

Assessment of Tiktok Trends and Teens' Drug Abuse in Anambra State

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Abstract:- This study investigated the connection between Tiktok trends and drug abuse among teens in Anambra state, Nigeria. Three research questions guided this study. The theoretical framework is based on social learning theory and technological determinism theory. The study adopted survey method of research. The target population of this study comprises of all public secondary schools in the twenty one (21) local government area of Anambra state with a sample size of 300 students drawn from three public secondary schools in three senatorial zones in Anambra state using purposive sampling technique.. The instrument used for data collection is the questionnaire. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between Tiktok trends and drug abuse among teenage students. The study also found that there is a very high rate of exposure of teens to Tiktok contents. The paper recommended that the government should put in place, policies that reduces drug availability especially to the minor both online and offline. The study also recommended that parents should monitor their children/wards' online activities by making use of parental guide app on their children's phones and laptops.

Keywords:- Tiktok Trends, Teens, Drug Abuse.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tiktok is defined as a video-sharing app that allows users to create and share short-forms of videos on any topic with friends and followers. It is mainly mobile based, although you can still watch Tiktok videos using the web app (Turnbridge, 2022). Tiktok is the most trending social media platform. Currently, the platform has close to 700 million users globally. Those who were born within 1997 and 2015 are mostly the ones making use of Tiktok (Turnbridge, 2023). This group of persons is characterized as digital natives, great thinkers, etc. They are often online, sharing real and honest moments of their lives. A study conducted by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University found that teenagers who regularly use popular social media outlets such as Tiktok were more likely to drink, use drugs, and buy tobacco than adolescents who either did not use social media or used it less frequently. The survey asked 2,000 adolescents about their drug use and social media habits and 70% said that they use social media on any given day. These "great thinkers" are usually the first group of persons that jump on viral social media trends, particularly

those shared by their favorite vloggers and influencers. Videos shared on Tiktok display a user's creativity, which may include singing, comedy, dancing challenges. This platform is usually filled with challenges which users are expected to participate in. Though the challenges seem to be fun and game, there are various kinds of dangerous Tiktok trends that have surfaced, which glamorize drug abuse and pose as a risk to teen's health. According to Turnbridge (2022), the primary demographic using Tiktok today is children, teenagers and young adults. The problem with this age group is that they are highly impressionable. Their brains are still in development, which makes the content they absorb highly influential on their behaviours and ways of thinking (Turnbridge, 2022). This assertion is in tandem with Hillard (2019) who opined that teens are vulnerable to the effects of what they see on social media, because this age group is highly susceptible to peer pressure. Turnbridge added that because the young adults' brains are still maturing, teenagers and young adults do not always have the ability to think about long-term consequences, or fully rationalize their decisions.

Turnbridge in their study found that the more a teen sees a dangerous trend, the more it becomes normal. This makes drugs out of household items such as ketamine appear normal.. At the same time it becomes normalized, it becomes something teens might want to try.

The above finding is in line with what was revealed in another research, which discovered that many products readily found in home or workplace such as spray, paints, markers, glues, and cleaning fluids contain volatile substances that have psychoactive (mind altering) properties when inhaled are being abused by teens in various homes (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2023). According to the institute, people do not typically think of these products as drugs because they were never intended for that purpose. However, these products are sometimes abused in that way. The institute stated that these substances are especially (but not exclusively) abused by young children and adolescents, and are the only class of substance abused more by younger teens than by older teens. Center for Disease Control (2023) has pointed that starting to abuse drugs during one's teen years is very harmful. Drug abuse during adolescence prevents brain development and can lead to long term health issues which include kidney failure, heart disease, blood pressure issues, etc. Sites like Tiktok, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat provides an environment where kids are

exposed to famous and normal people alike engaging in behaviours involving drugs and alcohol. (Hillard, 2019).

