

## Rivers State University Undergraduates' Awareness and Response to Below-The-Line Campaign on Drug Abuse

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### **Abstract**

*The study aimed to ascertain the Rivers State University undergraduates' awareness and response to below-the-line media campaigns on drug abuse. Specifically, the study sought to determine the level of exposure of Rivers State University students to below-the-line media campaign against drug abuse; find out if Rivers State University students adhere to below-the-line media campaigns on drug abuse among others. The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey design. The population of this study consisted of the students of Rivers State University in Rivers State. The population of the institutions was obtained from the office of the Registrar of each of the institutions. The total population for the study was 24,325. In determining the sample size for this study, Taro Yamane mathematical formula was adopted. The sample size for the study was 400 and the study adopted the multi-stage sampling technique. Data for this study were obtained using copies of questionnaire. The research questions were analysed using the contingency tables were used to present data obtained from the questionnaire using weighted mean score. Findings from the study revealed that, all the respondents accepted to have heard, seen or read about drugs abuse in the campus. The result still revealed that the majority of the respondents had heard, seen or read about the drug to a low intensity among others. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concludes that: media precipitates widespread awareness and as such served as a veritable medium for social mobilization. Below-the-line media such as billboard, signboard, posters, fliers, T-shirt, caps, handbills, etc demonstrated less competence in creating drug abuse exposure. The study, therefore, recommended that media, especially, on the below-the-line media should through their day to day reportage focus surveillance on the many ills and menace in the society so as to use them as themes for campaign. Also, campaigns should be designed such that they will have rudiments of the issues that form the subject matter of such campaigns. In this way, many people will see the need to key into the highlights of the message themes.*

**Keywords:** Rivers State University, Undergraduates, Awareness, Response, Below-the-Line Media, Campaign, Drug Abuse

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### **Introduction**

The indispensability of the mass media is not in doubt in a multi-faceted world like ours, especially as man is limited by his natural senses when viewed against the backdrop of the myriads of stimuli that daily confront him. Therefore, without the informative and educative role of the mass media, it will be agonizingly difficult for one to comprehend events and issues beyond his immediate

sensory perception (Okon, 2013). The web of mass media functionality enjoins the mass media to keep the society abreast of the news made by its own people. It is further expected that the mass media should also get deeply involved in the life of the people and be concerned with the things that concern them. Interestingly, a broad understanding of societal needs and a keen sense of journalistic responsibility accord to media practice. Similarly, the mass media in the light of social change, light the way and drive for action (Okon, 2013).

In a media-dominated world like ours, we are bombarded daily with reports, both formal and non-formal, of drugs abuse related deaths among youths. More disheartening is the fact that our health care delivery system is in shambles, with life expectancy of the average individual pegged at 47. In this regard, Nasidi (2012) notes that “life expectancy in Nigeria is the lowest among West Africa countries.” (p.36). Haladu (2003) explains the term drug abuse, as excessive and persistent self-administration of a drug without regard to the medically or culturally accepted patterns. 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. World Book Encyclopedia (2020) sees drug abuse as the non-medical use of a drug that interferes with a healthy and productive life. Drug abuse is the excessive, maladaptive or addictive use of drugs for non-medical purpose.

According to Abdulahi (2009) views drug abuse as the use of drugs to the extent that interferes with the health and social function of an individual. In essence, drug abuse may be defined as the arbitrary overdependence or misuse of one particular drug with or without a prior medical diagnosis from qualified health practitioners. It can also be viewed as the unlawful overdose in the use of drug(s). That’s why Odejide (2020) warned that drug abusers who exhibit symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression, behaviour changes, fatigue and loss or increase in appetite should be treated by medical experts and counsellors to save them from deadly disease. Drug abuse is the primary reason why many people are rehabilitated in Psychiatric homes and in prisons, as well as a source of crime and health problem in society today. It has become an unprecedented problem in Nigeria. Due to drug abuse the number of people incarcerated in various prisons across the country has increased dramatically over the last few decades. This primarily occasioned by peer influences in most cases. Peer group influences account for over 70% of drug abuses and misuse in Nigeria.

