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## **‘NAFDAC AND YOUR HEALTH’ TELEVISION PROGRAMME AND DRUG ABUSE AMONGST YOUTHS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA.**

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### **Abstract**

Drug abuse is a social menace that has spread across genders over the years, posing a threat to individuals, groups, nations, and the world. The study investigated the “NAFDAC and Your Health” television programme on drug abuse amongst youths in Lagos State. The study assessed level of awareness of the programme amongst youths in the state, level of drug abuse amongst youths in Lagos state despite the television programme, and perceived effectiveness of the media platforms [Television Continental (TVC) and Nigerian Television Authority (NTA)] used to air the programme. A descriptive survey was employed, purposive sampling technique was adopted to select 210 samples from University of Lagos youths and drug abusers from rehabs to whom questionnaires were administered. The study showed that despite the sensitisation programme on television, many (56%) youths admitted to taking drugs without doctor’s prescription. Majority (68%) of the youths still abuse drugs despite the anti-drug abuse programme on television. 74% youths pay little attention to the programme on drug abuse. This study concludes that despite awareness of the programme, they pay little or no attention to the programme message. Youths still engage in self-medication and other forms of drug abuse. They have shifted their focus from television to social media and found both television stations ineffective. It was recommended that the programme should be given more coverage on topics of drug abuse and reach on more television stations preferably stations that interest youths in the state. Social media platforms should also be integrated with television stations.

**Keywords:** Drug abuse, NAFDAC, youths, television awareness and social media

### **Introduction**

One of the biggest challenges confronting governments and policymakers in Africa is the manner by which chances and opportunities are given to the continent’s over 200 million youths with the objective of having better than average lives, and adding to the financial improvement of their nations (Idike & Eme, 2015). In 2020, Africa’s youthful population under 35 represents almost a billion people, amounting to 22.7% of the world’s total youth population, the second largest after Asia’s 58% (Rocca & Schultes, n.d).

The National Youths Policy perceives that the young people are a distinct advantage that can be tapped for the advantage of the entire nation. They are crucial prospects for development and should be included in all national development plans and programmes. The youth are recognised not only as future

leaders but also as actors and foundation of our society (Piper, 2001). Toffler (2006) opined that for society to attempt to solve its desperate problems without the full participation of even very young people is imbecile.

According to a 2011 World Drug Report, over 210 million people or 4.8% of the world population use illicit substances yearly. In Nigeria, the youth seems to be more involved in this deadly act. A 2018 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report shows that the age of first use in the country is 10-29 years. This report confirms a recent directive by the former Minister of Health, Professor Isaac Adewole banning the sales of codeine containing cough syrups without prescription across the country is, no doubt, a sad reflection of the alarming state of drug abuse and addiction in the country, especially among the youth. The directive became necessary due to the gross abuse of codeine usage in the country (Ogunbiyi, 2018).

Drug abuse is the use of illegal drugs or the use of over-the-counter drugs for purposes other than those for which they are meant to be used, or in large amounts. Drug abuse may lead to social, physical, emotional, and job-related problems (National Cancer Institute, 2013). Drug abuse is a major public health problem all over the world (Klein, 2005). According to the World Health Organization (WHO) the use and abuse of drugs by adolescents have become a burden and one of the most disturbing health-related phenomena in the country and other parts of the world (Okoye, *et al.* 2022; Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2015). Asikhia (2018) identified other effects of drug abuse on youth development to include, financial losses and distress, the increased burden for support of adolescents.

Nyameh *et al.* (2013) observed a lot of young people take pride in the abuse of drugs to their own detriment. They use drugs such as cannabis, cocaine, nicotine, marijuana, tobacco, alcohol, amphetamine derivatives and even as far as sniffing glue and so on to feel high and enhance social performance. Colleen, *et al.* (2013) study identifies four determinants that place youth at problematic substance abuse to include; individual (e.g., age, gender,), interpersonal (e.g., family, peers, school) and social and cultural community (e.g., social norm, street involvement). Others include: relief of boredom/depression/anxiety, peer influence, euphoria-seeking sensory satisfaction, need to belong to a social group or class, unemployment, for self-medication, parental deprivation at various levels, for pleasure, to overcome illness, to gain confidence, to overcome shyness, to be able to facilitate communication, to overcome many other social problems, and to induce themselves to work above their physical capacity. These factors as pointed out by scholars (Obadeji, *et al.* 2020; Agwogie, 2016; Olatunde, 1979 cited in Fareo, 2012) are reasons for youth involvement in the use of drugs and other substances. Abdu-Raheem (2013) study showed a significant relationship between family background, peer influence, family cohesion, and drug abuse.