Social Media are referred to as interactive technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, interests, and other forms of expression through virtual communities and networks. Social media are linked with substance abuse among teens. The suspected reasons for the connection between social media and drug use may be that social media glamorizes substance abuse, hurts mental health, leads to more exposure to such substances, and offers another means of buying drugs (Hendriks et al, 2018). American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2018) in their study found that social media have a great impact on the teen culture nowadays. Surveys showed that ninety percent of teens ages 13-17 have used social media. Seventy five percent report having at least one active social media profile, and 51% report visiting a social media site at least daily. Two thirds of teens have their own mobile devices with internet capabilities. On average, teens are online almost nine hours a day, not including time for homework (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2018). On the other hand, social media have become an active technical tool as well as a news and communication medium for most Nigerians. Access to mobile telephony, particularly among the computer age adolescents, has made information distribution as simple as snapping a finger. However, social networking sites are offering new and dangerous opportunities for adolescents to be exposed to drugs.

Also, in a research conducted by Mountainside, Tiktok has become one of the most popular social media platforms across the globe. Videos posted on the platform have made millions laugh, sparked dancing challenges, turned songs into sleeper hits, etc. Recently, Tiktok was trending on the news. This was because of the death of a fifteen year old girl in Oklahoma, caused by overdosing, as well as the hospitalization of three teens in Texas. The teens suffered overdosing due to the fact that they participated in a challenge titled “Benadryl challenge”. This challenge was a viral one in which participants misuse diphenhydramine. This challenge is one of the latest examples of drug usage being utilized for views and social media clout (Mountainside, 2023).

Results from the latest NOIpolls (NOI Polls is a research institute in Nigeria) showed that 9 in 10 Nigerians believe the highest abusers of drugs and substance are teenagers and young adults aged between 15 and 29 years old (Otorokpa, 2023). Otorokpa (2023) disclosed that drug abuse among Nigerian’s young population is on the increase. He believed that illicit drug trade in the country is fueled by a number of factors which include Nigeria’s economic disparities location, economic disparities, political instability and global demand for drugs. He went further to state that the repercussions of this dire situation are evident in the rising number of young individuals who find themselves entangled in addiction and dependency issues. Rather than pursuing their educational aspirations and the opportunities provided by academic institutions, these vulnerable individuals are now compelled to seek solace and rehabilitation in dedicated facilities (Otorokpa, 2023).

II. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The need for social media sites is for people to be able to be informed and also inform about what is happening globally, connecting with family and friends. Another usefulness of social media is that it builds new relationships and strengthens the existing ones. Its utilization has brought traffic to businesses once it is advertised via social media networks. What was a hobby to some computer literates has become a way of life and social norm for people across the globe (Bloyd, 2007). Tiktok has become a large part of people’s daily lives, especially when it comes to teenagers and adults. Youths participate in some trends using Tiktok. Some of the trends on Tiktok are alcohol or drug related. In the time past, alcohol and drug abuse was commonly portrayed in a negative light in traditional media, and in the days before social networking sites were invented. Consequently, many people did not know much about substance abuse. The images in alcohol adverts were carefully censored to ensure they did not glamorize drinking. However, a young person who logs into Tiktok account in this era is likely to see drugs and alcohol portrayed in a positive, even in an enticing manner. Tiktok makes it much easier for people to buy drugs and to stay in touch with dealers. However, little or no literature abounds on whether there is any connection between teens, Tiktok trends and drug abuse in Anambra state. It is against this backdrop that this research work seek to investigate the relationship between Tiktok trends and teens’ drug abuse in Anambra state..

➤ Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study is to examine the connection between exposure to Tiktok trends and drug abuse among teens in Anambra State?. Specific objectives are:

- To examine the level of teens exposure to Tiktok in Anambra state.
- To investigate the prevalent drug abused among teens in Anambra state.
- To examine the role of tiktok trends on drug abuse among teens in Anambra state.

➤ Research Questions

- What is the level of exposure of teens to Tiktok in Anambra state?
- What are the prevalent drugs being abused among teens in Anambra state?
- What is the role of Tiktok trends on drug abuse among teens in Anambra state?

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical foundation of this study was anchored on Social Learning Theory and Technological Determinism Theory (TDT).

A. *The Social Learning Theory*

Social Learning theory was propounded in 1960s by a psychologist, Albert Bandura. It has been used to explain substance abuse among adolescents literally from its inception in 1960. Main idea of social learning theory is that social learning is learning by observing other people with the goal of adapting one's behavior in social contexts. This theory suggests that basically good children learn to become substance abusers due to such social forces, the influence of delinquent peers and the presence of powerful social reinforcers. This theory when applied to the purview of this study is believed that mere observation of some videos especially the ones on alcohol consumption and smoking on Tiktok can actually lure the young adults into abuse of drugs.

