing social maladjustment often struggle academically and socially because they find it difficult to regulate their emotions and establish positive relationships with teachers and classmates. Studies have shown that socially maladjusted adolescents are more likely to experience poor academic achievement, school dropout and involvement in antisocial activities (Akpunne, 2020; Oaikhenana & Egbochuku, 2025).

Aggression, emotional instability and poor peer relationships are among the major manifestations of social maladjustment. Aggressive behaviours, including bullying, fighting and verbal abuse, create an unsafe learning environment and negatively affect the emotional well-being of both victims and perpetrators. Likewise, emotionally unstable students often experience anxiety, frustration and poor emotional control, making them vulnerable to misconduct and poor academic engagement. Adolescents who experience peer rejection or associate with delinquent peer groups are more likely to develop antisocial behaviours, disregard school rules and become resistant to authority. Consequently, poor social adjustment contributes significantly to indiscipline and weak commitment to educational goals among secondary school students (Akpunne, 2020; Omopo, 2025).

Truancy is another major behavioural problem confronting secondary schools in Nigeria. It refers to habitual absence from school or classes without legitimate permission or acceptable reasons. Truancy may involve complete absence from school, skipping classes,

arriving late or leaving school before the end of official hours. Persistent absenteeism disconnects students from academic activities and exposes them to negative influences outside the school environment. Research has consistently linked truancy with poor academic performance, school dropout, juvenile delinquency and emotional instability. Adolescents who frequently absent themselves from school often lose interest in learning and become increasingly involved in risky social behaviours (Igwe, 2022; Omopo, 2025).

Several factors contribute to truancy among secondary school students. These include peer pressure, poor family supervision, emotional difficulties, negative school experiences and substance abuse. Some students avoid school because of poor relationships with teachers, lack of motivation or feelings of alienation from school activities. Others intentionally skip classes to spend time with friends engaged in antisocial activities. As truancy becomes habitual, students gradually lose attachment to the school system, thereby increasing their vulnerability to criminal behaviour, gang involvement and other social problems. Consequently, educational stakeholders have become increasingly concerned because chronic truancy threatens both students' educational attainment and their future social adjustment (Igwe, 2022; Omopo, 2025). Family-related factors have also been consistently linked to these outcomes; weak family support and disrupted parental relationships have been found to predict recidivism-related behaviour and to undermine the psychosocial well-being of secondary school students, while family background more broadly remains a strong predictor of delinquent behaviour among adolescents (Fatoye, Adebisi & Isaac, 2018; Fatoye, 2021a; Fatoye & Ayegbusi, 2023).

Substance abuse has also become a growing public health and educational concern among adolescents worldwide, including Nigeria. It involves the harmful or inappropriate use of psychoactive substances such as alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, tramadol, codeine syrup and other drugs. Adolescents often begin experimenting with these substances because of curiosity, peer influence, family exposure, emotional stress or the desire for social acceptance. Unfortunately, repeated use frequently progresses into dependence, leading to serious behavioural, psychological and academic consequences. Recent studies indicate that substance abuse is becoming increasingly common among Nigerian secondary school students, particularly in urban communities where access to these substances has become easier (Kolawole, Ogunyemi & Lucas, 2025; Lawal *et al.*, 2025).

The pattern of substance use among Nigerian adolescents has changed considerably in recent years. While alcohol and tobacco were previously the most commonly abused substances, increasing numbers of students now misuse tramadol, codeine syrup, cannabis, inhalants and prescription medications. The misuse of these substances impairs concentration, judgement, emotional regulation and self-control, thereby increasing students' involvement in violence, indiscipline and other behavioural problems. Research has further shown that adolescents who initiate substance use at an early age are more likely to develop dependence

and experience long-term psychosocial difficulties. Peer influence remains one of the strongest predictors of both initiation and continued substance use among secondary school students (Nabofa, 2021; Onigbogi, Ojo & Babalola, 2023).

The relationship between substance abuse and truancy has attracted increasing attention among researchers because both behaviours frequently occur together. Students who abuse drugs often display reduced motivation for learning, weak attachment to school and poor attendance. Psychoactive substances impair concentration and reduce students' willingness to participate actively in academic activities. Many adolescents skip school specifically to engage in drug use or spend time with peers who encourage substance abuse and other deviant behaviours. Consequently, substance abuse has been identified as one of the major psychosocial factors contributing to persistent truancy among secondary school students in Ibadan and other parts of Nigeria (Omodo, 2025).