## Literature Review

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has expressed concern over the increasing level of drug abuse and drug trafficking among Nigerian youths. According to the NDLEA, the situation had been worsened by the affordability of substance of abuse such as cough syrups, lizard wastes, gums and cannabis sativa popularly known as Indian hemp. Considering the delicate and sensitive position of the youth within the country, drug abuse among them remains a major threat to national growth and development.

Studies have shown that most drug abusers started using from a young age. The average age of initiation of cannabis use among the general population was 19 years (UNODC, 2018). Faleti and Adesuyi (2016), in a study among 62 drug abusers at the Drug Abuse Unit of the Neuropsychiatric

Hospital, Aro, Abeokuta reported that cannabis is the most commonly abused drug (UNODC, 2018) while 53.5% are below the age of 30 years. Similarly, in the same centre, another study gave the mean age of onset of drug use among inpatients to be between the adolescent age range of 15-19 years within a span of 1992 to 1997 and 2002 to 2007 (Agboola et al, 2018). Among the older and the young generation, it is the latter that access these drugs mostly through illicit channels despite government regulations. Some of these ill-behaved youths usually end up in rehabilitation centres and psychiatric hospitals. Snehalatha et al., (2017), in their study of high school students revealed that 65% used drugs to have a good time with their friends, 54% wanted to know what it felt like, 20 to 40 % used it to change their moods, feel good, relieve tension and overcome problems.

According to the Drug Demand Reduction Directorate (DDR) of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) annual report of 2019, 53.65% abused cannabis which shows the dominant drug of choice in the country followed by Tobacco (11.27%), Alcohol (6.53%), while Codeine/Syrup (5.76%) and Tramadol (5.50%) are the next drugs of choice especially among the youths (NDLEA, 2019).

The need to rationalize the use of drugs, control donated drugs, control local drug production, legislation, inspection, and control the import and export of drugs gave rise to the establishment of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) policy. The policy covers the registration of drugs to ensure that the government has control over drugs that are offered for sale and use within the country, (Kiluk et al 2015) this enhanced the urgent need to strengthen NAFDAC. Studies (La'aro, 2002; Hilary, 2004 and Oyetola, 2006) have shown that public awareness of NAFDAC is high, and the average Nigerian's seeming familiarity with the organisation cannot be unconnected with the raids and other NAFDAC activities that make the news in our dailies and broadcast channels. This indicates that the agency undoubtedly recognises the centrality of the mass media in disseminating such important information as health related issues to the populace. However, for media campaign messages to achieve the required effects, such messages must be carefully planned and strategically delivered (Omoloso & La'aro, 2013).

Keuntjes (2019) extols the role of media awareness campaigns by asserting that it can inform the community about current problems by highlighting and drawing attention to it in such a way that the information and education provided can solicit action to make changes. Zamawe *et al.* (2016), Iheanacho, *et al* (2021) add that media campaigns are critical in disseminating public health information, improving health knowledge and changing health behaviours. No wonder NAFDAC adopts various media enlightenment campaigns to combat proliferation of fake and substandard products in Nigerian markets.

According to Sambe (2003 cited in Omoloso & La'aro, 2013), the media have the capacity to set agenda on health related issues in such a way that people will be stimulated "towards taking actions against all practices in the health sector that do not promote the welfare of man. Akinfeleye (2008 cited in Omoloso & La'aro, 2013) identifies television as the most potent of all the various media of disseminating health messages. This, according to him is because of the medium's audio-visual power which he describes as having an overriding impact on the behaviour of its target audience. Abone (2008 cited in Omoloso & La'aro, 2013) equally sees television's power of imprinting messages on the mind as making it to be capable of dealing with social change especially attitudinal change that could bring about healthy living.

### **NAFDAC, Media and Drug Abuse**

According to Ogunbiyi (2018), it is rather worrisome that drug abusers are mostly youth which is why pro-health campaigns across the country should majorly be youth related and multi sectoral in approach. In Lagos State, the campaign against drug abuse and addiction is structured around the Inter-ministerial

Drug Abuse Committee that consists of Ministries of Health, Youth and Social Development, Information and Strategy, Transportation, Education, Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs and Lagos Television (Ogunbiyi, 2018).

