Relationship between Social Media Use and Drug Abuse among Students of Kogi State Polytechnic

Social & Digital Media Discourse
2021, Vol.2(1), 91-101

URL: http://sdmd.net.ng/
SDMD

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Abstract
This study investigates the relationship between social media use and the drug abuse phenomenon among students in Kogi State Polytechnic. It is premised on the perceived notion that the prevalence of drug use among students can be as a result of high level of display of drugs on social media even as the platforms can be used to curb the ugly trend. The study sampled the views of 370 students in Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja. Data collected were analysed descriptively and inferentially. The study finds that perceived prevalence of drug abuse among young people is high and could be attributed to the promotion of drug on the social media as well as environmental factors. Interestingly, however, respondents in the study believed that the social media serve as double-edged platforms in drug abuse phenomenon as they could be use to spread drug misuse message thus enculturating the youth into the world of drug misuse, and could at the same time be used to spread messages aimed at curbing drug misuse and abuse among the youth. Hence, the study recommends monitoring and control of social media content that could be microscopically and macroscopically inimical to the youth. It is also recommended that the reach of the social media and youth's dependency on them be exploited for social marketing against drug misuse and abuse among the youth.

Keywords: Social Media Use, Drug Abuse, Students, Technological Determinism, Technology Acceptance Models

Introduction

Drug Abuse is spreading at an epidemic level today. According to the World Drug Report (2020), an estimated 269 million people representing 5.3 percent of the global population were reported to have used drugs in 2018 as against 210 million representing 4.8 percent in 2009. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC, 2018) also reported that about 450,000 people died as a result of drug use in Nigeria in 2018. Of those deaths, 167,750 were a direct result of drug use disorders, in most cases involving Opioids (Heroin, codeine, tramadol, and morphine). Drug abuse or substance abuse, as it is now called by the World Health Organisation (2016), refers to a patterned use of a substance (drug) in which a user consumes a substance in amounts or with methods which are harmful to him/her or others. The number of drug users or drug addicts has significantly increased in recent decades (UNODC, 2018). As reported UNODC (2018), it is almost impossible to give an exact figure of the numbers of drug users in the world due to bureaucratic hurdles and imperfect census reporting, but the rough estimate is of somewhat around 190 million and this number is on increase, worsening in developed countries.

A survey led by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the Centre for Research and Information on Substance Abuse with technical support from the United Nations Office on drugs

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and crime and funding from the European Union showed that the highest level of drug use was recorded among people aged between 25 to 39, with cannabis being the most widely used drug (NBS, 2019). The survey excluded the use of tobacco and alcohol. According to this research, the total estimated number of drug addicts in Nigeria was concluded to be 14,300,000 people, including men and women who use high-risk drugs such as Cannabis, Opioids, cocaine, tranquilizers/sedatives, ecstasy, hallucinogens, solvents/inhalants, cough syrup and many more. The report shows that men having a higher estimate of 10,850,000 users against women users estimated at 3,430,000.

In Nigeria, the 2021 data By National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) shows a scary situation as 40% of youth in the country involve in drug abuse. The statistics revealed these Nigerian youths, between 18 and 35 years, are deeply involved in the abuse of drug.

The abuse of various mood-altering substances has been reported to be prevalent among Nigerian youths (NDLEA, 2021). NBS (2019), also pointed out that some substances alter the mind, changed the user's feeling, perception and behaviour when they are used because they exert action on the brain. Global studies on drug use and abuse revealed that early initiation of drug use is one of the best predictors of future drug abuse and dependence; for instance, youths whose drug use started before the age of 14 are more vulnerable to drug problems later in life than those who started using drugs at the age of 21 and above (Adeyemo, Ohaeri, Okapala & Oghale, 2016; Horiom, 2011; UNDOC, 2018; PEW Research 2021). According to Jena (2019) from ancient times, the use of drugs has always been an inseparable part of occultism and the youth in tertiary institutions are deeply involved in this practice. It is a disturbing fact to note that internet is seen to have impact on youth level of drug abuse (Ismail, Affandy, Basir & Ahmed, 2014).