Drugs are meant to build not to destroy, to heal not to kill and to replenish not to drain. They are substances capable of bringing about a change in the biological function of an individual through its chemical actions, while modifying perceptions, cognition, mood, behaviour and general body functions (Fareo, 2012). According to pharmacologists, a chemical substance is used in the treatment, cure, prevention or diagnosis of disease or used to enhance physical and mental well-being (Obiechina & Isiguzo, 2016). However, recent outrage in the country, points to the very fact that most drugs have become severally abused and misused, through wrongful and inappropriate application, thereby resulting in a national or even global menace. According to Akanbi, et al. (2015), drug abuse, (now called, drug /substance use disorder), has become a threatening and disturbing global phenomenon, with multi-dimensional implications on global and Nigerian peace. It is one of the most potent motivating factors responsible for high level of anti-social, economic, health, and political problems confronting the world. It accounts for majority of the criminal activities such as killing, kidnapping, raping, cultism, banditry, suicide, armed robbery, as well as

issues of self-inflicted manifestations like accidents, withdrawal syndrome, dependence, depression, aggression, poor academic performance and failures.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) (2020), drawing from the American Psychiatric Association, posited that drug abuse is the application of illegal and non-medical use of substances, possessing inherent properties of altering the mental state of an individual in numerous ways, considered by social norms and values as inappropriate, undesirable, harmful, threatening, worrisome and culture-alien. It is a departure from an appropriate, legal or lawful use of drugs. It constitutes everything that represents non-medical use of substances by human beings with the conscious or unconscious intention of modifying one or more of its original functions and as such, impairing the individual's ability to function effectively and normally within the acceptable social, physical, emotional or psychological expectations. Moreover, literature point out that some drugs/substances commonly abused by students include tobacco, alcohol, stimulants like caffeine, nicotine, cannabis, Indian hemp, amphetamine, tramadol, codeine, volatile solvents like glue, chloroform, correction fluid, psychotropic medicines such as sedatives, anxiolytics, hypnotics, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), mescaline, vasodilator, aesthetic, gases manpower, paraga, sepe, opaeyin, etc, (Adeyeye, 2018 and UNODC, 2018). Indeed, drug/substance abuse has a ravaging effect on the lives of many Nigerian youths and students, ruins families and leads to the devastation of communities.

As a matter of fact, majority of the people have been arrested for drug offences, and/or have a drug abuse problem. Some of the factors contributing to this arrest are the public awareness of the danger in drug abuse, and the "war on drugs" declared by the Federal Government, using various agencies like the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control etc. However, since the year the NDLEA was set up in 1999, frantic efforts are being made to collect relevant information on drugs, through variety of drug indicators for policy formation. The impact of these agencies in terms of intervention strategies and control is tremendous. In fact, the use of certain drugs, (particularly the psychoactive drugs such as codeine and tramadol) has reached a dimension which is now considered or observed as an abuse and which poses serious threat to social harmony ,or the health and well-being among members of society. It is in reaction to this, that implementation to ensure the reduction of the availability and abuse of such drugs by various methods including legislation, punishment, rehabilitation, public enlightenment etc.

Drug abuse and misuse have become a lifestyle to some persons in the society. Today, drug misuse and abuse are major problems worldwide as its extent and characteristics, however, vary from region to region, and trends among the youths. Crystal meth, Codeine, tramadol and other drug related problems are becoming more and more a public health concern. But in all, the media is doing little or nothing to curb the menace, since its concern is hinged more on commercial contents. Thus, the abuse of drugs represents one of the leading causes of preventable death, illness and injury. This abuse is believed to be associated with increasing amounts consumed, frequency of use and group involved, it is incumbent on the media to do more of public advocacy to end the menace but they feel less concern, the non-active involvement of the below-the-line media is an issue which this study is concerned about. As a matter of fact, majority of the people have been arrested for drug offences, and/or have a drug abuse problem. some of the factors contributing to this arrest are the public awareness of the danger in drug abuse, and the "war on drugs" declared

by the Federal Government using various agencies like the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control etc.