In a comparative study of exposure of rural and urban dwellers of Kwara State to NAFDAC Campaign on Fake Drugs, La'aro (2002) found that 62% of the rural dwellers and 68% of urban dwellers who participated in the study demonstrated compliance to media campaign messages. This study concluded that the media serve as potent means of communicating public health messages to both the urban and rural populace. Findings of the study provide empirical evidence that the NAFDAC media campaign has indeed proved effective both in creating public awareness and message adoption even in the remote or rural area. The study concludes that NAFDAC television campaign messages have high reach among television audience in Ilorin South but the audience are still somewhat limited in access to the campaigns in terms of television channels and they are of the view that, to be more effective, the televised messages must be revised and upgraded with respect to transmission time, format of broadcasts, language of presentation and availability/accessibility on local television stations (Omoloso & La'aro, 2013).

"NAFDAC and Your Health" is a programme popular on Television (AIT, TVC, NTA International and Channels TV) where regulatory officers are invited to speak on issues such as food safety and drug abuse. This is an open programme where the public has the opportunity to ask questions and be further enlightened. One of the functions of NAFDAC is to create public enlightenment campaigns; these are strategies in which the agency can pass out vital information and share knowledge about safeguarding public health.

About 10 years ago, the television programme called "NAFDAC and Your Health" kicked off on major television stations. The then Director-General of the Agency, Late Professor Dora Akunyili and her successor, Dr. Paul Orhii, alongside their team, identified public enlightenment campaigns and massive enforcement as catalysts that enhanced the needed change. This programme provides an avenue for consumer feedback while updating Nigerians on the activities of the Agency. The television programme speaks of success in the lives of the youths in Lagos State. The programme is aired in Lagos state and has attracted the interest of the state residents, giving them the avenue of acquiring more knowledge by listening to the guest speakers and answering questions.

The establishment of the programme 'NAFDAC and Your Health' was with the intention to elicit a specific response and a swift behavioural change in attitude on health-related matters. The programme's objective is to access the minds of its viewers and transform how they think and feel. NAFDAC sets the agenda through the programme 'NAFDAC and Your Health' taking into consideration the function of the media and its expected result for the audience to respond in kind, discussing, debating and possibly advocating for change, based on the content of the programme.

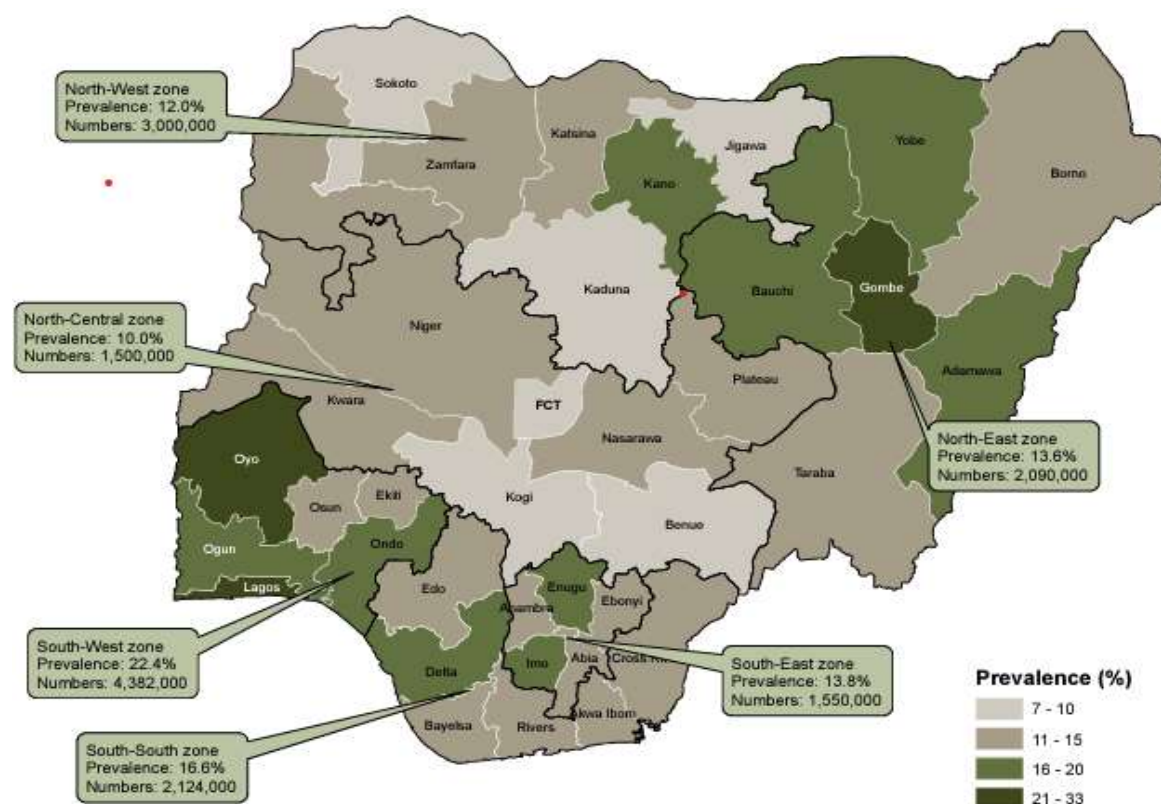
## **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the agenda-setting theory by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. The theory posits that the mass media determines the issues that are regarded as important at a given time in a given society. That means that the media is significantly more than a provider of information and opinion; and though it may not be able to tell its readers what it thinks, it does successfully tell them what to think about. This theory assumes that the 'NAFDAC and Your Health' television programme is expected to shape the youths reality instead of reflecting it; and the more attention that the programme pay to the issue of drug abuse, the more likely the youths will agree that it is important.