The continuous abuse of drugs amongst students can led to a situation of drug addiction and resulting to a form of bondage to the drug. Drug abuse causes situations that often lead to various crimes, including the distortions of social life among the youths. The effects of drug abuse can be detrimental not only to the individual, but to the society as a whole. With the youth being glued to social media sites, considered platforms for spreading various forms of 'cultures, their susceptibility to risky substance being promoted glamorously online becomes highly probable.

Recent studies have shown that social media are now being used as strategy for selling drugs, especially among youths who are active users of the social media (Costello, 2017; Jena, 2019). The increasing incidence of drug abuse among the youth, particularly those in the institutions of higher learning (NBS, 2019; NDLEA, 2021, UNDOC, 2018), likes students of Kogi State polytechnic, Lokoja, become worrisome, particularly in the light of pervasiveness of social media and their content in the lives of this cohort. Hence, this study seeks to address the linkage between social media and drug abuse phenomenon, with a view to offer important practical and policy implications of this development.

Research Questions

1. What the prevalence rate of drug abuse among students of Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja?
2. What is the relationship between social media use and drug abuse among the students?
3. How social media can be used to curb drug abuse among students?

Literature Review

Social media

The terms "social media" and "social networking" are often used to describe the tools, applications, and functions associated with Web 2.0, which make it easier for people to listen, interact, engage and collaborate with each other using the Internet (Deady, Kay-Lambkin, Thornton, Baker, & Teesson, 2012). According to Obar and Wildman (2015) social media are computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. The variety of stand-alone and built-in social media services currently available introduces challenges of definition; Obar and Widerman (2015) however, draw our attention to some common features:

i. Social media are interactive Web 2.0 Internet-based applications.
ii. User-generated content, such as text posts or comments, digital photos or videos, and data generated through all online interactions, are the lifeblood of social media.
iii. Users create service-specific profiles for the website or app that are designed and maintained by the social media organization.
iv. Social media facilitate the development of online social networks by connecting a user's profile with those of other individuals or groups.

Social Media and Drug Abuse

Drug abuse is a term used commonly when prescription medication with sedative, anxiolytic, analgesic, or stimulant properties are used for mood alteration or intoxication ignoring the fact that overdose of such medicines can sometimes have serious adverse effects (WHO, 2016). It sometimes involves drug diversion from the individual for whom it was prescribed (Barceloux, 2012).

Prescription misuse has been defined differently and rather inconsistently based on status of drug prescription, the uses without a prescription, intentional use to achieve intoxicating effects, route of administration, co-ingestion with alcohol, and the presence or absence of dependence symptoms. According Adeyemo *et al.* (2016), the prevalence of health-risky behaviours associated with adolescents' illicit drug use has attracted growing international recognition and Nigeria scholars are not left behind. That southern and western Africa see the upsurge of unsafe sexual behaviours which have significantly untoward consequences, considering the high HIV prevalence estimates from the regions and now the illicit abuse of drugs and most especially among youths (Adeyemo *et al.* 2016).

Odejide (2000) posited that a drug is said to be abused when it is not pharmacologically necessary, especially when it is used in face of legal prohibition or when socially-acceptable beverage is used excessively. Drug abuse may lead to organized crimes and disruption of normal academic programmes. It has led to increased secret cult activities in secondary schools and most Nigerian universities, which has been a source of threat to lives and properties (Aluede, 2002; Osahenye, 2011; Obar & Wildman, 2015). The impact of drug abuse among Nigerian youths has also been associated with the loss of societal values and ideals.

Oshikoya and Alli (2006), in their studies on perception of drug abuse amongst Nigerian undergraduates, also identified dependence and addiction as one of the major consequences of drug abuse, characterized by compulsive drug craving seeking behaviours even in the face of negative consequences. These researchers asserted that socially, a drug abuser is always pre-occupied with how to obtain drug of choice and crave for the substance. Kobiowu (2006) study revealed that the academic pursuit of those undergraduates who engages in drug misuse is not unduly jeopardized, and that the abusers do not socialize extraordinarily, contrary to seemingly popular expectation.

According to Hilliard (2019), social networking sites are offering new and dangerous opportunities for adolescents to be exposed to drugs. The author noted that teenagers who regularly use popular social media outlets were more likely to drink, use drugs, and buy tobacco than adolescents who either did not use social media or used it less frequently.

