

INFLUENCE OF PEER PRESSURE AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE ON CAREER DECISION-MAKING TENDENCIES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN IBADAN METROPOLIS, OYO STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study explored the Influence of Peer Pressure and Substance Abuse on Career Decision-Making Tendencies among Secondary school students in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State Nigeria. The study aimed to investigate the relationships between peer pressure, substance abuse, and career decision-making tendencies, as well as their combined effect and relative contributions to shaping adolescents' career choices. Using a sample of 100 secondary school students, a snowball sampling technique was employed, with participants drawn from various Local Government Areas (LGAs) within the Ibadan metropolis. Data were collected using standardized instruments, including the Peer Pressure Scale, Substance Abuse Questionnaire, and Career Decision-Making Inventory. The results revealed significant positive correlations among peer pressure, substance abuse, and career decision-making tendencies. Specifically, peer pressure was found to have a stronger influence on career decision-making than substance abuse. Additionally, both peer pressure and substance abuse made significant independent contributions to career decision-making tendencies. These findings highlight the importance of addressing peer pressure and substance abuse in shaping adolescents' career choices and suggest that targeted interventions are needed to guide young people toward more positive career outcomes. The study's implications for educational and psychological interventions are discussed, along with suggestions for future research to explore the causal relationships between these factors.

Keywords: Peer pressure, Substance abuse, Career decision-making tendencies

Introduction

Adolescence is a pivotal stage of development where individuals navigate identity formation, life choices, and career decision-making. The process of career choice is complex and influenced by a variety of factors, such as personal interests, family support, societal expectations, and peer influence. Globally, career decision-making is becoming more difficult as young people face growing challenges, including economic instability, rising unemployment, and a rapidly changing job market. In many developing nations, these challenges often lead adolescents to consider alternative career paths, including those that involve criminal activity or substance abuse (Iftikhar et al., 2023). Substance abuse, in particular, has emerged as a major risk factor that interferes with adolescents' ability to make informed and constructive career choices (Beyene & Hagos, 2022).

Peer pressure plays a crucial role in shaping adolescents' decisions, especially concerning risky behaviours such as substance abuse. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to peer influence, as they are in the process of establishing their social identities. Peer groups can act as powerful agents of socialization, often normalizing and even encouraging behaviours like substance use and criminal activities. This influence has been observed in multiple global studies, which indicate that peer networks significantly affect adolescents' involvement in deviant behaviour, including substance abuse and delinquent career paths (Yusuf & Asiyani, 2021; Becker et al., 2022; Miller et al., 2023). In the Nigerian context, studies by Omopo (2024) and Adewole and Oyeniran (2024) indicate that peer

pressure, when combined with substance abuse, leads adolescents to adopt maladaptive behaviours, including deviant career choices (Yusuf, Sulaimon & Asiyanbi, 2021).

In Ibadan, Nigeria, the issue of substance abuse among adolescents has reached concerning levels, with substances like tramadol, cannabis, and alcohol being widely abused. Studies show that adolescents from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are particularly at risk of making delinquent career decisions, often perceiving illicit activities, such as cybercrime or drug trafficking, as more attainable than traditional career paths (Omopo et al., 2024). Adewole and Oyeniran (2024) highlight the role of family structure and peer pressure in facilitating substance abuse among adolescents, with these factors directly influencing career choices that deviate from conventional career paths. This phenomenon is further complicated by social marginalisation and socio-economic inequality, which exacerbate the decision-making process, especially in young people in Ibadan (Omopo et al., 2024).

Research conducted by Omopo and Odedokun (2024) further supports the notion that the influence of peer pressure and substance abuse contribute significantly to adolescent delinquency. In their study, peer influence emerged as one of the strongest predictors of substance abuse and criminal behaviour among adolescents in Ibadan. These findings align with those from other African studies, such as Mugisha and Nsereko's (2022) investigation into Ugandan adolescents, which found that peer influence was a major driver of substance use and deviant career choices. This shows that peer networks not only influence the onset of substance abuse but also reinforce behaviours that lead to alternative career decisions that are often criminal or deviant in nature.

