

Depression and Self-Esteem as Predictors of Illicit Drug Use Among Secondary School Students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State

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Abstract

The study investigated depression and self-esteem as predictors of illicit drug use among secondary school students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State. The study employed correlational research design. Two research questions and two corresponding hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study comprised all 14,784 senior secondary school students (SSS 1, 2 and 3) in the 16 public secondary schools in Obio/Akpor LGA of Rivers State. A sample of 600 students was selected for the study using the purposive sampling technique. Two instruments were used in collecting data for this study. They include; Psychological Determinants of Illicit Drug Use Questionnaire (PDIDUQ) and Students' Illicit Drug Use Scale (SIDUS). The Cronbach alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instruments, the reliability coefficient of Psychological Determinants of Illicit Drug Use Questionnaire (PDIDUQ) was 0.83 and Students' Illicit Drug Use Scale (SIDUS) was 0.74 respectively. Data relating to the research questions were analysed using Mean, Standard Deviation and Simple Regression, while hypotheses were tested with t-test and simple regression at 0.05 level of significance. The finding of the study showed that depression and self-esteem, significantly predict illicit drug use among secondary school students in Obio/Akpor LGA of Rivers State. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that school administrators should employ and empower professional guidance counsellors to design and implement effective school-based mental health programmes. These programmes should specifically target early identification and intervention for students exhibiting symptoms of depression and low self-esteem which are precursors to drug involvement.

Keywords: Illicit Drug Use, Depression and Self-Esteem, Secondary school students

Introduction

The menace of illicit drug use is gradually becoming an established part of our present-day society. More worrisome is the recent increase of illicit drug use among the young population especially students in secondary schools. Recent data continue to highlight the prevalence and impact of illicit drug use among adolescents. According to the 2023 Monitoring the

Future survey by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), 10.9% of eighth graders, 19.8% of 10th graders, and 31.2% of 12th graders reported engaging in illicit drug use within the past year, reflecting a persistent trend in adolescent substance use (NIDA, 2023). Similarly, the World Drug Report 2023 by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) emphasizes the emergence of converging crises as illicit drug markets continue to expand globally, thereby underscoring the urgency of implementing comprehensive prevention and intervention strategies (UNODC, 2023). Simply, particularly among young individuals, there is a recent rise in the rate of substances intake and dependence in Owerri Nigeria and other countries of West African regions (West African Commission on Drugs, 2014, Igboka, et al., 2023). These findings reinforce the critical need for sustained research, policy efforts, and targeted interventions to curb the adverse effects of illicit drug use among secondary school students and the broader youth population.

A drug is any chemical substance that, when introduced into the body, alters the structure or function of cells, tissues, or organs, either for medical treatment or non-medical purposes (World Health Organization, 2004; UNODC, 2023; NIDA, 2023). Drugs are chemicals which when used, affects an organism's mental and physical capacity to function (Donald, 2011). It is an acceptable behaviour if drugs are prescribed by medical professionals to a patient and used as directed, however the society frowns at individuals who misuse or abuse drugs, and this aptly explains what illicit drug is. Illicit drug use is often termed drug abuse, which refers to the misuse or excessive use of prescribed medications or illegal substances in a manner harmful to health and social functioning (World Health Organization (WHO), 2004 as cited in Agberotimi, 2018). The use of drugs in manners that deviate from medical norms or socially acceptable pattern within a given society and culture is also referred to as illicit drug use. Simply put, illicit drug use is inappropriate use of drugs for a purpose other than its legitimate purpose. Jibrin (2019) explained illicit drug use as the purchase, use and possession of drugs which are termed illegal, depending on the society's definition.

The National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control, (NAFDAC) (2014) explained the term illicit drug use as excessive and persistent self-administration of a substance or substances without regard to the medically or culturally accepted patterns. In the same vein, Chisom (2010) described illicit drug use as the excessive, maladaptive, or addictive use of drugs for nonmedical purposes despite social, psychological, and physical problems that may arise from such use. Ndom, Igbokwe and Ekeruo (2012) explained illicit drug use as drug abuse involving the use of a substance in a manner that its user(s) excessively consumes the substance in large quantity or in a manner detrimental to

