

## **Breaking the Silence: Broadcasting Media Messages against Youth Drug Abuse in Port Harcourt Metropolis**

**Chigozi Eke**

PhD Student, Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies,  
University of Port Harcourt  
08033733954; [chigozi\\_eke@uniport.edu.ng](mailto:chigozi_eke@uniport.edu.ng)

**Opeyemi Muideen Adeyemi**

PhD Student, Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies,  
University of Port Harcourt  
08039603111; [opeyemi\\_adeyemi@uniport.edu.ng](mailto:opeyemi_adeyemi@uniport.edu.ng)

DOI: 10.56201/rjmcit.v9.no4.2023.pg1.15

---

### **Abstract**

*Youth drug abuse is a pressing issue in Port Harcourt metropolis, with detrimental effects on individuals, families and the community as a whole. The problem necessitates urgent attention and concerted efforts to mitigate its consequences. This study was undertaken to ascertain the breaking the silence: broadcasting media messages against youth drug abuse among in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The objectives of the study were among others: to find out the level of exposure of youths in Port Harcourt to broadcasting media messages against drug abuse and to find out if the broadcasting media have played any role to reduce the rate of youth drug abuses in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The method used was descriptive survey design. The study had a total population of 324,000 Port Harcourt youths with a sample size of 400 drawn from the studied population through Taro Yamane mathematical formula. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the youths in Port Harcourt. Close-ended format questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Findings showed that the level of exposure to broadcasting media messages against youth drug abuse in Port Harcourt Metropolis was less. Another finding, with regards to reduce drug abuse, revealed that the broadcasting media messages played an average role. The study concluded drawing from the underlying notions of the agenda setting theory, the broadcasting media messages significantly abdicated on a normative web of functionality embellished in information and education. However, message on the subject matter lacked depth. By inference, therefore, the drug abuse was not intensive and extensive. The study recommended that The Health Ministry should encourage media outlets to allocate airtime and coverage to youth drug abuse. Collaborate with journalists and organisations to produce informative content that educates the public about the dangers of drug abuse among youth and available resources for help.*

---

**Keywords:** *Breaking Silence, broadcasting messages, drug abuse, Port Harcourt Metropolis*

---

## INTRODUCTION

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. Also, the mass media in the light of social change, light the way and drive for action. Life's daily challenges make daily living much more complicated than it appears. It has often been argued that humans step from one social world to another affects the way that actors move between scenes. The social systems reverberations that confront mankind require more than just a cursory adjustment, especially those reverberations that border on life and death.

In this time of digital age, 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.22). Haladu (2003, p.22) explained the term drug abuse, as excessive and persistent self-administration of a drug without regards 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 (2004) sees drug abuse as the non-medical use of a drug that interferes with a healthy and productive life. Manbe (2008) defines drug abuse as 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 (2000) warns 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 misuse and 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 (Oyebode, 1999). This primarily occasioned by peer influences in most cases. Peer group influences account for over 70% of drug abuses and misuse in Nigeria. 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 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 heroin and methamphetamine) 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 wellbeing 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. 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 cannabis sativa, heroin, and methamphetamine is the primary concern of this study.

Drug abuse and misuse have become a lifestyle to some youths 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. Methamphetamine, cannabis sativa, heroin 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 media is an issue which this study is concerned about.

Recently, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in Rivers State has uncovered a warehouse of compressed cannabis sativa in Abuja Estate in Port Harcourt. The State Commander, Rachael Shelleng, who announced this via media in a statement, said that officers of the agency stormed the cannabis warehouse in the early hours of February, 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The operation resulted in the recovery of 23 bags of compressed blocks of cannabis sativa, weighing 621 kilogrammes and 0.029kg of cocaine; according to her, after evaluating the exhibits, the officers proceeded to the slaughter area of Trans Amadi and Slaughter in Port Harcourt Metropolis where they also recovered 0.006kg of heroin and 0.048kg of methamphetamine. The seized cannabis sativa has been estimated to have a street value of over N17 million. Both Abuja Estate and Slaughter areas of Port Harcourt have been identified as very notorious spots for illicit drug peddling. Therefore, the NDLEA boss urged the public to avail the agency of actionable intelligence that would lead to ridding the state of illicit drugs trade. The destructive effects of methamphetamine are quite enormous as it affects both users of the substance as well as non-users who may be residing around any clandestine laboratories. In fact, the use of certain drugs, (particularly the methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine and cannabis sativa) have reached a dimension which is now considered as an abuse and poses serious threat to social harmony or the health, and wellbeing among members of society.