When it comes to alcohol and drug use, peers can be just as influential online as they are in person (DeGroat , 2012). The use of social network sites will make it easier for the teenagers to share explicit experiences of their activities, be it in a good, or a bad way (Onyema & Chukwu, 2019).

Empirical Evidences

Observers have noted a range of positive and negative impacts of social media use. Social media can help to improve individuals' sense of connectedness with real or online communities and social media can be an effective communication (or marketing) tool for corporations, entrepreneurs, non-profit organizations, including advocacy groups and political parties and governments. At the same time, concerns have been raised about possible links between heavy social media use and *depression*, and even the issues of *cyber bullying*, online *harassment* and "*trolling*" (Valente, Gallaher, & Mouttapa, 2004). Currently, in United

State of America about half of young adults have been cyber bullied and of those, 20% said that they have been cyber bullied regularly (PEW, 2021). Another survey was carried out among 7th grade students in America which is known as the Precaution Process Adoption Model with 69 % of 7th grade students claiming to have experienced cyber bullying, which is worse than their experience of face-to- bullying (Chapin, 2016).

Social media, which now function instrumentally and ritualistically like the mainstream media like newspaper, television and cinema, connect people with realities and play tremendous role in enculturation. Having different communicative properties, and with direct conversation-like characteristics, social media can prove more influential than other mass media forms in spreading awareness against drug abuse (Jena, 2019). As platforms for sharing views and opinions about various social problems, social media also provide substantial bases for launching a forceful campaign against the menace of drugs (De-Groat, 2012).

The popularity and access of social media has increased tremendously in recent years. In January 2014 the 74% of online adults visited social networking sites (Pew Research Center, 2014). This increase has taken place rapidly with the advent of smartphones. The number of smartphone users in the world today is over 5 billion in 2021 (PEW, 2021). Because of, and parallel to, this increased use of internet and smartphones is the increase in the popularity of social media, now recognized as effective tools for spreading awareness on various social maladies such as the increased representation of drugs abuse (PEW, 2021).

In America, a survey reported that over 90 percent of adolescents in America have Facebook accounts (O'Keefe, 2011; PEW 2021). In the U.S, over 60% of 13 to 17-year-olds have at least one profile on social media, with many spending more than two hours a day on social networking sites (Hajirnis, 2015). According to Nielsen (2020), Internet users continue to spend more time on social media sites than on any other type of site. At the same time, the total time spent on social media sites in the U.S. across PCs as well as on mobile devices increased by 99 percent to 121 billion minutes in July 2012 compared to 66 billion minutes in July 2011 and climaxing at over 300 billion minutes in 2020 (PEW, 2021). For content contributors, the benefits of participating in social media have gone beyond simply social sharing to building a reputation and bringing in career opportunities and monetary income (Tang, Gu & Whinston, 2012; Hillard, 2019).

The NBS 2021 report shows that there are approximately 43 million social media users in Nigeria with over 70% of the social media accounts being owned by the youth who are much active on the platforms. Significantly, social media sites are most used by the people of age group ranging from 18-29 (89%) with 84% of the group being college going people (Pew Research Centre, 2021). At the same time, this age group is the most vulnerable to, and affected with, drug abuse. According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (2011/12), the highest level of recent drug use was reported by the 16–24-year age group (, PEW, 2021). This report is corroborated by Jena's (2019) study that most of drug users in the UK are adolescent. Zaman, Razzaq, Hassan, Qureshi, Ijaz, Hanif, et al. (2015), in their study of drug abuse and students, affirmed that drug addiction is prevalent among students. Using survey to study 500 students in Pakistan, they found that the commonly abused drugs are Opioid, Benzodia, etc. (Zaman, et al. 2015).

In another related study, Adeyemo, et al. (2016) examined the prevalence of drug abuse among students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, using descriptive survey to measure the relationship between university environment and drug abuse among undergraduates. The study found that many students have taken drugs for non-medical purposes more than once. The study also found that students take drugs as a result of poor teacher-student relationship, improper parental upbringing, as well as the influence of peer pressure.