The foregoing lends credence to the fact that public health has in recent times become a subject of planetary concern. The least that mass media can do in this regard, is to vigorously raise attention to the plausibility of the logic of awareness and drive for action (preventive measure) through messages. In other words, the ideology of preventive measure offers the mass media a veritable platform for message awareness. How these messages have been deployed by media to further the cause of awareness of danger, and health risk of drug especially crystal meth, codeine and tramadol in the tertiary institutions in Rivers State, especially, Rivers State University is the primary concern of this study. It is therefore the thrust of this study to assess the Rivers State University undergraduates' awareness and response to below-the-line media campaigns on drug abuse.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The use of certain drugs, (particularly the psychoactive drugs such as codeine and tramadol) have reached a dimension which is now considered as an abuse and poses serious threat to social harmony or the health, and well-being among members of society. This scenario calls for all hands to be on deck in order to tame the danger of drug/substance abuse. It demands combined efforts and collective responsibilities from all educational stakeholders especially; media and information professionals, who are the purveyors of information and knowledge resources. Media houses and information professionals are trained personnel with higher educational qualifications and requisite skills of generating, recording, processing, storing, preserving, retrieving, disseminating and communicating information to the audience. Media are involved in the tasks of advocating, educating, mentoring, counselling, liaising, lecturing and enlightening students through diverse media and for a on the surging tide of drug/substance abuse among students in the Nigerian tertiary institutions, especial in Rivers State University.

This has become absolutely necessary because students as leaders of tomorrow, the hope of the families, the light of the communities and the pillars of nation; are in great danger of increasing affinity with drug/substance abuse in all our institutions of higher learning. In fact, the misuse and abuse of drugs/substances by students have become one of the most worrisome health, emotional and psychological related phenomena in Nigeria and Rivers State. Also, NAFDAC (2021), reported that the abuse of illicit drugs is forming Nigerian student's subculture, thereby making several Nigerian students live in the dilemma of mental health and many other physical, emotional cum psychological challenges such as insanity, maladjustment to school situations, poor academic performance, loss of focus and concentration, and high rate of school drop outs.

Based on these problems, the tertiary institutions authorities in collaboration with governments, students union governments, students affairs, tertiary public relations departments, NDLEA and development agencies to employ various below-the-line media campaigns in the tertiary institutions campuses such as T-Shirts, Billboards, handbills, posters, caps, fliers, handbooks, brochures, etc with the inscription; "say no to drug abuse" to see that drug abuse is eradicated in the tertiary institutions. Below-the-line media are some of the channels to reach to the tertiary institutions students. Below-the-line media are pivotal in the achievement of any type of growth and development in the society. They are expected to create awareness, enlighten, educate, inform and entertain people (students). Good health is an important index for development

of a society. It is only healthy students that can afford to make positive contributions towards its growth and development. Therefore, this study is set to examine the Rivers State University undergraduates' awareness and response to below-the-line media campaigns on drug abuse.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The study aims to assess the Rivers State University undergraduates' awareness and response to below-the-line media campaigns on drug abuse. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the level of exposure of Rivers State University undergraduates to below-the-line media campaign against drug abuse;
2. Find out if Rivers State University undergraduates adhere to below-the-line media campaigns on drug abuse;
3. Ascertain factors responsible for the abuse of drugs by Rivers State University undergraduates.
4. Examine if the below-the-line media played any role to reduce the rate of drug abuses among Rivers State University undergraduates.