The abuse of drugs among the youth exposes them to numerous health risks, including addition, mental health disorders and an increased likelihood of engaging in risky behaviours. Moreover, drug-related crimes and violence associated with substance abuse pose threats to public safety. Drug abuse adversely affects educational attainment and employability among the youth, hindering their academic performance and reducing their chances of securing gainful employment.

This perpetuates a cycle of poverty and limited opportunities. Drug abuse places strain on families, causing disintegration and dysfunction. It disrupts the social fabric of the community, eroding trust and support systems that are crucial for individual well-being. The economic burden resulting from drug abuse is substantial, encompassing healthcare costs, legal expenses and decreased productivity due to absenteeism and reduced efficiency in the workforce. The primary aim of this study is to raise awareness or exposure, educate and mobilise the Port Harcourt Metropolis to combat this growing problem. Through targeted communication and information dissemination, this study fosters a proactive approach, encouraging preventive measures, treatment, rehabilitation and support networks to reduce youth drug abuse and its associated impacts.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The problem highlights the urgent need to address youth drug abuse in Port Harcourt Metropolis through effective broadcasting messages and comprehensive initiatives to prevent further harm and promote a healthier and more prosperous metropolis. the objectives were to:

1. Find out the level of exposure of youths in Port Harcourt to broadcasting message against drug misuse and abuse.
2. Find if the broadcasting stations have played any role to reduce the rate of drug misuses and abuses in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Media Advocacy**

Media advocacy entails garnering the attention of the media on issues through development of relationship with media, television, print and online reporters. It is mostly employed to influence public policy such as disseminating information to law makers through the media. Similar to the above perspective is public communication campaigns, where media and organized communication activities are used to produce particular results in a large number of individuals and in a particular period of time. Multi-communication channels are employed in this aspect of campaign to often coordinate mass media effort with the aim to sharpen behavioural patterns towards achieving desired social results. Other channels are interpersonal and community based communication channels (Coffman, 2002).

Public communication campaigns, according to Coffman (2002), are categorised into two, namely: individual behaviour change campaigns and public will campaign. Individual behaviour change campaign are packaged to change individual behaviour capable of endangering their wellness or to promote behaviours that can engender their social well-being. Campaigns under this type target behaviours such as drug use, smoking, recycling and seatbelt usage, fire and crime prevention, and designated driving. Moreover, some of these campaigns border on criminal justice, education and early childhood and adults together against violence campaign, national youth anti-drug media campaign, and voluntary ozone action programme campaign. Wakefield, et al. (2000) in their work “Use of mass media campaigns to change health behaviour,” found out that mass media campaigns can directly and indirectly engender positive changes or prevent negative ones

in health related behaviours across extensive populations. Several studies measuring on the effectiveness of different media campaigns on health-related behaviours have shown effectiveness.

### **Media Campaign against Drug Abuse**

According to Dominick (2009), 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 (2000), 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. Sandman (2000) states that 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 (Nwosu, 1998 ).

Mass media campaigns are aimed primarily to change knowledge, awareness and attitudes, contributing to the goal of changing behaviour. It is a tool for promoting public health and is being widely used to expose high proportions of large populations to message through routine uses of existing media, such as television, radio, newspapers etc one medium cannot effectively carryout a campaign. Ihejirika (2011) points out that no one medium alone can carry out the functions of media in society. They can be truly effective tools when they are adequately employed, effectively utilized and professionally managed. Nigeria and other developing countries today are marked by poverty and other challenges. One of the elements that can help create conditions and accelerate development of these nations is the provision of information and knowledge which could be carried out through use of campaigns. People need information to make decisions and improve their situation.