When it comes to alcohol and drug use, peers can be just as influential online as they are in person (DeGroat & Gnagey, 2012). Jena (2019) provides longitudinal evidence that suggests that individuals who have friends who smoke are more likely to start smoking themselves (Citing Valente et al., 2004). The use of social network sites will make it easier for the teenagers to share explicit experiences of their activities, be it in a good, or a

bad way (Hajirnis, et al., 2015). According Aislin (2015), the menace of drug abuse has eaten deep into the fabrics of our society.

Hypotheses

Social media sites have the ability to mould or distort teen thinking to a great extent. Recent studies indicate adolescents turn to alcohol and drug use by seeing the images of people doing so in social media sites (Costello, 2017; Jena, 2019; PEW, 2021). The opposite can also be achieved by showing negative aspect of drugs. Thus, the following hypotheses were tested:

H_1: Promotion of drug abuse on the social media is associated with perceived prevalence of drug abuse among students of Kogi State Polytechnic

$H_{2:}$ Drug-saturated environment is associated with perceived prevalence of drug abuse among students of Kogi State Polytechnic

Methodology

Through survey, students of Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja were sampled. Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Table for sample size determination three hundred and seventy (370) copies of questionnaire were used to sample the views of the students. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM-SPSS) Version 25.0 was used to descriptively and inferentially analysed the data collected. To instantiate the phenomenon, self-developed scales, based on extensive literature review, were use with the key constructs (promotion of drug abuse on the social media, environmental influence, curbing drug abuse, and perceived prevalence of drug abuse) being measured with battery of items on 5-point Likert scales.

Results

This section presents the findings based on the analysis of data. Essentially, a prosaic summary the results of the descriptive analysis preluded the presentation of inferential data analysis resulting from test of hypotheses advanced.

Descriptive Data

The demographic profile of respondents in this study revealed a slight male (51.9%) majority. Respondents are averagely 23 years old (M=22.7, SD=4.80), with 16 years being the minimum age while 35 the maximum age. This shows that the entire respondents are youths who are susceptible to influence of social media that is their important daily media diet.

Of the six main social media (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, SnapChat, Twitter, and YouTube used by the respondents), WhatsApp (30.8%) is the most used followed by Facebook (29.7%) and Instagram (17.6%). YouTube (2.4%) is, however, the least used social media. Six in ten of the respondents (63.8%) visit social media platforms daily while more than half of the respondents (52.7%) use social media for more than four hours daily.

Promotion of Drug Abuse on the Social Media (M=3.58, SD1.12, α=.854): This construct was measured by 11 items measured on 5-point Likert scale. Item include Students are exposed to pictures that promote risky behaviours such as drinking and smoking (M=4.00, SD=0.87), students seeing their friends and family on social media having fun with smoke and drink can tempt them to make risky choices (M=4.00, SD=0.88), photos and videos of young people smoking weed, consuming alcohol and taking narcotic drugs can encourage students to experiment in the same way (M=4.00, SD=0.84), celebrity use of drug on social media influence student drug abuse (M=3.60, SD=1.10) and that social media promote drug abuse (M=3.50, SD=0.96), among others.

Environmental Influence (M=3.00, SD=1.12, α=.550): This construct explored the impact of unmediated environment on drug abuse among the students. Three items used in indexing this construct are campus environment influences students use of drugs (M=3.00, SD=1.30), drugs are easily available to students (M=3.60, SD=1.10) and drugs are easily and readily available in school (M=2.40, SD=1.20).

Curbing Drug Abuse with Social Media (M=4.19, SD=0.95, α=.805): Seven items were used to explore the possibility of using the social media for curbing incidence of drug abuse among the students sampled in this study. The items include social media can be used for campaigning against drug abuse (M=4.30, SD=1.00), students should be educated on the proper use of social media and the consequences of misuse (M=4.40,

SD=0.72), social media can be used to maintain open dialogue with students on the perils of smoking, drinking and drug abuse (M=4.40, SD=0.67), celebrity social media message can be use to campaign against drug abuse (M=4.00, SD=1.00).