B. *Technological Determinism Theory (TDT)*

Technological Determinism Theory (TDT) was propounded by an American sociologist, Thorstein Veblen in 1929. It is the idea that technology shapes social change. It determines our future. The author opined that the negative consequences of technological development are the results of poor use by the folks, not of the terrible nature of technology. Anunike & Onuegbu, (2020) in their opinion believed that although technology is developed by humans, it influences and shapes the human feelings, behaviour or attitude in return. According to Dew (2023), the internet is a technological innovation that brings a lot of advantages and disadvantages to society because of how much it facilitates fast, easy communication. Little wonder, Sasvari (2012) states that "the information and telecommunication technologies play a constantly expanding role in all fields of social existence, which has shaken the foundations of social structures and processes and resulted in profound changes in politics, economy, culture, and everyday life. It is believed that alcohol and drug abuse was commonly portrayed in a negative light in the traditional media of the past, and in the days before social networking sites, many people did not know much about substance abuse. Today, drug abuse is being portrayed in a positive and aspirational way through trends on Tiktok and the youths exposed have tendencies of abusing substances. All these are possible because of technology.

C. *Some of Tiktok Trends That Promote Drug Abuse*

The following are some of the trends that promote drug abuse among its users. They are:

➤ *Benadryl challenge*

This was a Tiktok trend in the year 2020. This challenge is a situation where people take a large amount of Benadryl to experience a high that triggers hallucinations. In September, 2020, the Food and Drug Administration reported that it had been investigating the reports of hospitalizations and deaths of adolescents participating in the Benadryl challenge on Tiktok. (Food and Drug Administration, 2020). The victims were mimicking Tiktok users who documented their consumption of massive amounts of Benadryl and dared others to replicate. The challenge exploits many young people's erroneous belief that over-the-counter drugs cannot be dangerous (Miller, 2023).

➤ *#SeshHead Tiktok*

Tiktok made muted attempts to control the reign of drug themed content on its platform by banning hastags such as #cocaine and #heroin. However, these efforts seem to have achieved nothing, it just pushed it to another level. The #cocaine tag has become prevalent across the #SeshHead hashtag. Many of the top content creators in the hashtag avoid censorship by creating comedy-like videos which contained innuendo. It is obvious that these creators are reflecting and glamorizing cocaine.

➤ *#Triptok*

Among all the Tiktok drug themed contents, the #Triptok hashtag may be the most well intentioned. In this trend, many #Triptok creators document and post their experiences on psychedelic drugs such as psilocybin, LSD, etc under the pretence of informing and enlightening viewers. #Triptok still sets a dangerous precedent of normalizing the use of illegal drugs.

➤ *Nutmeg Challenge*

This challenge can be traced back to a hashtag created by Tiktok, which referenced a soccer move, not the spice itself. The soccer move "the nutmeg" requires the user to kick a ball between one's opponent's legs and reach it on the other side. However, the nutmeg hashtag was hijacked for videos about eating or smoking nutmeg to get high just as other social media trends and hashtags were hijacked.

The Tiktok nutmeg challenge is when a person consumes two tablespoons of ground nutmeg mixed in water. This mixture is believed to produce a hallucinogenic high similar to that of LSD. The experiences shared by the users ranged from seeing walls melting to being high like someone under the influence of marijuana. Others reported less impact such as light headedness.

Tiktok drug challenges are predominant among teens and young adults, especially because the app caters for this age group. The impact of social media on substance abuse is evident in the influence these challenges have on the users. These challenges tend to expand user's curiosity and often encourage them to experiment with harder drugs (Alyssa, 2022).

IV. METHOD

The survey research method was adopted for this study. Survey method was used in this study for effective data collection and processing. A sample of 300 subjects was drawn out of 1,009,030 total population of teens with the age range of 10-19 years in Anambra State (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). The respondents were done using purposive sampling technique. One of the reasons for making use of purposive sampling technique was because some schools were picked out the secondary schools in Anambra state. The researcher used the age range of 13-17 years as teen age range for this study. 100 students were purposively allocated to each of the schools selected for the purpose of this study. The schools selected for the purpose of this study were: CapitalCity Secondary School, Awka(Anambra Central),

Government Technical School, Onitsha (Anambra North) and Community Secondary School, Nnewichi, Nnewi (Anambra South).