### **Drug 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) views 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). It is also considered as a substance that modifies perceptions, cognition, mood, behaviour and general body functions (Balogun, 2016). They could thus, be considered as chemical modifiers of the diving tissues that could bring about physiological and behavioural changes.

Drug abuse is a major public health problem all over the world (UNODC, 2015). The use and abuse of drugs by youth have become one of the most disturbing health related phenomena in Nigeria and other parts of the world (NDLEA, 2017). Several school going youths experience mental program, either temporarily or for a long period of time. Some become insane, maladjusted to school situations and eventually drop out of school. NAFDA (2001) as cited by Haladu (2013) explains the term drug abuse as excessive and persistent self-administration of 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. Drug abuse as the non-mental use of a drug that interferes with a healthy and productive life. Manbe (2008) sees drug abuse as the excessive, maladaptive use of drugs for non-medical purpose.

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 be viewed as the unlawful overdose in the use of drug(s) Odejide (2015) warns that drug abusers who exhibit symptoms stress, anxiety, depression, behaviour change, fatigue and loss or increase in appetite should be treated by medical experts and counsellors to save them from deadly diseases.

### **Theoretical Framework**

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 gate keeping 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).

Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) observe that news values are often shaped by the way news organizations are structured and the routines they follow pointing out that the press in America generally does not tell the audience what to think but does tell them what and whom to think about, referring to it as agenda-setting. The theory becomes apt to this study due to the critical nature of drug abuse that needs a quick and prompt adherence and action from the people to always examine themselves for health risk that aids reduction of untimely deaths. Since the agenda setting theory suggests that media influence public perception by emphasising certain issues, shaping what people think about. In the context of breaking the silence on youth drug abuse in port Harcourt metropolis, applying this theory means utilising media platforms to highlight the issue, set the agenda and prompt public discussion and action to combat drug abuse among young individuals in the region. Media can shape public perception and policies by placing a spotlight on the problem and advocating for solutions, ultimately aiding in addressing this critical social issue.

The media, including television, radio, newspapers and online platforms, play a crucial role in shaping public discourse and influencing what topics are prominent in society. in this case, the media in Port Harcourt Metropolis can set the agenda by actively addressing the issue of youth drug abuse through various broadcasting methods. As the broadcasting focuses on the issue of youth drug abuse through programming, news coverage and public service announcements, it can bring this problem to the forefront of the public attention. This, in turn, can lead to increased awareness and concern among the local population. When an issue gains significant attention in the media and captures the public's interest, it can also influence policymakers and government officials. They may be more inclined to take action, allocate resources or implement policies to address youth drug abuse due to the heightened awareness created by the media. Agenda setting theory also involves how the media frames or presents an issue. In this context, broadcasters can frame youth drug abuses as a serious public health concern, emphasising its impact on individual, families and metropolis. by framing the issue in this way, they can elicit a stronger response from the audience. In summary, applying the agenda setting theory to this study highlights how the media can play a pivotal role in raising awareness, shaping public perception and influencing action regarding the issue of youth drug abuse in the metropolis. Through strategic broadcasting and framing, broadcasting outlets can contribute to addressing this social menace.

### **Empirical Review**

Okoye et al. (2022) conducted a study on “Effectiveness of mass media in the fight against drug abuse among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Imo State.” The study investigated the effectiveness of mass media in the fight against drug abuse among undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Imo State. The study was anchored on the theory of reasoned action and the research design adopted for this study was the survey method. The population consists of 81,000 undergraduates of the select higher institutions in Imo State. A sample size of 382 arrived after the application of the Wimmer and Dominick online sample size calculator. The systematic sampling technique was employed in this study. The percentage method and bar chart were used for analysing the data. The findings revealed that the level of awareness among respondents towards