themselves or those around them. According to Sambo as cited in Muritala, et al, (2015), drug is said to be illicitly used when the usage is not pharmacologically necessary especially when used in the face of legal prohibition, or when a socially acceptable beverage is used excessively. Illicit drug use could also be viewed as the use of substances to the extent that it interferes with the physical health, psychological stability, and social functioning of an individual, often resulting in personal, academic, and societal problems. Ewuziem (2015) sees illicit drug use as the excessive or persistent taking of a particular substance or a combination of different substances, to the extent that it causes physical damage to the user, impairment of the user's ability to function in social situations, or make a person behave in ways that may be harmful to others and himself. Ajayi and Ayodele (2002) maintained that illicit drug use is the wrong application or improper use of chemical substances that have the tendency of altering the functioning of the cells in the body. For Ajayi and Ekundayo (2010), illicit drug use is over reliance or dependence and therefore misuse of one particular drug either with or without a previous medical diagnosis, from qualified personnel.

According to Afuwai (2016) there are several illicit drugs which are commonly used among the young population, they include: (a) Depressants; these are drugs that slow down the central nervous system, bodily functions and behaviours. Examples of depressant drugs include barbiturates, tranquilizers, and alcohol. (b) Hallucinogens: Hallucinogens also called psychedelic (mind-altering) drugs, are drugs that modify an individual's perceptual experiences and produce delusions. Common example of this drug is the LSD (Lysergic acid diethylamide). (c) Stimulants: are drugs that excite any bodily function, but especially the brain and nervous system. Examples include caffeine, nicotine, amphetamines and cocaine. Large doses can cause over-stimulation, resulting in anxiety, panic, and seizures. (d) Marijuana: a psychoactive drug from cannabis plant. Examples include ganja, weed, morocco, and Indian hemp. (e) Narcotics: psychoactive or pain-relief drugs used for numbing or paralyzing a body part. Examples include heroin, codeine, morphine, methadone, fentanyl and tramadol. (f) Inhalants: these are dangerous substances that have psychoactive (mind-altering) properties when inhaled. Examples include aerosols, cobbler's glue/gum, dried faeces, paints, cleaning fluids and gasoline.

Illicit drug use can cause serious and sometimes irreversible damage to individual's physical, mental and psychological wellbeing. Afuwai (2016) asserted that illicit drug use can affect the thinking ability of an individual, making the person do things irrationally. The World Health Organization (2012) stressed that illicit drug use is capable of affecting brain or altering mind, mood and externally observed behaviours. Van Tyne, et al., (2012) argued

that illicit drug use tends to undermine moral restraints, leads to violent behaviours and other criminal acts. Illicit drug use is a major public health problem all over the world. It is therefore not surprising that there is a prevalence in the number secondary school adolescents engaging in illicit drug use both at home and in school. Illicit drug use among students has many negative effects, for instance, illicit drug use is responsible for nausea, insomnia, hangovers, and accidental injuries (Ekeke, et al, 2016). Heavy illicit drug use, even on a single occasion, can result to harm of self and other persons. Carney, Myers, Louw, Lombard and Flisher (2013) observed that persons who indulge in illicit drug use had higher likelihood of exhibiting abusive behaviours such as aggressiveness, and bullying. They further stressed that it is very common to find illicit drug users commit crimes like rape, murder, armed robbery and kidnapping. Illicit drug use causes multisystem organ damage, including neurological impairment and cognitive deficits (Lee, et al., 2018; NHMRC, 2020), cardiovascular complications such as arrhythmias and cardiomyopathy (Darke et al., 2010; AIHW, 2025), hepatotoxicity and liver cirrhosis (NHMRC, 2020; WHO, 2022), gastrointestinal pathologies like oesophageal tears and pancreatitis (Degenhardt et al., 2020), renal dysfunction secondary to direct toxicity or rhabdomyolysis (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2025), and death (Shield, & Rehm, 2021; Darke et al 2024) with these effects being well-documented across clinical and epidemiological studies.). Other effects of illicit drug use among young people include academic underachievement, poor study habit and school drop-out. Obi (2014) opined that illicit drug users stand the chance of being infected with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), hepatitis A, B and C, especially those who share needles with others while injecting illicit drug into their bodies. Some psychological effects of illicit drug use include schizophrenia, psychosis, depression, shame and guilt, loss of self-esteem, frustration, disorientation suicide ideation, actual suicide. Often adolescents who engage in illicit drug user are faced with lots of crisis as they strive to adjust to their home and school demands. In the course of their struggle to adjust and also maintain their identity they sometimes run into problem that places them in further dilemma. Sometimes too, they find themselves compromising and falling into more dangerous problems (Agaku, et al., 2014). Sequel to the foregoing, Ewuziem (2015) stressed that illicit drug use has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigeria and the prevalence in the number of students indulging in illicit drug use has become a source of concern that should be properly looked into by the government, school authorities and researchers. Therefore, this research was carried out to establish some psychological

variables such as depression and self-esteem as predictors of illicit drug use among secondary school students.