Statistical tool used was the simple percentage. In the simple percentage, the number of respondents to a particular question was separated into those who gave negative answers. Each response option is divided by the total number of

respondents and is again multiplied by 100%. Hence, this example:

$$\frac{\text{Total number of responses}}{\text{Total number of respondents}} \times \frac{100}{1} \quad (1)$$

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

➤ *The Findings of this Research are Revealed as Follows:*

Table 1: What is the Level of Exposure of Teens to Tiktok in Anambra State?

Please Tick Appropriately	YES	NO	
Have you ever heard of Tiktok?	292 (92%)	8(8%)	300 (100%)
Do you have a Tiktok account?	250 (83.3%)	50 (16.7%)	300 (100%)
Is your TikTok account an important part of your life?	198 (66%)	102 (44%)	300 (100%)
Do you check your TikTok more often than your other social media apps?	195 (65%)	105 (45%)	300 (100%)
Do you check your other people’s TikTok more often than your own TikTok?	227 (75.7%)	73 (24.3%)	300 (100%)

The findings to the first research question revealed that 292 (92%) respondents have heard of Tiktok while only a little proportion of the respondents 8 (8%) have never heard of Tiktok. 250 (83.3%) respondents have Tiktok accounts while 50 (16.7%) respondents do not have a Tiktok account. 198(66%) respondents above 102 (44%) revealed that Tiktok is an important part of their life. 195 (65%) respondents agreed that they check the Tiktok app more than any other social media apps (Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, etc). the research also revealed that 227 (75.7%) of the respondents

agreed that they check other people’s Tiktok profile or status more than they visit theirs.

Dilon (2023) who submitted that 56 % of the teenagers want to be in touch with friends, 43 % loves getting seen by others, 88 % wants to have fun and relax, out of the population in his study used Tiktok as against all other social media apps. This he explained is due to the fact that Tiktok has a better protective service in comparison to other social media apps.

Table 2: What are the Prevalent Drugs been Abused among Teens in Anambra State?

	DRUG/ SUBSTANCES	Please Tick In Order Of Prevalence					Percentage
		Extremely High	Very High	High	Low	Very Low	
What are the prevalent drugs been abused among teens in Anambra state?	Tramadol	213 (71%)	57 (17%)	30 (10%)	0	0	300 (100%)
	Cocaine	123 (41%)	71 (23.7%)	13 (4.3%)	90 (30%)	3 (1%)	300 (100%)
	Shisha	69 (23%)	216 (72%)	15 (5%)	0	0	300 (100%)
	Diazepam	0	0	23 (7.7%)	157 (52.3%)	120 (40%)	300 (100%)
	Methamphetamine (Mkpurummili)	273 (91%)	27 (9%)	0	0	0	300 (100%)
	Marijuana	257 (85.7%)	32 (10.7%)	11 (3.7%)	0	0	300 (100%)
	Inhalants	0	12 (4%)	16 (5.3%)	72 (24%)	200 (66.7%)	300 (100%)
	Tobacco	0	0	0	12 (4%)	288 (96%)	300 (100%)
	Syrup	12 (4%)	271 (90%)	0	17 (6%)	0	300 (100%)
Codein	10 (3.3%)	283 (94.3%)	5 (1.7%)	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.3%)	300 (100%)	

The findings to the second research question revealed that 213 (71%) of the entire 300 (100%) respondents agreed that tramadol abuse is extremely high, 17% very high, 10% high. For cocaine abuse 41% respondents agreed that it on the extremely high side while 1% submitted it is on the low side. Shisha as another substance been abused received 69 (23%) extremely high, 216 (72%) very high, and 15 (5%) high. Diazepam received 23 (7.7%) high, 157 (52.3%) low and 120 (40%) very low. Methamphetamine (Mkpurummili) received a huge percent of 85.7% (extremely high) and 9% very high, . Inhalants received 12 (4%) very high, 16 (5.3%) high, 72 (24%) low, and 200 (66.7%) very low. Tobacco

received 12 (4%) low and 288 (96%) very low from the respondents. Syrup abuse as revealed by the respondents showed 12 (4%) extremely high, 271 (90%) very high and 17 (6%) low situations. Codeine as a substance abuse received 10 (3.3%) extremely high respondents, 283(94.3%) very high respondents, 5 (1.7%) high, 1 (0.3%) low and 1 (0.3%) very low respondents.