mass media campaigns against drug abuse is moderate. Further findings showed that respondents agreed that mass media efforts have not been effective in reducing the threat of drug abuse among undergraduates in Imo State's tertiary institutions. As a result, it was concluded that mass media campaigns are ineffective in the fight against drug abuse among undergraduates of higher institutions in Imo State, because the campaigns have not succeeded in curbing the menace, as students continue to engage in it, which could be linked to a lack of awareness among these undergraduates. The reviewed study and the current study are related as both studies focus on mass media fight against drug abuse. Whereas the reviewed study focused on the effectiveness of mass media in the fight against drug abuse among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Imo State, the current study focuses on breaking the silence: broadcasting media messages against youth drug abuse in Port Harcourt metropolis. The area of divergence is on the objectives, scope, theoretical framework and methodological approaches.

Ibrahimu (2018) carried out a study on “Impact of broadcasting media in fighting against drug abuse in Uganda: a case study of NBS television, Kampala.” The study was to establish the impact of broadcasting media in fighting against drug abuse in Uganda. With special attention to NBS TV located in Kawempe, Kampala. It was guided by the researcher objectives that included investigating on the effect of broadcasting media in fighting against drug abuse among the Ugandans, examining the role of broadcasting media in fighting against drug abuse, to examine the Challenges faced by broadcasting media in fighting against drug abuse in Uganda and devising the strategies of improving broadcasting media’s role in fighting against drug abuse in Uganda. The study used an investigative design that incorporated a sample of 50 respondents who specifically were the management of NBS staff especially TV presenters, journalists, News editors engaged through a research questionnaire. This was to provide parameters of investigation such as the significant of the study and challenges faced by broadcasting media in fighting against drug abuse in Uganda. The study findings indicated that broadcasting media has impact in fighting against drug abuse in Uganda; by addressing specific substances with the aim of reducing use and raising awareness about the associated problems, enhancing personal and social skills that promote positive lifestyle choices as well as resistance to drug use, addressing the existing knowledge and beliefs of the target audience that impede adoption of the desired behaviour, proper addressing risks associated with drug abuse will improve students discipline to be acceptable in society and academic performance will improve as well. The researcher made recommendations to broadcasting media, universities, government and policy makers. The universities were urged to use approaches that incorporate drug resistance skills into a broader set of essential personal and social skills. The reviewed study and the present study are both related as they hinge on broadcasting media fight against drug abuse but differ in the areas of objectives, scope, and methods.

Akata and Mba (2023) did a paper on “Effectiveness of broadcasting messages as a panacea to drug abuse in South-East, Nigeria.” The aims of this study are to ascertain the level of awareness created by the broadcast media on drug abuse and the level of audience compliance to these messages on drug abuse. This study aligned itself with the agenda setting theory with a focus on the South Eastern part of Nigeria; having a total population of 22,539,169, according to the National Population Commission 2006 estimated at 2.5% annual growth rate. 382 respondents were sampled from the two states randomly selected, Enugu and Abia. The survey research design



was employed using the questionnaire and interview as research instruments to answer the research questions raised in this study. Data generated were presented in frequency tables and analysed, using the simple percentage and textual analysis. The findings of the study espoused reasons for drug abuse, ability of the broadcast media to sustain awareness on the dangers of drug abuse and ability of the broadcast media to engineer attitudinal change as regards the abuse of drugs. The study recommended that adequate funding for broadcast campaigns, and proper timing in the presentation of these messages to reach the target public and creation of jobs for the unemployed youths. The study is related to the pioneer study as both studies centre on broadcasting messages as a panacea to drug abuse but differ in the area of objectives, scope and methods.