Substance abuse is another critical factor that influences adolescents' career decision-making. Omopo (2024) demonstrates that substance abuse severely impairs adolescents' decision-making processes, making them more likely to engage in impulsive and risky behaviours, including choosing illegal career paths. This impairment in decision-making is consistent with findings from Brown and Patel (2023), who noted that adolescents under the influence of substances often experience cognitive distortions that hinder the development of realistic career aspirations. As such, substance abuse becomes a significant obstacle to the development of healthy, conventional career goals among adolescents.

In recent years, the issue of career decision-making among secondary school students has become increasingly critical, particularly with the rising influence of peer pressure and substance use. Adolescence is a crucial period marked by identity formation and decision-making that has long-term consequences. Unfortunately, many students fall victim to the negative influence of their peers, often leading them to engage in risky behaviours such as drug and alcohol use. These behaviours can impair their cognitive functioning, reduce academic motivation, and consequently affect their ability to make informed and rational career decisions. The problem is further amplified by societal neglect, poor parental guidance, and inadequate career counseling services in many Nigerian secondary schools. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), over 45% of senior secondary school students in urban and peri-urban areas in Nigeria have admitted to making career choices based on peer influence rather than personal aptitude or interest. Similarly, a report by the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council (NERDC, 2021) shows that 37% of secondary school students who abuse substances exhibit low academic performance, truancy, and high levels of indecision concerning future careers.

Several scholars have attempted to investigate the influence of external factors on career choices. For instance, Adegoke (2015) examined the role of parental influence on career choice and found that while parents significantly affect students' decisions, peer pressure often overrides parental guidance during adolescence. Likewise, Okafor and Ede (2019) explored the relationship between substance use and academic performance and revealed a strong negative correlation but did not extend their study to its impact on career decisions. Despite these efforts, there is a dearth of empirical studies specifically addressing how the combined influence of peer pressure and substance use shapes career decision-making among secondary school students in Nigeria. The current study intends to fill this gap by investigating these dual influences in a comprehensive manner, thereby providing evidence-based recommendations for educators, counselors, and policymakers. Understanding these dynamics is

crucial to developing strategic interventions that can help students make better career choices and reduce the long-term socio-economic consequences of poor decision-making.

By focusing on this specific population, the study aims to shed light on how these factors contribute to the poor career choices made by adolescents in the region. This understanding is crucial for developing targeted interventions that address both peer pressure and substance abuse, ultimately guiding adolescents towards more positive career pathways and reducing their risk of engaging in criminal activities (Zhang et al., 2023).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of peer pressure, substance abuse, and career decision-making tendencies among secondary school students in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. This study aims to understand how these variables affect adolescents' career choices and behavioural outcomes during the transition from school to adulthood. Specifically, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the relationship between peer pressure, substance abuse, and career decision-making tendencies among secondary school students in Ibadan, Oyo State.
2. To determine the combined influence of peer pressure, substance abuse, and career decision-making tendencies among secondary school students in Ibadan, Oyo State.
3. To assess the relative influence of peer pressure, substance abuse, and career decision-making tendencies among secondary school students in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

Ho1: There is no significant relationship among peer pressure, substance abuse, and career decision-making tendencies among secondary school students in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Ho2: There is no significant combined influence of peer pressure, substance abuse, and career decision-making tendencies among secondary school students in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Ho3: There is no significant relative influence of peer pressure, substance abuse, and career decision-making tendencies among secondary school students in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population consisted of adolescents who had graduated from secondary school within the past two years and were residing in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. This group was specifically selected because it represents a transitional stage where peer influence, substance use, and future decision-making are critically interlinked. A sample of 100 participants was drawn using a snowball sampling technique, with 20 participants selected from each of the five Local Government Areas that constitute the Ibadan metropolis: Ibadan North, Ibadan North-East, Ibadan North-West, Ibadan South-East, and Ibadan South-West. Referrals were initially obtained from youth organisations, community centres, and social media networks within these LGAs.