There are debates that illicit drug use among students may be linked to depression. Depression is conceptualized as a mental state of mind producing serious mood swings, loss of interest or pleasure, decreased energy, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, and poor concentration (WHO, 2012). Depression is a mental health disorder characterized by persistent sadness, loss of interest or pleasure (anhedonia), and a range of cognitive-behavioural symptoms, including insomnia or hypersomnia, appetite or weight changes, psychomotor agitation or retardation, fatigue, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt, difficulty concentrating, and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide (American Psychiatric Association (APA), 2022). Contemporary research highlights the neurobiological correlates of depression, including dysfunction in the prefrontal cortex and limbic system (Drevets et al., 2008 Gonda, et al., 2023), as well as transdiagnostic features like maladaptive rumination, which perpetuates negative mood states (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000). The disorder significantly affects emotions, thought patterns, behaviours, physiology, and social relationships (Dahle et al., 2011). Depression is a serious mood disorder that disrupts an individual's daily life and is distinct from regular mood fluctuations (Njoku & Obogo, 2017). The University of Michigan Depression Center (2014) stresses that depression involves changes in brain chemistry rather than being a transient feeling. It affects an estimated 350 million people globally, with about 1 in 20 individuals experiencing depressive episodes (WHO, 2020). Chinawa et al. (2015) found that 7.4% of adolescents in Nigerian secondary schools exhibit depressive symptoms, often linked to illicit drug use. Andrea (2015) identified adolescents at higher risk for depression as those facing behavioural issues, genetic factors, family conflicts, academic struggles, health problems, and engagement in illicit drug use. Agu et al. (2013) emphasized the bidirectional relationship between depression and illicit drug use, where one can influence the other. Symptoms of depression can be observed across various domains, such as cognitive (e.g., concentration problems, memory loss), physiological (e.g., sadness, hopelessness), physical (e.g., tiredness, appetite changes, sleep disorders), and behavioural (e.g., substance abuse, absenteeism). The impact of these symptoms on illicit drug use among students remains a key issue to explore in research (Pang, 2014). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the connection between depression and illicit drug use among students.

Another variable that may influence illicit drug use among secondary school students is self-esteem. Psychologists have defined self-esteem as the positive and negative evaluations we

have about ourselves (Cheung, et al., 2015). Self-esteem refers to the general feelings of self-worth or self-value which helps construct a sense of self (Lightfoot, et al., 2008). Rosenberg (1965) as cited in Isukwem and Ekechukwu (2019) stressed that self-esteem is an individual's perception or subjective appraisal of one's own self-worth, one's feelings of self-respect and self-confidence and the extent to which the individual holds positive or negative views about self. It is self-evaluation involving cognitive appraisals about general self-worth and affective experiences of the self (Murphy, et al., 2005). The self-esteem of a person could be classified as being low or high (Hewitt, 2002). In relation to illicit drug use, studies have argued that low self-esteem is a predictor of illicit drug use among students (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe 2007; Li & Chung, 2011). Fayokun (2011) reported that the vast majority of secondary school students who engage in illicit drug use often exhibit low self-esteem. According to him, such students resort to drug use as a means of boosting their self-worth and gaining a sense of belonging, in contrast to their counterparts with higher self-esteem. He further emphasized that low self-esteem among students can result in psychological challenges such as dejection, phobia, and social anxiety disorders. Consequently, in an attempt to overcome feelings of worthlessness and low self-image, some students resort to the use of illicit drugs as a coping mechanism (Fayokun, 2011).

Ajayi, Haastrup and Osalusi (2017) explained that student with high self-esteem usually think and see themselves as asserts to their families and society, to them illicit drug use would likely bring shame and dishonour to their family and end to their educational aspirations, as such they would not want to engage in illicit drug use. Whereas students with low self-esteem are gullible and volatile about their self-worth, hence they are prone to illicit drug use. Brown, Dutton, and Cook (2001) stressed that when students have low self-esteem, they are very likely to have bad view about their dignity and worth, as well as those of other around them. They opined that this eventually makes them to indulge in illicit drug use. However, Okore and Okorie (2016) were of the opinion that self-esteem does not relate to students' illicit drug use. They explained that students' illicit drug use could be related to other factors rather than self-esteem. Low self-esteem affects every facet of an individual's life, from the way one thinks, to the way one reacts to life situations. The way a student feels about himself or herself is adversely affected when negative influences or thoughts are allowed to take a better part of his or her mind and this makes such a student susceptible to illicit drug use (Solomon, 2012).