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Drug Use and Abuse**

Since the early times, herbs, leaves and plants have been used to heal and control diseases. The use of drug in itself does not constitute any danger, because drugs correctly administered have been a blessing as a drug is a substance used for medical purposes that change the state or function of the body. According to Carroll (2018), drug is any substance which upon entering the body can change either the function or structure of the organism. On the other hand, drug abuse is a situation when drug is taken more than it is presented. It could be seen as the use of illicit drugs or the abuse of prescription or over-the-counter drugs. He further defined drug abuse as the deliberate use of chemical substances for reasons other than intended medical purposes and which results in physical, mental emotional or social impairment of the user. Sambo (2018) posits that chronic use of substances can cause serious, sometimes irreversible damage to youth's physical and psychological development. The use of drugs could be beneficial or harmful depending on the mode of use. A drug refers to a substance that could bring about a change in the biological function through its chemical actions (Okoye, 2011).

#### **Information Campaigns and the role of the Media**

Voluntary associations possess the right to advocate certain issues, and the mass media are capable of providing access to the public (Paisley, 1989). Social scientists have contributed a theoretically grounded approach to the planning, conducting, and evaluating of these campaigns, while government organizations, such as the National Institute of Drug Abuse, have often contributed the funding for these campaigns (Paisley, 1989). Each audience for these campaigns creates a unique communication environment which filters the messages that reach it; therefore, each audience member may respond differently to various persuasive appeals. As a result, the effectiveness of information campaigns rests on the degree of shared values and perceptions in the audience (Paisley, 1989). Paisley (1989, by gaining knowledge of these shared perceptions, researchers may increase the likelihood of persuasion by incorporating or exploiting them in campaign messages. As Paisley states, "One crusader... cannot achieve reform until large numbers of citizens agree that action is necessary" (p. 25).

Characteristically, the mass media have been better at reinforcing attitudes than changing attitudes (Wartella & Middlestadt, 1991). This function is influenced by selective attention and retention of the audience, such that the audience's memory of material is consistent with its pre-existing attitudes towards the subject (Wartella & Middlestadt, 1991). Also, the selective exposure tendency explains which information is sought out or avoided. Audience agreement or disagreement with the communication determines whether they seek out or avoid exposure to it (Paisley, 1989). In addition, the audience's affective response to the material influences the likelihood of attention, persuasion, and retention. Audience members often decide if they like or dislike the communication before they are aware of what it says (Paisley, 1989).

### **Media Campaigns**

Media campaigns as a set of activities that seek to achieve a set of predetermined goals (Shelleby & Shaw, 2014). Tully et al., (2019) see that media campaigns are a collection of communication activities aimed at events that influence public behaviour. However, Tully, et al., (2017) define media campaigns as it is seen as a set of communication activities developed during a given time to address a set of predetermined goals that include increasing the level of knowledge and awareness that can lead to changes in public behaviour related to social issues and problems. Jones (2013) defines media campaigns as a collection of newspaper articles, television interviews and other media templates aimed at achieving a range of objectives.

### **Levels of Impact of Media Campaigns on Public**

There is a range of stages related to the impact of media campaigns on people. Baumel (2016) believes that the levels of influence of media campaigns vary from one campaign to another. Some media campaigns may aim to increase people' awareness towards certain topics, while some other media campaigns aim to change the behaviour of people towards some issues, but a change in the behaviour of the public, especially some teenagers, goes through a series of stages.

The first is to raise people' awareness of the issues and topics raised by media campaigns. The second is to increase knowledge of the issues by increasing the amount of information that people are exposed to due to these media campaigns. The third is to increase attention to the dimensions surrounding the issues presented by media campaigns (Panter-Brick, et al., 2014). Fourth of these levels is the formation of the desire and trend of people to take steps in the issues raised, such as contributing and participating with the rest of society to solve these issues or having a tendency among people to follow the procedures followed by these campaigns, if the campaign aims to address the problems suffered by young people such as health problems such as addiction and drugs, or social problems such as bullying against others. The fifth is the practice of practice and practice advocated by media campaigns related to addressing some of the problems and issues in society (Frank, et al., 2015).