## Statement of the Problem

Drug abuse, an excessive and persistent self-administration of a drug without regard to the medically or culturally accepted patterns, is a major public health problem all over the world. It could also be viewed as the use of a drug to the extent that it interferes with the health and social function of an individual (Gould, 2010 cited in Soremekun et al., 2020). Several adolescents of school age (10–21 years) have been known to experience mental health problems (Fareo, 2012).

In the last UNODC report on Nigeria in 2018, the prevalence of any drug use in 2017 is estimated at 14.4% (14.3 million people) aged 15-64 years who had used a psychoactive substance for non-medical purposes (Olanrewaju et al, 2022). The highest levels of any past-year drug use was among those aged 25-39 years. 1 in 5 person who had used drugs is suffering from drug abuse disorders. An estimated 10.8%(10.6 million) people, had used cannabis in 2017(UNODC, 2018).



**Fig. 1** Prevalence of Drug Use in Nigeria by Geopolitical Zones and States, 2017. Source: UNODC, 2018.

According to the UNODC (2018) report on the prevalence of drug use in Nigeria by geopolitical zones and states in 2017, South-West Nigeria had the highest percentage of 22.4% while the prevalence was highly significant in Lagos followed by Oyo state.

The youths of Lagos State gruesomely engage in drug abuse openly and in their closets. Drug addiction poses a threat to individuals, groups, and the entire country. It has been observed that drug abuse is a social problem that has spread over the years and cut across both genders with reports showing an increased number of females involved in the act (Adefule-Ositelu, 2009). Constant use of drugs leads to

the breakdown of relationships and places further stress on already depressed families in Lagos State and the country, (Odejide, 2006).

While the use of drugs is observed among all age groups in Nigeria, the use of most drug types is high among young people within the age brackets of 25 and 39 years (UNODC, 2018) who constitute majorly the youths. Mamman et al. (2014) revealed an increase in the percentage of high school students who used drugs.

Some of these substances in the form of medications give pleasure to the user (pleasurable pathways). The user at first may enjoy it and will want to experience the sensation again (Seraphim, 2005). Studies (Kypri, et al. 2005; Melchior et al. 2008, cited in Okoh, et al., 2022) submitted that across the countries of the world, drug abuse tends to be rampant among youngsters. While the youth are supposed to be the major agent of change and development, a number of them are being destroyed by drug abuse making them unproductive (Okoh, et al., 2022).

It is understandable that most drug abusers and addicts need the right information to understand the situation they are in, however, the large number of people hooked on the use of drugs despite government efforts, NDLEA and media campaigns by NAFDAC is indeed worrisome and a significant medical, psychological, social and economic problem facing the nation. More worrisome is the increasing number of youths in secondary and tertiary institutions who are persistently getting involved in drug abuse. This therefore informed the need to assess “NAFDAC and Your Health” television programme on drug abuse amongst youths in Lagos State.