Perceived Prevalence of Drug Abuse (M=3.98, SD=0.98, α=.799): This construct established respondents' perception of prevalence of drug abuse among the youth. Measured by five items on a 5-point Likert scale. The items yielded high agreements to statements like students use narcotics such as codeine, opium, tramadol, etc. (M4.00, SD=1.00), drug abuse among students has resulted to drug addiction (M=4.30, SD=0.92), drug abuse is increasing day by day among students (M=4.10, SD=0.88), students use drugs heavily for non-medical purposes (M=3.70, SD=1.00) and students engage in illegal activities to obtain any drugs (M=3.80, SD=1.10).

Test of Hypotheses

The two hypotheses raised in this study were tested using hierarchical regression models, which controlled for the effects of demographic variables (age and gender) on perceived prevalence of drug abuse among the youth. After satisfying that the constructs were reliably measured, inter-item correlations were performed to ensure absence of multicollinearity among the variables. The results, which demonstrated absence of any inordinate correlation is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Inter-item Correlations

Variables	**1**	**2**	**3**
1 Promotion of Drug Abuse on the Social Media	1	.177**	.244**
2 Non-mediated Environmental Influence		1	.143**
3 Perceived Prevalence of Drug Abusa			1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

H1: H_1: Promotion of drug abuse on the social media is associated with perceived prevalence of drug abuse among students of Kogi State Polytechnic

The results of hierarchical regression testing association between social media promotion of drug abuse and perceived prevalence of drug abuse yielded a total variance of 6% (R2=.060, p=.001). Both gender and age controlled for in the Model 1 have no contribution to the influence of social media promotion of drug abuse on perceived prevalence of drug abuse. This means that the effects hypothesised will occur irrespective of gender and age of the respondents in this study. These results affirm hypothesis 1 of the study.

Table 2: Association between Promotion of Drug Abuse on the Social Media and Perceived Prevalence of Drug Abuse

Model	**B**	**SE**	**β**	**t**	**p**
Model 1					
Constant	4.01	0.20	-	20.17	.001
Age	.00	.01	-.001	-.015	.988
Gender	.03	.08	.02	.404	.686
R^2=.001, Adj R^2=-.006, $R^2\Delta$=.001, p=.922					
Model 2					
Constant	2.97	.30	-	9.887	.001
Age	.00	.01	.03	.487	.626
Gender	-.01	.08	-.01	-.107	.915
Promotion of Drug Abuse on the Social Media	.25	.05	.25	4.516	.001
R^2=.060, Adj R^2=-.051, $R^2\Delta$=.059, p=.001					

Dependent Variable: Perceived Prevalence of Drug Abuse

$H_{2:}$ Drug-saturated environment is associated with perceived prevalence of drug abuse among students of Kogi State Polytechnic

Similar to the test of hypothesis 1, hierarchical regression was conducted to test the influence of drug-saturated environment on perceived prevalence of drug abuse among the youth. Controlling for the effects of gender and age in the Model 1, the results revealed a very modest influence of drug-saturated environment on perceived prevalence of drug abuse among the youth. The overall variance explained of 3.4% (R2=.034, p=.008) and positive contribution of drug-saturated environment (β=.18, p=.001), hypothesis 2 of the study is partially upheld.

Table 3: Association between Drug-saturated Environment and Perceived Prevalence of Drug Abuse

Model	**B**	**SE**	**β**	**t**	**p**
Model 1					
Constant	3.97	.20	-	20.360	.001
Age	.00	.01	.014	.263	.792
Gender	.02	.08	.012	.216	.829
R^2=.000, Adj R^2=-.006, $R^2\Delta$=.000, p=.942					
Model 2					
Constant	3.46	.24	-	14.352	.001
Age	.00	.01	.01	.239	.811
Gender	.01	.08	.01	.151	.880
Environmental Influence on Drug Abuse	.17	.05	.18	3.436	.001
R^2=.034, Adj R^2=-.025, $R^2\Delta$=.034, p=.008					

Dependent Variable: Perceived Prevalence of Drug Abuse

Discussion

This study explores the association between social media use and prevalence of drug abuse among the youth. Premised on the notion that the social media have become important sites of enculturation and cultivation of values among the youths (Florence et al. 2014; NBS, 2019; Nielsen, 2020) who are incidentally the hugest patrons of the platforms, the study investigates how drug abuse narratives on the social media affect drug misuse and abuse among students of Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja, Nigeria.