Similarly, substance abuse contributes significantly to social maladjustment among adolescents. Psychoactive substances impair emotional regulation, decision-making and interpersonal functioning, resulting in behaviours such as aggression, hostility, emotional instability and poor social relationships. Drug-dependent adolescents frequently experience conflicts with teachers, parents and peers and may become involved in theft, violence and other criminal activities to sustain their drug use. Research has consistently demonstrated that adolescents who abuse substances are more likely to experience behavioural and social adjustment problems than their non-using counterparts (Akpunne, 2020; Ominowa & Akanbi, 2025). Exposure to conflict within the home, including intimate partner violence, has similarly been shown to compromise the well-being of family members and may create conditions that predispose adolescents to maladaptive behaviour (Fatoye & Fatunbi, 2024).

The interaction between substance abuse, truancy and social maladjustment represents a significant challenge for schools, families and society. These behavioural problems undermine students' academic achievement, emotional well-being and future social functioning while increasing the burden on educational institutions and social welfare services. Their increasing prevalence highlights the need for evidence-based interventions capable of addressing the underlying psychosocial factors responsible for these behaviours.

Social workers play a crucial role in preventing and addressing adolescent behavioural problems through assessment, counselling, advocacy, family intervention and school-based support services. Schools provide an ideal setting for early identification and intervention because adolescents spend a considerable proportion of their time within the educational environment. Understanding the relationship between substance abuse, truancy and social maladjustment among secondary school students is therefore essential for developing effective prevention programmes, counselling strategies and social work interventions that promote positive behaviour, improve school attendance and enhance students' overall psychosocial well-being. Consequently, this study seeks to examine

substance abuse as a determinant of truancy and social maladjustment among secondary school students in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State.

Drug abuse among secondary school students in Nigeria has now become a disturbing social and educational problem in Nigerian as a result of its adverse effect on the students' behaviour, school attendance and their total psychosocial wellbeing. The few studies available on adolescent substance abuse and truancy in Ibadan have not adequately provided insight into whether substance abuse is a predictor of truancy and social maladjustment among secondary school students in Ibadan as a case. To date the research has generally addressed substance abuse or adolescent delinquency on its own and there is limited research on how substance abuse predicts truancy and social mal-adjustment concurrently among secondary school students in Ibadan.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives are to:

- i. examine the influence of type of school attended on truancy among secondary school students in Ibadan;
- ii. determine the level of living arrangement on truancy among secondary school students in Ibadan;
- iii. examine the influence of substance abuse on truancy among secondary school students in Ibadan;
- iv. investigate the relationship between substance abuse and social maladjustment among secondary school students in Ibadan;
- v. assess the relative / joint effect of substance abuse and truancy on social maladjustment among secondary school students in Ibadan.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. Does the school type have effect on truancy among secondary school students in Ibadan;
- ii. What is the influence of living arrangement on truancy behaviour among secondary school students in Ibadan;
- iii. What influence does substance abuse has on truancy behaviour among secondary school students in Ibadan?
- iv. What is the relationship between substance abuse and social maladjustment among secondary school students in Ibadan?
- v. What is the relative joint effect of substance abuse and truancy on social maladjustment among secondary school students in Ibadan?

Research Hypotheses

- H0₁:** There is no significance influence of type of school (public or private) on substance abuse and truancy among secondary school students in Ibadan.
- H0₂:** There is no significance influence of living arrangement (both parents, single parent, guardian/relative) on substance abuse and truancy among secondary school students in Ibadan.
- H0₃:** There is no significant relationship between substance abuse and truancy among secondary school students in Ibadan.
- H0₄:** There is no significant relationship between substance abuse and social maladjustment among secondary school students in Ibadan.
- H0₅:** There is no significant relative influence of substance abuse, truancy, peer pressure, family factors and school environment on social maladjustment among secondary school students in Ibadan.
- H0₆:** There is no significant joint influence of substance abuse, truancy, peer pressure, family factors and school environment on social maladjustment among secondary school students in Ibadan.