### **Objectives of Study**

The general objective of the study is to assess the perception of youths on the effect of ‘NAFDAC and Your Health’ television programme on drug abuse prevalence in Lagos State. The specific objectives are to:

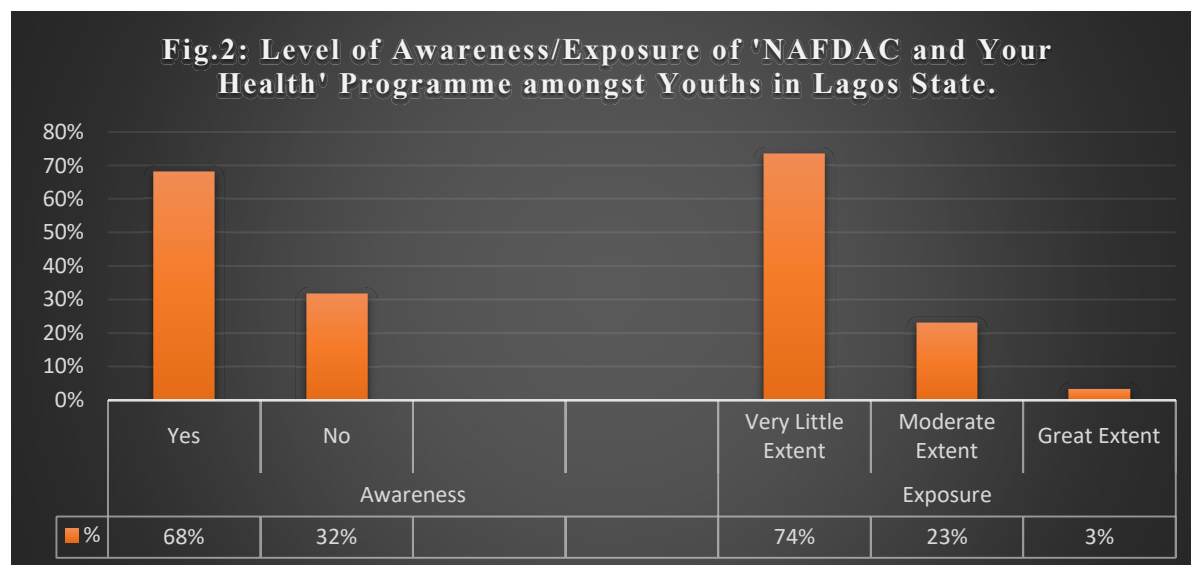
1. determine the level of awareness of ‘NAFDAC and Your Health’ Television programme amongst the youths in Lagos State.
2. determine the level of drug abuse amongst youths in Lagos state despite the ‘NAFDAC and Your Health’ Television programme.
3. assess the perceived effectiveness of Television Continental (TVC) and Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) used to broadcast the ‘NAFDAC and Your Health’ television programme.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted the survey research design. According to Tejumaiye (2017), survey is a method for collecting and statistically analysing social data through highly structured and detailed interviews or questionnaire in order to obtain information from large numbers of respondents presumed to be representative of a specific population. The population of this study include all the youths (drug abusers and non-abusers) in Lagos State and a sample size of 210 was purposively selected. 50 drug abusers were sampled from rehabilitation centres (CADAM Rehab centre at Ogba, Wellspring Rehab Centre at Berger, House of Joy Rehab Centre at Surulere and Tranquil, and Quest Rehab Centre at Surulere) and another 160 youths were conveniently sampled from the University of Lagos, Akoka, in Lagos State. A content validity was adopted for the 210 questionnaires administered to the respondents. NTA and TVC were purposively selected on the criteria of public and private broadcast stations where the programme is aired. Data obtained were descriptively analysed using frequency counts, percentages and charts.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

The study had a 100% return rate of 210 questionnaires that were self-administered. Study analysis revealed that majority (55.7%) of the respondents were males while 44.3% were females. Majority (78.1%) of the respondents belong to the age group of 15 – 29 years which constitutes the age range of youths considered in this study, while 31.9% were within 30-35 years of age.



Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Fig. 2 shows that despite majority (68%) of the respondents were aware of 'NAFDAC and Your Health' programme on Television Continental (TVC) and Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), a significant (74%) number of these youths who are major target audience for the programme pay less or no attention to the programme. This implies that the level of youths' exposure to the programme is highly insignificant, thus defeating a major purpose of anti-drug abuse campaign of the programme. These results corroborates the position of La'aro (2002); Hilary (2004) and Oyetola (2006) when they submitted that public awareness of NAFDAC activities is high, and the average Nigerian's seeming familiarity with the organization cannot be unconnected with the raids and other activities that made the news in the dailies and broadcast channels. Furthermore, this result questions the submission of Akinfeleye (2008) and Abone (2008) when both emphasized the potency of television among the various media of disseminating health messages as highly impactful. This is because recent studies (Akintola, 2021; Apuke & Ezeah, 2017; Akintola, Bello & Daramola, 2016; Uzuegbunam, 2015) have shown that majority of these youths are now paying more attention to social media platforms than any other. Indeed, the internet has become the most essential medium for youth across most countries (Uzuegbunam, 2015). A growing number of scholars note that most students (youths) spend a large part of their time on social media (Akintola, 2021; Apuke & Ezeah, 2017; Akintola, Bello & Daramola, 2016). This is a paradigm shift Akinfeleye and Abone did not take into account. Though Sambe (2003) was not specific on television, he recognised that the media (old and new) have the capacity to set impactful agenda on health related issues in order to promote the welfare of man.



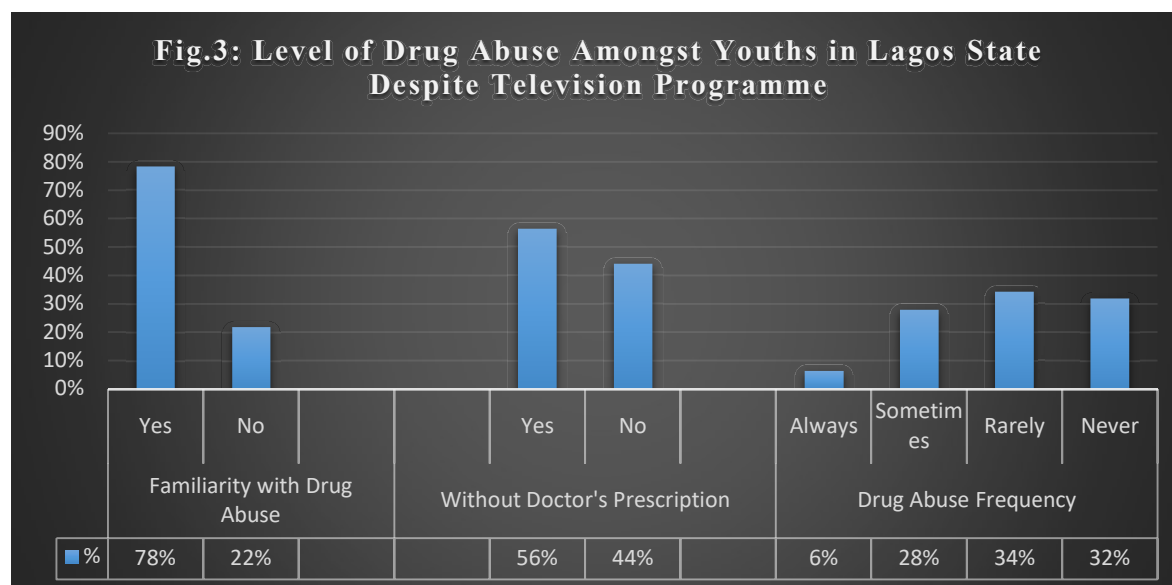
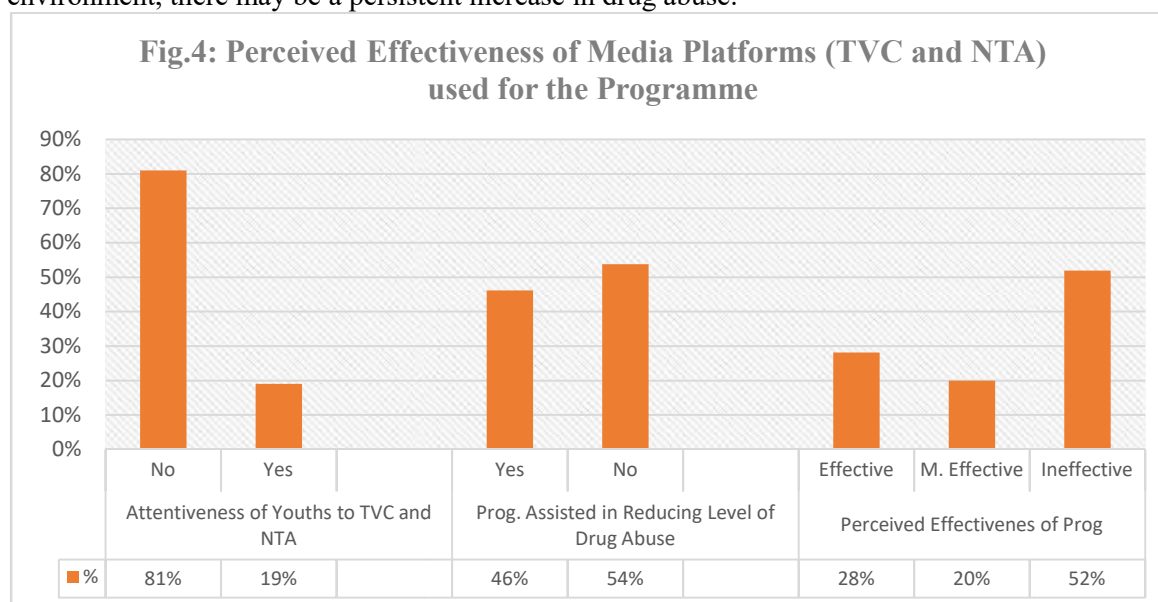