Based on extensive interrogation of the literature that indicates the existence of social media-induced drug misuse in advanced democratic climes like the United States and Europe (Frentasia, 2012; Jena, 2019; Hilliard, 2019), this study examined Nigerian context of this phenomenon with a view to profile happenings in African largest democracy and offer informed practical and policy recommendations. Hence, survey data were systematically elicited from 370 students in Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja.

Results revealed good use of social media among the students surveyed in terms of quantity, frequency and time spent on them. This state of affairs provides the basis for possibility of influence of the platforms on their users as posited by numerous studies in media effects tradition (Baran & Davis, 2010; O'Keefe, 2011; Costello, & Ramo, 2017). It was also found that social media, through their capacity for viral information dissemination and uncensored mechanisms, contributed to promotion of drug abuse information, either as light or heavy entertainment (DeGroat, 2012). Additionally, the environment is also found culpable in promoting this drug abuse phenomenon, particularly if the environment is permeable and permissible of this dangerous malady (Deady, et al. 2012; PEW, 2021).

Disturbingly, respondents in this study have very high perception of the prevalence of drug abuse among their cohort. This affirmation concurs with numerous findings of extant studies on drug abuse phenomenon among the youth across the globe (Florence, et al. 2014; WHO, 2016; UNODC, 2018). It is, however, heart-warming that the same platforms have been found functional and positive for pro-value messaging. Hence, this study confirmed the instrumental capacity of social media for the curbing of drug abuse among the youth. Collectively, findings in this study align with the popular notion that mass media and the entirety of mediated communication is neither functional nor dysfunctional, but a product of the kind of use individuals and societies make of the powerful cultural institution (Baran & Davis, 2010; Ismail, et al. 2014).

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it is apparent that the social media as important media diet of the contemporary youths function for good and for bad in semblance with prior media of mass communication before their arrival. It is thus essential for stakeholders- individual, social media operators, government, civil society organisations and other institutions in the society- to develop mechanism for appropriating the functional use of the platforms while diminishing the deleterious consequences of using the platforms for evil. The power of the social media to push narratives in temporo-spatial limitless ways should be recognised as coming at huge price that could bode ill for the society if wrongly deployed. Hence, responsible use of the social media should be pursued aggressively.

One of the most interesting fallouts of social media revolution is their prosumer quality that has handle enormous editorial power on every individual, particularly the professionally-uninitiated, who could afford the technology and this is becoming a common currency given the increasing affordance of digital apparatuses in view of low cost. Today, it not uncommon to witness viral dissemination of super-imposed pictorial and other audio-visual content that belong to the cadre of information disorder on the social media. Besides, technological affordance of deep-fake that is often diffused via the social media contributes in no small measure to negative and retrogressive enculturation. Wanton display of narcotics and other hallucinogenic agents in self-made videos or from contemporary musicals shared on the social media have traceable effects on negative value orientation of the youth as confirmed by the findings of this study.

It is, therefore, recommended that a societal regulatory mechanism be institutionalised with a social mandate of making inimical users of social media users accountable for their actions. In furtherance of building media and digital literate citizenry, government should, as a matter of urgency, consider development and implementation of media and digital literacy policy a priority. Similarly, other social institutions such as families, religious bodies and civil society organisations should partner each and every other institution to birth a cultured society amidst the Tower of Babel that exponential revolution of social media has created.

This study is though exploratory and modest in nature and outlook, it documents vital information that could help redress the malignant malady of drug use phenomenon and culpability of the social media among the youth. It is recommended that future studies should address the lacuna inherent in the current study in terms of designs, locale, as well as other ontological and epistemological deficiencies. This would no doubt help in maximizing the advantage of digital and social media platforms in today information-saturated society.

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How to Cite: Okaiyeto, S. A., & Adewole, P. P. (2021). Relationship between Social Media Use and Drug Abuse among Students of Kogi State Polytechnic, *Social & Digital Media Discourse*. *2*(1), 91-101.