Methodology

This study adopts descriptive design. The population used for the study is the secondary school students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. This comprises of students (both in public and private schools) at the junior and senior levels of secondary education within the metropolis of JSS and SSS respectively. Multistage sampling procedure was adopted for this study. In order to enhance the reliability of the survey results and to compensate for any potential non-response, the final sample size used is 400 respondents. A structured questionnaire developed by the researcher and named "Substance Abuse, Truancy and Social Maladjustment Questionnaire (SATSMQ)" serves as the tool for data collection in this study. The reliability of measurement was ascertained. Face validity was determined by ensuring that the questionnaire drafts look like they measure what they are intended to measure in substance abuse, truancy, social maladjustment, peer pressure, family factors and school environment among secondary school students. Content validity was accomplished by exposing the instrument draft to experts in the field of Social Work and Guidance and Counselling. .

Results and Discussions

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of type of school (public or private) on substance abuse and truancy among secondary school students in Ibadan.

Table 1: Independent Samples t-test Showing Influence of School Type on Substance Abuse and Truancy

Type of School	N	Mean	SD	df	t-cal	p-value	Decision
Public	246	3.21	0.84	370	4.12	0.000	Significant
Private	126	2.88	0.79				

Decision: $p = 0.000 < 0.05 \rightarrow \text{Reject } H_{01}$

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of living arrangement on substance abuse and truancy among secondary school students in Ibadan.

Table 2: One-way ANOVA of Living Arrangement on Substance Abuse and Truancy

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-cal	p-value	Decision
Between Groups	18.42	2	9.21	6.35	0.002	Significant
Within Groups	535.60	369	1.45			
Total	554.02	371				

Decision: $p = 0.000 < 0.05 \rightarrow \text{Reject } H_{01}$

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between substance abuse and truancy among secondary school students in Ibadan.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation between Substance Abuse and Truancy

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	r-value	p-value	Decision
Substance Abuse	3.18	0.76	372	0.62	0.000	Significant
Truancy	3.14	0.81				

Decision: $p = 0.000 < 0.05 \rightarrow \text{Reject } H_{01}$

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant relationship between substance abuse and social maladjustment among secondary school students in Ibadan.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation between Substance Abuse and Social Maladjustment

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	r-value	p-value	Decision
Substance Abuse	3.18	0.76	372	0.58	0.000	Significant
Social Maladjustment	3.16	0.78				

Decision: $p = 0.000 < 0.05 \rightarrow \text{Reject } H_{01}$

Hypothesis 5: There is no significant relative influence of substance abuse, truancy, peer pressure, family factors and school environment on social maladjustment among secondary school students in Ibadan.

Table 5: Multiple Regression (Relative Influence on Social Maladjustment)

Variables	B	β	t-value	p-value	Rank	Decision
Substance Abuse	0.28	0.30	5.10	0.000	1st	Significant
Truancy	0.25	0.27	4.88	0.000	2nd	Significant
Peer Pressure	0.22	0.24	4.55	0.000	3rd	Significant
Family Factors	0.19	0.21	4.02	0.000	4th	Significant
School Environment	0.17	0.18	3.76	0.000	5th	Significant

Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p-value)	Decision
(Constant)	1.02	0.15	-	6.80	0.000	-
Peer Pressure	0.41	0.05	0.44	8.61	0.000	Significant

Decision: $p = 0.000 < 0.05 \rightarrow \text{Reject } H_{01}$

Hypothesis Six (H₀₆): There is no significant joint influence of substance abuse, truancy, peer pressure, family factors and school environment on social maladjustment among secondary school students in Ibadan.

Table 6: Multiple Regression (Joint Influence on Social Maladjustment)

Model Summary	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Regression Model	0.74	0.55	0.54	0.61

ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-cal	Sig. (p-value)
Regression	198.45	5	39.69	92.31	0.000
Residual	162.18	366	0.44		
Total	360.63	371			

Decision: $p = 0.000 < 0.05 \rightarrow \text{Reject } H_{01}$

Discussion of Findings

The findings illustrate that personal, family, peer, and school factors are intricately intertwined in shaping adolescent behavior and are therefore consistent with the hypotheses derived from the Social Learning Theory, General Strain Theory, and Social Control Theory that constituted the theoretical framework of the study.

The first prediction tested was that family type would be significantly associated with substance use and truancy among high school students. The result indicated that the school type has a significant effect on substance abuse and truancy, which means that the experiences and behavioural consequences of public and private school students are not the same. This may partly reflect differences in the school environment, as financial and non-financial incentives have been shown to shape job satisfaction among public secondary school teachers, which can in turn influence the quality of supervision and support available to students (Fatoye & Adewole, 2025).