Fig. 3 reveals that majority (78%) of the youths are familiar with the concept and activities of drug abuse in Lagos State. Majority (56%) of them take drugs without doctor's prescriptions. These youths engage in self-medication because they are unaware of the consequences or do not consider the act as a form of drug abuse. Furthermore, 68% of them still abuse drugs despite the anti-drug abuse programme on television (TVC and NTA). These findings affirmed the position of Nyameh et al. (2013) when they observed that youths take pride in the abuse of drugs to their own detriment. Colleen, et al. (2013) position showed that irrespective of media messages on drug abuse, there are other significant determinants that encourages youths to abuse drugs such as relief of boredom/depression/anxiety, affordability, peer influence, euphoria-seeking sensory satisfaction, need to belong to a social group or class, unemployment, self-medication, pleasure, overcome illness etc. As long as these extant determinants are constant in the environment, there may be a persistent increase in drug abuse.



Source: Field Survey, 2022.

In fig.4, a significant percentage (81%) of the youths claimed they do not pay any attention either Television Continental (TVC) or Nigeria Television Authority (NTA). This is because they consider the contents in both television stations to be less attractive or less appealing and that they have shifted most of their attention to technological devices especially their smart phones for media content consumption. Furthermore, majority (54%) of the respondents disagreed that the 'NAFDAC and Your Health' programme has assisted them in reducing their level of drug abuse. A similar percentage (52%) of the youths also noted that the media channels used to broadcast the programme are ineffective thus the programme is deemed ineffective. This could be due to lack or inadequate attention given to both media platforms by the youths. For media campaign messages to achieve the required effects, such messages must be carefully planned and strategically delivered (Omoloso and La'aro, 2013) to the youths. Unfortunately, the programme does not have the expected positive impact of helping to reduce drug abuse since recent studies (Akintola, 2021; Apuke & Ezeah, 2017; Akintola, Bello & Daramola, 2016; Uzuegbunam, 2015) have shown that these youths now focus more attention to social media platforms than television. This result shows that the agenda-setting prowess of television has shifted to social media where issues on drug abuse are discussed by youths.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that despite the awareness of 'NAFDAC and Your Health' programme on Television Continental (TVC) and Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), they pay little or no attention to the programme message. It was also concluded that youths in Lagos state are familiar with the concept and activities of drug abuse yet, they still engage in self-medication and other forms of drug abuse. Furthermore, the study concludes that youths do not pay attention to either TVC or NTA because they seem to consider their programme contents less appealing. A significant number of these youths who have shifted most of their focus on social media could not have been assisted by the television programme in reducing their level of drug abuse. This study also concludes that the youths do not find both television stations used to air the programme effective.

This study therefore recommends that the programme should be given more coverage on topics of drug abuse and reach on more television stations preferably stations that interest youths in the state, such as sports and entertainment channels. Social media platforms should be integrated with the use of television stations that interests the youths. Sustainable efforts on anti-drug abuse campaigns from all stakeholders especially the media, family settings, educational institutions, other drug related agencies such as NDLEA, government and concerned agents should be intensified at all levels.

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