The researchers observed that illicit drug use among secondary school adolescents result in adverse life effects including injuries, illnesses, low self-esteem, and death. Illicit drug use

among adolescents increases the probability of negative health consequences including Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), hepatitis A, B and C. Illicit drug use among adolescents has also resulted in academic underachievement, poor study habit and school drop-out. The situation is such that secondary school adolescents would prefer visiting their friends who would give them drugs, or other places where they can get drugs even at school hours rather than attending classes or studying at home. Even when they are in class, some are seen peddling drugs, hence they lack concentration in class lessons and even loiter during classes. Some students have been expelled for illicit drug use in school, while some other had been arrested by the police and the National Drug, Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) for the use of illicit drugs. The researchers are personally aware of two senior secondary school male students from the same family who were diagnosed with schizophrenia, allegedly linked to prolonged illicit drug use. Consequently, they dropped out of school and are currently undergoing treatment at the Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Rumuigbo. Their condition has brought considerable shame and reproach to their family's reputation. Similarly, there is the case of Jane, a young female student who was introduced to drug use by her peers in school. Tragically, during one of their drug use episodes, she overdosed on heroin administered through injection and died as a result. Illicit drug use among adolescents has been associated with several adverse psychological effects, including schizophrenia, psychosis, depression, feelings of shame and guilt, low self-esteem, frustration, disorientation, suicidal ideation, and in extreme cases, actual suicide. Adolescents involved in illicit drug use often experience multiple crises as they struggle to cope with the demands of home and school. In their attempt to adjust and assert their identity, many of them encounter challenges that further complicate their situation, sometimes leading to the adoption of more destructive behaviours.

If the issue of adolescent illicit drug use is not addressed with prompt and strategic interventions, the future of young people in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area may be jeopardized, potentially resulting in an upsurge of social vices within the community. Therefore, it became imperative to examine depression and self-esteem as psychological predictors of illicit drug use among secondary school students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study examined depression and self-esteem as predictors of illicit drug use among secondary school students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area, Rivers State

Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives;

1. Determine the extent depression predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
2. Find out the extent self-esteem predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. To what extent does depression predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?
2. To what extent does self-esteem predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study;

1. Depression does not significantly predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
2. Self-esteem does not significantly predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted the correlational research design. The population of the study comprised all 14,784 senior secondary school students (SSS 1, 2 and 3) in the 16 public secondary schools in Obio/Akpor LGA of Rivers State. A sample of 600 students was randomly selected for the study using the purposive sampling technique. Two instruments were used in collecting data for this study. They include; Psychological Determinants of Illicit Drug Use Questionnaire (PDIDUQ) and Students' Illicit Drug Use Scale (SIDUS). The Cronbach alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instruments, the reliability coefficient of Psychological Determinants of Illicit Drug Use Questionnaire (PDIDUQ) was 0.83 and Students' Illicit Drug Use Scale (SIDUS) was 0.74 respectively. The research questions were answered using Mean, Standard Deviation and Simple Regression, while hypotheses were tested with t-test and simple regression at 0.05 level of significance

Results and Discussion

Research Question One: To what extent does depression predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 1: Simple Regression Analysis on the extent depression predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.882 ^a	.778	.777	2.44401

Table 1 revealed that the regression coefficient R was calculated to be 0.882 while the regression squared value was computed to be 0.778. This shows that illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State is positively and highly predicted by depression. Judging by the coefficient of determination, it shows that 77.8% change in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State can be predicted by depression, while 22.2% was accounted by other variables not considered in this study.

Hypothesis One: Depression does not significantly predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Table 2: t-test associated with simple Regression on how depression predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	2.501	.612			4.086	.000
	Depression	.935	.020	.882		45.738	.000

Table 2 revealed that depression predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State by 0.882. The t-test value 45.738 associated with regression was statistically significant at 0.000 when subjected to 0.05 alpha level of significance. By implication, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, depression significantly predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Research Question Two: To what extent does self-esteem predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 3: Simple Regression Analysis on the extent self-esteem predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
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1	.680 ^a	.463	.462	3.79995
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Table 3 revealed that the regression coefficient R was calculated to be 0.680 while the regression squared value was computed to be 0.463. This shows that illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State is positively predicted by self-esteem. Judging by the coefficient of determination, it shows that 46.3% change in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State can be predicted by self-esteem, while 53.7% was accounted by other variables not considered in this study.