### **Media Campaign against Drugs Abuse**

According to Dominick (2019), a campaign consists of a large number of advertisements, stressing the same major theme or appeal that appears in a number of media over a specified time. Media campaigns are widely used to expose high proportions of large population to messages through routine use of existing media such as television, radio and newspapers. Campaigns have been employed to affect different health behaviours in large populations. Wakefield et al. (2010) state that it is a result of the force in campaigns that environmental communicators seek to harness this powerful force to inform and change public opinion, but often, this power is quite difficult to be

used effectively. In some cultures, people are bombarded with over many advertising messages per day. What would make a message stand out among competition? According to Sandman (2010), a team of creative people should work with content experts putting into consideration the implications of the message and that every element of the campaign should be pretested with the intended audience to avoid miscommunication. There are many examples of media products that were distributed broadly before the organizers realize they are not communicating the desired message. Evidently, campaigns can be of short period of time or of long duration. In the same vein, they might stand alone or be combined with other organized programmers like clinical health or institutional outreach or may complement policy change. Therefore, various ways of disseminating campaign messages are employed, if health campaigns are part of brooders social marketing programmers (Wakefield, et al., 2010). It is common to hear people discussing and making reference to what they have heard over the radio, watched on television or read in the newspapers. The information given out by the mass media are usually for the consumption of the citizens of a particular society, the write ups in all facets of life are done to arouse the interest or curiosity of the citizen.

### **Theoretical framework**

#### **The Gatekeeping theory**

Apparently, Kurt Lewin was the first person to use the term “gatekeeping” as the theory is attributed to him. He used the term to describe mothers as the persons who decide which food would end up on the family dinner table. Later the theory was used in media to describe those who control the transmission of the media fare (Anaeto, 2003). Folarin (2002) quoting Ekeli notes that; be he a reporter, editor or subeditor, a journalist is first and foremost gatekeeper of news. Gatekeeping emanates from the understanding that journalists have a moral right; a part from legal restrictions to restrict what is to be published and be socially responsible to their readers in whatever material they package for the masses.

The theory is also highly relevant to this study as it emphasized how media content is filtered, selected and disseminated to the audience, often by gatekeepers such as editors, journalists, or content creators. In the content of the study, understanding how gatekeepers within the university environment control the flow of information about drug abuse campaigns can shed light on students’ exposure to such messages and their subsequent responses. It can also provide insights into the effectiveness of below-the-line media strategies in influencing attitudes and behaviours related to drug abuse among Rivers State University undergraduates.

#### **Agenda Setting Theory**

The agenda setting theory as propounded by McCombs and Shaw (1972) posits that the mass media do not instruct what people think but what they should think about. Due to the gatekeeping function of the media, they determine and direct public attention to issues considered more important, by the emphasis and prominence given to the issues in the media. It is to this end that the theory maintains that the issue or message that constantly features in the media becomes the public agenda of the people (Coffman, 2002).

There is wide agreement that awareness leads to knowledge, and knowledge leads to behaviour modification (Rimal, 2000). Various theories and models acknowledge the importance of the mass media in creating awareness in the society. One of such theory is the agenda setting theory, which holds that the media have the ability to advise or tell audiences what issues are major

and relevant, thus setting the agenda. They can achieve this by choosing what stories to consider newsworthy and how much prominence and space they give those stories (Folarin, 1998).

Relating this theory to the study, the agenda setting posits that media determine the coverage and its importance to the public. Media scholars believe that by giving a particular topic a prominent treatment in their agenda over a period of time, the media would have succeeded in making the audience believe that the coverage is indeed important. This theory is significant in this study because Ministry of Health, Ministry of Information and Communication and National Drugs law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) know the power of the mass media and, therefore, uses them to their advantage of committing awareness messages on health issues such as drug abuse. In this respect, the media need the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Information and Communication, NDLEA and the Ministries and the agency need the media to reach out to the public. This is a good example of how the mass media should carry out their agenda setting functions for the purpose of health and development.