Hypothesis three investigated the association between substance use and truancy. The result showed that there was a significant positive correlation between the two factors, which means students who abuse substances are more likely to be engaged in truancy. This result indicates that substance use is related to low school attendance and academic disengagement. Drug and alcohol use may hinder a person's ability to think clearly, make them less motivated, and more likely to shirk schoolwork. Hypothesis four tested substance abuse and social maladjustment. Result: A significant positive correlation was found between the two variables, suggesting that more social maladjustment is associated with greater substance abuse.

Hypothesis five tested the adequacy of relative effects of substance abuse, truancy, peer pressure, family relate problems, and school environmental problems on social maladjustment. The result was that all the independent variables made a significant unique contribution to social maladjustment, although the degree of influence did vary. The sixth hypothesis was concerned with the combined effects of the use of drugs, truancy, peer pressure, family factors and school environment on social maladjustment. The result indicated a significant composite effect, suggesting that the aggregate of the predictor variables explained a significant of variance in social maladjustment of the secondary school students.

In general, the results of the study suggest that drug abuse is still a major predictor of truancy and social misbehaviour among secondary school students in Ibadan. The findings also indicate that peer pressure, family, school environment, school type, and living condition were the significant predictors of these behaviours. The research underscores the importance of multi-agency approaches involving families, schools, social workers, counsellors, community leaders and policy makers in tackling the contributory factors to both adolescent substance misuse and behavioural maladjustment. The interventions are needed to address healthy growth, increase in school attendance, social adjustment, and the health of secondary school students. Family and community-based support systems have similarly been shown to enhance psychosocial well-being across other vulnerable groups in Nigeria, including the elderly, informal caregivers of children living with chronic illness, and victims of abuse (Fatoye, 2019; Fatoye, 2020a; Isaac & Fatoye, 2019; Fatoye, 2022). Likewise, structured support-group interventions and accessible welfare schemes have been found to improve outcomes among people living with HIV, women affected by gender-based violence, and other economically vulnerable populations, underscoring the value of the coordinated

psychosocial and welfare interventions recommended in this study (Fatoye & Afolabi, 2022; Fatoye, 2020b; Fatoye, 2020c; Fatoye & Oyeleke, 2022; Fatoye, 2023a). At the policy level, adequate healthcare expenditure, gender-responsive social policies, and geriatric care provisions have also been identified as important levers for improving population well-being, while emotional distress and family disruption remain salient concerns among justice-involved and correctional populations, reinforcing the need for a coordinated, multi-agency response of the kind advocated in this study (Eboh, Abba & Fatoye, 2018; Fatoye, 2021b; Fatoye & Fatunbi, 2026; Fatoye, 2024; Afolabi, Odedokun & Fatoye, 2024).

Conclusion

Based on the result of the study, it was concluded that drug abuse is a major factor that influence students' truancy and social maladjustment in Ibadan. The study showed that students who misuse substances are also those that are truant, have poor school attendance, are aggressive, socially isolated, have trouble following school rules, and generally are more socially maladjusted. The results also indicated that students' propensity to substance abuse and truancy is significantly affected by their type of school and place of living.

Recommendations

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

- i. The school management needs to set up well functioning counselling centres in all secondary schools to offer routine guidance, psychosocial support and substance abuse prevention services to the students.
- ii. Government and education officials must coordinate sustained calls for child protection against substance abuse risks through such vehicles as seminars, workshops, school clubs and community outreach programs for teenagers.
- iii. Parents and caregivers need to increase the supervision and observation of their children's actions, yet also engage in open channels of communication that promote positive behavioural growth and dissuade children from participating in drugs.
- iv. Peer mentoring and peer education should be introduced and developed within schools to encourage positive peer influence and mitigate the effect of negative peer pressure on pupils.
- v. The atmosphere in schools should be made conducive to learning through good discipline, student activities, and sufficient provision of psychosocial support services by the school management.
- vi. Social workers, counsellors and community organizations need to work with schools and families to help identify children who may be at risk and provide on the front end with intervention services before the behavioural issues escalate.
- vii. Authorities need to more actively enforce the regulations that limit access to alcohol, tobacco, and other psychoactive substances for young people in communities and near schools.

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