This revealed that Methamphetamine (Mkpurummili) has a higher use among the teenagers, followed by tramadol and shisha.

Table 3: What is the Role of Tiktok Trends on Drug Abuse among Teens in Anambra State?

Please Tick Appropriately	Frequently	Often	Seldom	Never	Percentage
How often do you view the Tiktok account of other users?	207 (69%)	20 (6.7%)	0	73 (24.3%)	300 (100%)
How often do you use your own Tiktok account daily?	170 (56.7%)	71 (23.7%)	9 (3%)	50 (16.7%)	300 (100%)
Does Tiktok influence your perception about drug abuse?	32 (10.7%)	235 (78.3%)	25 (8.3%)	8 (2.7%)	300 (100%)
Does Tiktok influence your desire for drugs/substances?	67 (22.3%)	151 (50.3%)	52 (17.3%)	30 (10%)	300 (100%)
Do you get different drug use styles and tips from TikTok?	232 (77.3%)	51 (17%)	9 (3%)	8 (2.7%)	300 (100%)

The findings to the third research question revealed that 227 (75.7%) of the entire respondents view the Tiktok account of other users. 170 (56.7%) of the respondents frequently visit their Tiktok account daily, 71 (23.7%) often visit it daily, 9 (3%) seldomly visit it while 50 (6.7%) respondents visit the app daily. 32 (10.7%) respondents revealed that Tiktok influence their perception about drug abuse frequently, 235 (78.3%) revealed it does often, 25 (8.3%) agreed it influences seldomly while 8 (2.7%) never agreed. In the area of influencing their desire for drugs/substance use, the findings revealed 67 (22.3%) respondents at frequently, 151 (50.3%) at often, 52 17.3%() at seldomly, and 30 (10%) at never. The findings of the respondents on if they get different drug use styles and tips from TikTok received 232 (77.3%) frequently, 51 (17%) often, 9 (3%) seldomly and 8 (2.7%) never responses.

This agrees with a nationwide survey carried out on high school students in 2008, which stated that 65% used drugs to have a good time with their friends, 54% wanted to experiment to have a feeling of what it is like, and 20-40% used it to alter their moods either to feel good, relax, to relieve tension and to overcome boredom (Abudu, 2008). This also aligns with the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (2011) which stated that teenagers who use social media are more apt to use marijuana, tobacco and alcohol as opposed to teenagers who don't use these media platforms. This can be as a result of the social media influencers or celebrities who do these things online and their followers also want to follow in their footsteps. Akwu in The Guardian Newspaper of 10 May, 2023 explained that these celebrities smoke marijuana and advocate for its legalization.

VI. CONCLUSION

Drug abuse is a sobering situation that does not only affect the individual concerned, family and friends but also eat deep into the economy of a country. One of the things to take cognisance of about Tiktok challenges and drugs is that most of the challenges make use of over-the-counter-drugs. This has been attributed to the reason why teenagers failed to see the impending dangers involved in participate in these challenges for social media attention. The leadership of our nation and future families lies on the shoulders of our young ones. Therefore, if we fail to catch them young now, the possibility of a more decayed society is inevitable.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be deduced that exposure to most Tiktok trends does negatively influence the involvement of teens in drug abuse. Also, the rate of exposure to social media such as Tiktok is very high among teens of secondary schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ *Based on the Findings of this Study, the Following Recommendations were Made:*

- Parents should regulate their children/wards' online activities by making use of parental guide app on their children's phones and laptops.
- The guidance and counseling units in our various schools should intensify their effort in educating the young adults on the dangers of abusing drugs.
- Community leaders and the government should engage mix media as a means of communication to drive home the message against drug abuse.
- The government should put in place, policies that reduce drug availability especially to the minor both online and offline.
- Social media owners and stakeholders should find a better approach to control the channels from impede criminal activities to ensure that underage users are not engaging with or exposed to potentially harmful contents.
- National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) should implement the approach of assessing and treating both the apprehended and non-apprehended victims. This approach will enable the Agency to discover those that need addiction treatment.

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