### **Methodology**

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey design was used to document existing attitudes. The choice of the descriptive survey research design was informed by the need to determine the Rivers State University undergraduates' awareness and response to below-the-line media campaigns on drug abuse. The population of this study consisted of the Rivers State University undergraduates,. The population of the institution was obtained from the office of the Registrar of the institution. The population of the Rivers State University undergraduates 2023/2024 session was 24, 325 (Twenty-four thousand, three hundred of twenty-five).

In determining the sample size for this study, Taro Yamane mathematical formula was adopted.

Mathematically, the formula is  $n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$

Where: n = Represents sample size sought

N = Represents the population size

E = Represents the level of significance (0.05)

I = is constant

From the above formula therefore;

N = 24,325

E = 0.05

$$\therefore n = \frac{24,325}{1 + 24,325(0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{24,325}{1 + 24,325 \times 0.0025}$$

$$\frac{24,325}{6,082}$$

= 3.999, approximately,

So, n = 400. The sample size for the study was 400.

Sampling, on its part, involves the process of selecting a sample. The study adopted the multi-stage sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a non-standardized instrument



designed by the researcher, titled Rivers State University undergraduates' awareness and response to below-the-line media campaigns on drug abuse. The research questions were analysed using the descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. In other words, contingency tables were used to present data obtained from the questionnaire using weighted mean score (WMS).

### Analysis and Discussion of Findings

**Table 1: Heard, Seen or Read about Drugs Abuse in the Campus**

Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Yes</b>	390	100%
<b>No</b>	0	0%
<b>Uncertain</b>	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the Table 1, all the respondents (390) representing 100% accepted to have heard, seen or read about drugs abuse in the campus.

**Table 2: Medium Respondents got the drugs abuse Campaigns in the Campus**

Options	Number for Respondents	Percentage
Billboard/signboard	67	17
Posters/fliers/handbills	84	22
T-shirts/caps	20	5
All of the above	219	56
None of the above	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 reveals that majority of the respondents got the drugs abuse campaigns in the campus through billboard, signboard, posters, fliers, handbills, t-shirts, and caps as they indicated all of the above.

**Table 3: Level of Awareness of drug Abuse Campaigns in the Campus**

Options	Rating	No of Respondents	Percentage
Very High	100 – 80	30	8%
High	79 – 59	122	31%
Low	58 – 38	225	58%
Very Low	37 – 1	13	3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>390</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the above table, majority of the respondents had heard, seen or read about the drug to a low intensity.

**Table 4: Acceptance of Drugs Abuse Campaign in the Campus**

Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Very much	31	8
Much	155	39
Little	184	47
Very little	20	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 shows that majority of the respondents believed and accepted little of the media campaign on drug abuse in the campus.

**Table 5: Description of Respondents to Drug Abuse campaign in Campus**

Option	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Very high	23	4
High	110	28
Low	146	63
Very low	11	3
Total	390	100

Table 5 reveals that majority of the respondents described their response to drug abuse campus in the campus with respect to their attention as very low.

**Table 6: Factors Responsible for Abuse of Drugs by Rivers State University Undergraduates**

Items	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	StD	Extent
Drugs are abused to increase of libido and highness	122 (488)	184 (552)	62 (124)	22 (22)	3.04	0.84	Agreed
Drugs are abused because of depression medication and controlling obesity	88 (352)	134 (402)	118 (236)	50 (50)	2.65	0.96	Agreed
Drugs are abused due to peer influence and fraternity influence	156 (624)	192 (576)	42 (84)	0 (0)	3.26	0.67	Agreed
<b>Grand Mean</b>					<b>3.08</b>		<b>Agreed</b>

Data in Table 6 above reveal that the factors responsible for abuse of drugs by Rivers State University undergraduates were increase of libido, highness, depression medication, obesity control, peer influence and cult/fraternity influences.