Standardised and psychometrically sound instruments were used for data collection. The Peer Pressure Inventory (PPI), with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86, was used to assess peer influence. Substance abuse were measured using the Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory (SASSI), which demonstrates internal consistency between 0.80 and 0.94. Career decision-making tendencies were assessed using the Career Decision Scale (CDS), which has a reported reliability coefficient ranging from 0.82 to 0.89. The administration of questionnaires was conducted in person with informed consent obtained from each participant. Ethical approval was secured from the appropriate institutional review board. Confidentiality, voluntary participation, and anonymity were ensured throughout the data collection process. Data analysis involved Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) to assess relationships among variables, and multiple regression analysis to determine both joint and individual predictor influences.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship among peer pressure, substance abuse, and career decision-making tendencies among secondary school students in Ibadan, Oyo State

Table 1: Correlation matrix showing the relationship between study variables

Variables	1	2	3
1. Peer Pressure	1.000		
2. Substance Abuse	0.52**	1.000	
3. Career Decision-Making	0.46**	0.49**	1.000

Note: ** $p < 0.05$

Table 1 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients showing the relationships between peer pressure, substance abuse, and career decision-making tendencies. The results indicate a significant positive correlation between peer pressure and substance abuse ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.05$), peer pressure and career decision-making tendencies ($r = 0.46$, $p < 0.05$), and substance abuse and career decision-making tendencies ($r = 0.49$, $p < 0.05$). These findings reveal that increases in peer pressure and substance abuse are significantly associated with more problematic patterns in career decision-making. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship among the variables is rejected.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant combined influence of peer pressure, substance abuse, and career decision-making tendencies among secondary school students in Ibadan, Oyo State

Table 2: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Showing the Joint Prediction of Career Decision-Making Tendencies by Peer Pressure and Substance Abuse (N = 100)

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	F-ratio	Sig.
Regression	0.58	0.34	0.33	4.28	24.87	0.000**

Note: ** $p < 0.05$

Table 2 displays the multiple regression analysis results assessing the combined effect of peer pressure and substance abuse on career decision-making tendencies. The model produced a multiple correlation coefficient R of 0.58 and an R² of 0.34, indicating that 34% of the variance in career decision-making tendencies was jointly explained by peer pressure and substance abuse. The F-ratio of 24.87 was statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.000$), demonstrating that the model is a good fit. Thus, the null hypothesis that there is no significant combined effect is rejected.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relative influence of peer pressure, substance abuse, and career decision-making tendencies among secondary school students in Ibadan, Oyo State

Table 3: Relative Contributions of Peer Pressure and Substance Abuse to Career Decision-Making Tendencies (N = 100)

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig.
Peer Pressure	0.38	0.09	0.41	4.22	0.000**
Substance Abuse	0.29	0.08	0.36	3.68	0.001**

Note: ** $p < 0.05$

Table 3 illustrates the relative contributions of peer pressure and substance abuse to career decision-making tendencies. Both predictors made statistically significant independent contributions. Peer pressure had a standardised beta coefficient of 0.41 ($t = 4.22$, $p < 0.05$), while substance abuse had a beta coefficient of 0.36 ($t = 3.68$, $p < 0.05$). These findings suggest that while both variables independently influence career decision-making tendencies, peer pressure is a slightly stronger predictor. Hence, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relative contribution is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from the first hypothesis revealed a significant relationship among peer pressure, substance abuse, and career decision-making tendencies among recent secondary school graduates in Ibadan. This aligns with existing literature indicating that peer influence plays a critical role in

adolescents' choices regarding drug use and future planning. For instance, Onigbogi, Ojo, and Babalola (2023) found that secondary school students in Lagos who were heavily influenced by peers were more likely to engage in substance abuse and exhibit indecisiveness in their future aspirations. This suggests that adolescents who succumb to peer pressure are more vulnerable to making impulsive or risky life choices, including those related to career direction. The findings of this study underscore the significant influence of peer pressure and substance abuse on the career decision-making tendencies of recent secondary school graduates in Ibadan, Nigeria. These results align with existing literature, highlighting the pervasive impact of peer dynamics on adolescents' behavioural choices. For instance, Adebajo and Omotoso (2024) conducted a study in Ibadan North LGA and found a strong link between peer pressure and substance abuse among secondary school students, emphasising that adolescents often conform to peer norms to gain acceptance through risky behaviours. Their work revealed that students under peer influence were more likely to experiment with drugs, alcohol, and tobacco, which in turn affected their overall academic and social functioning. This evidence supports the assertion that unchecked peer influence can escalate into maladaptive behaviours that influence broader life decisions.