### **Methodology**

The survey design would be used for the study. The method adopted was considered appropriate because it is essentially a design that recognises the importance of people in data gathering about peoples' views, opinions, actions and reactions towards social issues and phenomena like that of the awareness of danger and health risk of cocaine, cannabis, heroin and methamphetamine. The population concerned in this study are young male and female individuals between the ages of 14 to 45 years in Port Harcourt Metropolis. According to National Population Commission (2023 projected figure), there are 324,000 young person's between the ages 14 - 45 in Port Harcourt Metropolis. It is therefore important to state that according to population division of the United Nations Department of Economic and social Affairs, the Nigerian population growth rate since the year 2018 to 2021 is 2.78%. The total population of Port Harcourt young female and male individuals between the ages of 14 to 45 years as at the year 2006 is three hundred and twenty four thousand (324,000). Hence, the population of Port Harcourt young female and male individuals (youths) between the ages of 14 to 45 years is 333,007

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 = 33,007

E = 0.05

$\therefore n = \frac{333,007}{1 + 333,007(0.05)^2}$

$$= \frac{333,007}{1 + 333,007 \times 0.0025}$$

$$\frac{333,007}{832.52}$$

$$= 399.99 \text{ (approximated to 400)}$$

So,  $n = 400$ . The sample size for the study is 400. The sample size for the study is 400. Two sampling techniques were used by the researcher namely: purposive sampling and cluster sampling. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the youth in Port Harcourt local government area. To get to the 400 respondents, the researcher utilized the multi-stage sampling technique which started with the division of the Port Harcourt Metropolis into clusters, namely: Diobu as cluster one, Ogbunabali as cluster two, Trans Amadi as cluster three, Slaughter area as cluster four and Town area as five. From each of the clusters, two streets were selected using ballot system to give ten (10) streets in all. Forty (40) respondents were selected from each street using alternate compound numbers to select one respondent from each compound on a street. This is to enable each of the elements selected to be properly represented. The data for this study were generated using the questionnaire. The researchers personally administered the questionnaire, assisted by three assistants and retrieved the instrument by the same method. Respondents were met in their homes, places of work, drug abuse awareness events and centres among others. The data for this study would be analysed using simple percentages and would be arranged in frequency tables.

## Results

The results of the analysis are presented in the table below:

**Research Question 1:** What is the level of exposure of youths in Port Harcourt to broadcasting media campaign against drug misuse and abuse?

**Table 1: Broadcasting Media Messages Respondents Were exposed to**

Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Hiv/Aids (Zip-Up) message	65	16
Roll back mosquito message	50	13
Drug abuse and misuse message	67	17
All of the above	198	51
None of the above	10	3
Total	390	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table 1 shows that the majority the respondents were exposed to all broadcasting messages, but few of the respondents were exposed to drug abuse message.

**Table 2: Description of Broadcasting Messages against Drug Misuse and Abuse**

Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Very high exposed	16	4
High exposed	60	15
Exposed	146	37
Less exposed	142	42
Not exposed	6	2
Total	390	100

**Source: Field Survey, 2023.**

Table 2 shows that the respondents were less exposed to the broadcasting messages on drug abuse.

**Research Question 2:** Have the broadcasting media played any role to reduce the rate of drug abuse in Port Harcourt Metropolis?

**Table 3: Influence of Broadcasting Media Message on Youths' Attitude**

Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Very high	15	4
High	105	27
Average	251	64
Low	11	3
Very low	8	2
Total	390	100

**Source: Field Survey, 2023.**

Table 3 shows that majority of the respondents agreed that with regards to reduced drug abuse, the influence of broadcasting media message on their attitude was average.

**Table 4: Broadcasting Message Role in reducing Drug Abuse**

Options	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Positively	151	39
Negatively	-	-
Not at all	239	61
Total	390	100

**Source: Field Survey, 2023.**

Table 4 above indicates that majority of the respondents agreed that broadcasting media campaign roles in changing their attitudes toward drug abuse did not help them at all, while few of the respondents said it helped them positively.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