**Table 7: Influence of Below-the-Line Media Drugs Abuse Campaign on Rivers State University Undergraduates' Attitude**

Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Advocacy	26	7
Enlightenment	105	27
Awareness creation	251	64
Appeals	8	2
Total	390	100

Table 7 shows that majority of the respondents agreed that awareness creation was used to reduced drug abuse, the influence of media drugs abuse campaign on their attitude is low.

### Discussion of Findings

The data analysed in tables 4.3 to 4.9 provided the platform for this discussion which was purely done in relation to the research questions. Each of the tables handled and addressed a given research question.

**Research Question One:** What is the level of exposure of Rivers State University undergraduates to below-the-line media campaigns on drug abuse?

Responding to the question above, all the respondents accepted to have heard, seen or read about drugs abuse in the campus. The result still revealed that majority of the respondents got the

drugs abuse campaigns in the campus through billboard, signboard, posters, fliers, handbills, t-shirts, and caps. Also, majority of the respondents had heard, seen or read about the drug to a low intensity. This finding corroborates the study of Wakefield et al. (2010) as stated that it is a result of the force in campaigns that environmental communicators seek to harness this powerful force to inform and change public opinion, but often, this power is quite difficult to be used effectively. Also, Stacks and Salween (1996) also explain that, when assessing how affective a health campaign is, the key determinant is the degree of audience reception, the quality and quantity of the message, the dissemination channels and the larger communication environment. It is possible that an audience can be more receptive to some message than others the media channel and how the message is reached by the audience can affect the effectiveness of the health campaign. So to fully realize media's role in facilitating the pursuit of health education, promotion and disease prevention, health communicators need to exploit multiple mass media channels and carry out carefully planned media strategies to reach the intended audience.

The gatekeeping theory upon which this study is anchored on lends credence to the findings of this work. The theory posits that media content is filtered and controlled by gatekeepers before reaching the audience. In the case, gatekeepers could include university authorities, student organizations, or campaign organizers who decide which messages are displayed on billboards, posters, flyers and other promotional materials. The role of gatekeepers in selecting and disseminating campaign messages is crucial for analysing the effectiveness of drug abuse awareness efforts among students. It allows researchers to examine how these gatekeepers shape the information environment on campus and influence students' awareness and responses to drug abuse campaigns. Also, studying the interaction between gatekeepers and audience members can provide insights into the dynamics of information dissemination and reception within the university community, informing future strategies for addressing drug abuse and promoting public health initiatives.

**Research Question Two:** In what ways did the Rivers State University undergraduates adhere to below-the-line media campaign on drug abuse?

Item 6 and 7 confirmed that majority of the respondents believed and accepted little of the media campaign on drug abuse in the campus and majority of the respondents described their response to drug abuse campus in the campus with respect to their attention as very low. This upholds the study of Haladu (2003) that young men and women are potential drug addicts who continued to reside in the social environment in which past drug use occurred, suggests that the use of such drug may continue. This is because most case of drug abuse and misuse emaciates from array of psycho-social reasons. From recent times, the misuse and abuse of drugs have always been an inseparable part of occultism and the youth in urban and deeply involved in this practice. Agenda setting theory gives backing to this finding. It proposes that the idea or information which people have about public issues such as drug abuse tend to be proportionate to the amount of emphasis placed on such issues by the media. This implies that the way the media see and regard issues of drug abuse is the same way the Rivers State University undergraduates would regard such issue. Invariably, the ways in which drug abuser are presented to the public by the broadcast media goes a long way in making the public to see the issue as important and therefore worth thinking.