Hypothesis Two: Self-esteem does not significantly predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Table 4: t-test associated with simple Regression on how self-esteem predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1 (Constant)	8.944	.946			9.451	.000
Self-Esteem	-.716	-.032	-.680		-22.688	.000

The result in Table 4 shows that self-esteem significantly predicts illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The regression coefficient for self-esteem is negative ($B = -0.716$), indicating that as self-esteem decreases, the level of illicit drug use increases. The standardized beta coefficient is -0.680 , suggesting a strong inverse relationship between self-esteem and illicit drug use. This implies that as self-esteem increases, illicit drug use decreases, invariably, as self-esteem decreases, illicit drug use increases. The t-value is -22.688 , and the associated p-value is 0.000 , which is less than the 0.05 level of significance. Since the p-value ($.000$) is less than 0.05 , the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, self-esteem significantly predicts illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

Depression and Illicit Drug Use

The finding of the study showed that depression significantly predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, thus this indicates that depression significantly predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The finding of the present study is in agreement with the study by Chinawa, et al, (2015) who found out that depression significantly predict illicit drug use among students. Andrea (2015) also found out that depression significantly predict illicit drug use among students and added that depression has forced many students into illicit drug use and further develop other psycho-behavioural problems.

The reason why the finding of the present study would stand correct is based on the fact that depression affects the emotions, thoughts, behaviours, and social relationships of a person, persistent feelings of dejection, sadness and worthlessness. Wherein, students with depression may be susceptible to illicit drug use as a way to escape these depressive symptoms.

Self-esteem and Illicit Drug Use

The result of this study showed that self-esteem significantly predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The null hypothesis of no significant relationship between self-esteem and illicit drug use was rejected in favour of the alternative that self-esteem significantly predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The findings of the present study is in agreement with an earlier study by Fayokun (2011) who found out that self-esteem significantly predict illicit drug use among students. He further reported that the vast majority of students who are illicit drug users in secondary schools have low self-esteem hence their aim of engaging in illicit drug use is usually for raising their self-worth, than those with higher self-esteem. Ajayi, Haastrup and Osalusi (2017) also found out that self-esteem significantly predict illicit drug use among students.

The finding of the present study is not surprising in that self-esteem is an individual's perception or subjective appraisal of one's own self-worth, one's feelings of self-respect and self-confidence and the extent to which the individual holds positive or negative views about self. Wherein, students with low self-esteem are likely to be gullible and volatile about their self-worth, hence they engage in illicit drug use. Whereas, students with high self-esteem usually think and see themselves as assets to their families and society, to them illicit drug use would likely bring shame and dishonour to their family, and an end to their educational aspirations, as such they would not want to indulge illicit drug use.

Conclusion

The study concludes that illicit drug use is a major problem among secondary school students especially in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. Depression and self-esteem significantly predict illicit drug use among students in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommended the following;

1. School administrators should employ and empower professional guidance counsellors to design and implement effective school-based mental health programmes. These programmes should specifically target early identification and intervention for students exhibiting symptoms of depression and low self-esteem which are precursors to drug involvement.
2. There is a need for the inclusion of mental health education in the school curriculum to create awareness about depression, its symptoms, coping strategies, and the dangers of illicit drug use. This will foster early help-seeking behaviour among students.
3. Parents and guardians should be actively involved in the psychosocial development of their children. Regular parenting workshops and sensitization programmes should be organized to equip parents with skills for effective communication, emotional support, and supervision of their adolescents.
4. Government and non-governmental organizations should develop and sponsor intervention programmes such as life skills education, cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) sessions, self-esteem enhancement workshops, and stress management training for students.
5. Policy makers in Rivers State should consider establishing adolescent-friendly mental health centres within school clusters in Obio/Akpor LGA to provide counselling services, emotional support, and referral services for students with mental health challenges.
6. School authorities should enforce strict regulations against the possession and use of illicit drugs within the school environment. Additionally, collaboration with security agencies to monitor drug supply chains around schools should be prioritized.

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