The result revealed that the respondents agreed on the level of exposure to media message against drug abuse to be less exposed. Though they had agreed to have heard and knew about the media messages on drug abuse from the broadcasting media. This finding corroborates with the agenda setting theory upon which this study is anchored. The theory posits that media can influence what topics or issues people consider important. In the context of youth drug abuse, less exposure to broadcasting messages about the issue may result in reduced awareness and understanding of its significance, potentially impacting prevention efforts and public discourse. This study also, lend credence to the study of Akata and Mba on effectiveness of broadcast messages as a panacea to drug abuse in South-East as the study espoused reasons for drug abuse, ability of the broadcast media to sustain awareness on the dangers of drug abuse and ability of the broadcast media to engineer attitudinal change as regards the abuse of drugs. The finding of this study is in consonance with the study of Okoye et al (2023) on effectiveness of mass media in the fight against drug abuse among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Imo State that the level of awareness among respondents towards mass media campaigns against drug abuse is moderate. This study equally refutes the study of Ibrahimu (2018) on impact of broadcasting media in fighting against drug abuse in Uganda, a case study of NBS television, Kampala as stated that the broadcasting media has impact in fighting against drug abuse in Uganda; by addressing specific substances with the aim of reducing use and raising awareness about the associated problems, enhancing personal and social skills that promote positive lifestyle choices as well as resistance to drug use, addressing the existing knowledge and beliefs of the target audience that impede adoption of the desired behaviour, proper addressing risks associated with drug abuse will improve students discipline to be acceptable in society and academic performance will improve as well.

The result of research question 2, analysis shows that the youths in Port Harcourt Metropolis agreed that with regards to reduce drugs abuse the media played an average role and that in changing of youth attitude towards drug abuse, the media message did not help at all. 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 upon which this study is underpinned supports the finding of this study. The theory proposes that media can influence public perception and prioritise by highlighting certain issues. In the context of reducing youth drug abuse, broadcasting messages can shape public discourse, raise awareness and contribute to shifting societal focus towards addressing this problem. The media's coverage and framing of drug abuse issues can influence public policy, Port Harcourt Metropolis discussions and individual behaviours, potentially playing a role in tackling the issue. Okoye et al. (2022) study is in support of this finding when stated that respondents agreed that mass media efforts have not been effective in reducing the threat of drug abuse among undergraduates in Imo State's tertiary institutions in their study on effectiveness of mass media in the fight against drug abuse among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Imo State.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results and findings of the study it is concluded here, that drawing from the underlying notions of the agenda setting theory, the media significantly abdicated on a normative web of functionality embellished in information and education. However, broadcasting media message on the subject matter lacked depth. By inference, therefore, the drug abuse was not intensive and extensive. In this study, the study explored the impact of broadcasting messages aimed at raising awareness and combating youth drug abuse in Port Harcourt Metropolis. The research revealed significant findings that shed light on the effectiveness of using media platforms to address this pressing issue within the metropolis. The study demonstrated the importance of broadcasting to disseminate information and initiate conversations about the youth drug abuse. The media's role in shaping public perception and policy discourse is undeniable and harnessing a supportive and informed community. Moreover, the research highlighted the need for a multifaceted approach that combines informative messages, testimonials, expert insights and comprehensive strategy can effectively engage the youth, their families and the wider community, encouraging dialogue, understanding and action against drug abuse. Additionally, the study emphasised the significance of tailoring messages to the cultural, social and economic context of Port Harcourt metropolis. The understanding the unique dynamics of the community allows for the creation of messages that resonate and prompt behavioural changes, aligning with local values and concerns. Broadcasting messages against youth drug abuse in Port Harcourt has proven to be a vital tool in the fight against this pervasive issue. Through strategic messaging and collaborating with relevant stakeholders, the media can contribute to play a crucial role in addressing youth drug abuse, ultimately promoting a healthier and more aware society.

### **Recommendations**

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

1. The Health Ministry should encourage media outlets to allocate airtime and coverage to youth drug abuse. Collaborate with journalists and organisations to produce informative content that educates the public about the dangers of drug abuse among youth and available resources for help.
2. Broadcasting messages can be optimised to play a more effective role in reducing youth drug abuse and fostering a healthier, drug-free environment in Port Harcourt.