**Research Question Three:** What factors are responsible for the abuse of drugs by Rivers State University undergraduates? The finding revealed that the factors responsible for abuse of drugs by tertiary institutions students in Port Harcourt were increase of libido, highness, depression medication, obesity control, peer influence and cult/fraternity influences. This finding upholds the two theories that the study was underpinned. Gatekeeping theory states how media content is filtered and selected by gatekeepers before reaching the audience. In the context of drug abuse, gatekeepers could include university authorities, healthcare providers, peer groups and even drug dealers. These accessible and how they are portrayed, thus, shaping students' perceptions and behaviours related to drug use. The agenda setting theory also posits that the media does not tell people what to think, but what to think about. In this case, the factors identified as contributing to drug abuse, such as increase of libido, highness, depression medication, obesity control, peer influence and cult/fraternity influence can be seen as issues that gain prominence in the minds of students through media coverage, discussions and social interactions. Media coverage of drug-related issues and societal norms around drug use can influence which factors students perceive as significant contributors to drug abuse.

**Research Question Four:** what role did below-the-line media played to reduce the rate of drug abuses among Rivers State University undergraduates?

This research question in tables 4.9 answered the research question above respectively. Responding to this, that with regards to reduced drug abuse, the influence of media drugs abuse campaign on their attitude was low and that in changing of youth attitude towards drug abuse, the campaign did not help at all, though awareness creation was used to reduce the drugs abuse.

This study agrees with Okon (2013) in the study of advocacy for early detection of breast cancer among pre-menopausal women in Rivers State: a study of three broadcast stations in Port Harcourt. The study found out that the public service announcements were irregular and the messages (public service announcements) lacked depth because they did not convey adequate information geared towards enlightening the people on the consequences of late detection.

The agenda setting theory adopted in this study hold sway in this finding as the theory avers that the media plays a crucial role in shaping which issues are considered important in society. In this context, the failure of the drug abuse campaigns to significantly impact students' attitudes could be attributed to the media's limited focus on this issue. If drugs abuse prevention campaigns were not given enough prominence or coverage in the media, students may not have perceived drug abuse as a pressing or relevant issue, thereby diminishing the effectiveness of the campaigns in influencing attitudes.

In line with the above, the gatekeeping theory highlights the role of gatekeepers who control the flow of information to the audience. In this case, gatekeepers could include campaign organizers, university authorities and even the media itself. If these gatekeepers did not effectively select and disseminate campaign messages through below-the-line media channels, the campaigns may have failed to reach the target audience or engage them effectively. Additionally, gatekeepers may have filtered or altered campaign messages in ways that diminished their impact on students' attitudes towards drug abuse.

## Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concludes that: media precipitates widespread awareness and as such served as a veritable medium for social mobilization. Below-the-line media such as billboard, signboard, posters, fliers, T-shirt, caps, handbills, etc demonstrated less competence in creating drug abuse exposure. Exposure in this regard precipitates knowledge especially as they border on core issues of drug abuse.

Descriptively, therefore, without a good understanding orchestrated by exposure, the core issues of drug abuse and misuse will be lost on listeners. The inference therefore is that adequate information can help audience members to understand the core issues of drug abuse campaign. This understanding in turn will enable effective reduction or curb drug abuse which also ensures that audience members gain a favourable disposition towards it.

Drawing from the underlying notions of the agenda setting theory, the media channel studied significantly abdicated on a normative web of functionality embellished in information and education. However, campaign on the subject matter lacked depth. By inference, therefore, the drug abuse was not intensive and extensive.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is therefore recommended based on the foregoing that:

1. Media, especially, on the below-the-line media should through their day to day reportage focus surveillance on the many ills and menace in the society so as to use them as themes for campaign
2. Campaigns should be designed such that they will have rudiments of the issues that form the subject matter of such campaigns. In this way, many people will see the need to key into the highlights of the message themes.
3. The Health Ministry should provide information on the necessity of adopting various campaigns of drug abuse in the tertiary institution, as the message is very essential and needful to public.
4. Media should show greater commitment and passion for campaigns by ensuring a steady running pulse of frequency.

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