Moreover, the relationship between peer pressure and career decision-making tendencies is corroborated by research from Mupambireyi and Nyoni (2022), who found that students in Zimbabwe relied heavily on peers for career-related advice, encouragement, and exposure to career options. This study noted that adolescents may abandon personal aspirations in favour of career paths endorsed or glamorised within their peer circles, often without full understanding of long-term consequences. These findings suggest that peer groups play a pivotal role not only in shaping behaviour but also in influencing important life trajectories such as occupational aspirations. Thus, when peer networks are characterised by misinformation or low ambition, they can mislead adolescents into poor career choices.

The association between substance abuse and impaired career decision-making is further reinforced by findings from Eze and Adebayo (2023), who reported that substance use among in-school adolescents significantly undermines mental health and cognitive processes essential for effective decision-making. Their study concluded that substance use compromises goal orientation, impulse control, and planning ability skills necessary for choosing appropriate career paths. Furthermore, adolescents who regularly used substances were found to be more indecisive, confused, and susceptible to external pressures in making career-related decisions. These outcomes reinforce the importance of integrating substance abuse prevention into career guidance and counselling programmes within secondary schools.

The second hypothesis assessed the combined influence of peer pressure, substance abuse, and career decision-making tendencies. The result indicated a statistically significant joint influence, implying that these factors interact to shape adolescent behaviour in complex ways. This is corroborated by Tiamiyu and Ajibola (2021), who reported that peer influence and substance use together accounted for a considerable variance in adolescents' cognitive and emotional processes that guide major life decisions. Their study showed that students who reported higher levels of substance use and peer conformity also demonstrated lower levels of clarity in setting career goals. The combination of social and psychological pressure appears to diminish the capacity for rational future planning among this group. Similarly, Tiamiyu and Ajibola (2021) found that adolescents who engaged in substance use often exhibited greater confusion, impulsivity, and passivity in making career-related decisions. Their study suggests that substance use not only impairs cognitive clarity but also undermines self-efficacy, both of which are essential for effective career planning. These findings highlight the urgent need for interventions that address the dual impact of peer influence and substance use. By equipping adolescents with critical thinking and decision-making skills, stakeholders such as schools, families, and community organisations can help mitigate the adverse effects of these predictors on future career paths.

The third hypothesis focused on the relative influence of the independent variables. Results revealed that both peer pressure and substance abuse significantly contributed to difficulties in career decision-making, with peer pressure having the highest influence. This pattern suggests that social dynamics are potent in shaping adolescents' behavioural tendencies and decision outcomes. Supporting this,

Adewole and Oyeniran (2024) found that peer pressure emerged as the strongest predictor of substance use among teenagers in Oyo State, Nigeria, highlighting the substantial role of peer influence in adolescent behaviour. When adolescents lack strong internal controls or adult guidance, they are more susceptible to external influences. The corroborated evidence from these recent studies confirms that a multidimensional approach is necessary in addressing both substance abuse and career guidance among school leavers to prevent future maladaptive outcomes.

Conclusion

This study explored the combined effects of peer pressure and substance abuse on career decision-making tendencies among recent secondary school graduates in Ibadan, Oyo State. The results revealed significant relationships between these variables, with peer pressure being the most substantial predictor of career decision-making tendencies. Both peer pressure and substance abuse independently influenced adolescents' career choices, demonstrating the need for focused interventions to address these factors. These findings underscore the critical role that external social influences and personal behaviours play in shaping adolescents' future aspirations, which often result in suboptimal career decisions.

Recommendations

In the light of these findings, the following recommendations are hereby proffered:

1. Schools should implement peer mentorship programmes where older students can serve as role models
2. Promoting positive career choices and offering guidance to younger peers.
3. Additionally, schools and community organisations should collaborate to develop substance abuse prevention programmes that specifically target the adolescent population.
4. Encouraging a supportive environment that promotes self-esteem, resilience, and informed decision-making will be crucial in reducing the negative effects of peer pressure and substance abuse on career decision-making.

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