## References

- Abdullahi, Z. (2009). Drug abuse among youths: Strategies for school counselling. *The Nigerian Society of Educational Psychologists*, 131-136
- Akata, O. P. N. U. & Mba, J. U. (2023). Effectiveness of broadcast messages as a panacea to drug abuse in South-East, Nigeria. *University of Nigeria Interdisciplinary Journal of Communication Studies*, 29(1), 120 -130.
- Balogun, S. (2016). Chronic intake of separate and combined alcohol, nicotine on body maintenance among albinorats. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 19 (1), 21 - 24.
- Carroll, G. A. (2018). Drug education and its effects on the educational performance of some people drug abusers in Ibadan. *The Counsellor* 18(5), 378-387.
- Coffman, J. (2002). *Public communication campaign evaluation: An environment scan challenges, criticism, practice and opportunities*. M.A Family Press.
- Dominick, J. R. (2009). *The dynamics of mass communication: Media in the digital age* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). The McGraw Hill Company.
- Dominick, J. R. (2009). *The dynamics of mass communication: Media in the digital age*. The McGraw Hill Company.
- Folarin, B. (1998). *Theories of mass communication*. Scepter Publishing.
- Haladu, A. A. (2003). Outreach strategies for curbing drug abuse out of-school youth in Nigeria: A challenge for community Based organization (CBOs). In A. Garba (Ed.). *Youth and drug abuse in Nigeria: strategies for counselling, management, and control*. Pp. 23 -43. Kano: Matosa Press.
- Ibrahimu, R. (2018). Impact of broadcasting media in fighting against drug abuse in Uganda: A case study of NBS television, Kampala. <https://desktop/Ruhweza%20ibrahimu.pdf>.
- Ihejirika, W. C. & Omego, C. (2011). *Research Methods in Linguistic and Communication Studies*. University of Port Harcourt Press.
- Manbe, R. O. (2008). Crime and drug abuse among Nigeria youths: A critical examination in world health organization. Expert committee on drug dependence, 28<sup>th</sup> Report (Unpublished).
- McCombs, M. E. & Shaw, D. L. (2004). The agenda-setting function of mass communication. *Public Opinion*, (Summer), 176 - 197.
- NAFDAC (2018). Do drugs control your life? Know the Risks. [https://nafdac/2018/21023765/drug-control\\_life\\_know\\_therisk](https://nafdac/2018/21023765/drug-control_life_know_therisk) Pdf.
- National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (2021). Drug data collection. Port Harcourt: Drug Demand Reduction Unit, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency.

- Nwosu, I. (1998). *Mass media and the Nigerian society*. The Readers Choice Press.
- Odejide, A. O. (2005). Research, prevention and treatment of alcohol and drug abuse in Nigeria. Problem and prospects, paper presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Lecturer of CRIST. Jos (5<sup>th</sup> October).
- Okon, G. B. (2013). Advocacy for early detection of breast cancer among pre-menopausal women in Rivers State: A Study of three broadcasting stations in Port Harcourt. *EBSU Journal of Mass Communication*, 3(1), 1 - 12.
- Okoye, L. E., Etummu, E. W., Agbim, K. & Okodogbe, P. (2022). Eeffectiveness of mass media in the fight against drug abuse among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Imo State. *South Asian Journal of Social Studies and Economics*, 14(3), 1 – 40.
- Rimal, R. N. (2000). Closing the knowledge behaviour gap in health promotion: the mediating roles of self-efficacy. *Health Communication*, 12(3), 219 - 237.
- Sambo S. (2018). *Understanding guidance and counselling*. Ahamadu Bello University Press Limited.
- Sandman, P., Rubin, D. & Sachman, D. (2000). *Media: An introductory analysis of American mass communications*. Englewood Cliffs Prentice Hall.
- United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC]. UNODC World Drug Report (2021): pandemic effects ramp up drug risks, as youth underestimate cannabis dangers.
- Wakefield, A. J. Murch, S. H., Anthony, A. Linnell, J., Carsson, D. M., Malik, M. & Berelowitz, M. (2000). Ileallyphoid-nodular hyperplasia, non-specific colitis and pervasive development disorder in children. *The Lancet*, 35(9103), 637 – 641.
- Weaver, D. H., & Wilhoit, G. C. (1996). *The American journalist in the 1990s*. Lawrence Erlbaum.