

# Effect of Employment Status and Drug on the Psychological Well-Being Among Youths

<sup>1</sup>Chuka Ignatius Okuefuna , <sup>2</sup>Emmanuel Nweke Okafor

Siam University,  
Thailand

<sup>1</sup>*chukaokuefuna@yahoo.com*

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of employment status and drug use on psychological well-being among youths. A total number of one hundred and forty-three (143) youth drawn from two social groups: Obinwanne and Omambala groups in Anambra State; served as the participants for the study. The researchers selected participants through simple random sampling which gives equal opportunity to the target group members. They consist of twenty-seven (27) females and a hundred and sixteen (116) males. Their ages ranged from 19 – 37 years and their mean age was 28.32 with a standard deviation of 4.28. Two instruments were used in the study; Psychological Well-Being Index (PWBI) an 18-item scale, developed by Ryff and Keyes (1995), and the Drug use questionnaire (DUQ) a 20-item questionnaire, developed by American Addiction Research Foundation (1982). The researchers conducted a pilot study and obtained 0.89 alpha coefficient reliability on the psychological well-being scale and 0.80 alpha coefficient reliability in the drug use questionnaire. Two hypotheses were tested in the study. The first statistical hypothesis which suggests that employed and unemployed youth will remarkably vary in their level of psychological well-being was accepted at  $p < 0.05$ . The second statistical hypothesis, which suggests that drug users and non-drug users will remarkably vary in their level of psychological well-being was also accepted at  $p < 0.05$ . However, the interaction between employment status and drug use was not statistically significant ( $F = 1.28, p = 0.26$ ). The results were discussed, and relying on the findings of this study, the researchers recommend that the services of qualified psychologists be made available to schools, to counsel and direct students on the dangers of drug use, when necessary.

## INTRODUCTION

The healthy psychological well-being of the youths is a panacea for a productive society. The youths play an important role in society; their psychological well-being determines how society strives. This can make or mar society as the society greatly depends on the youth for survival as they are the productive age that sustains the society. Having healthy psychological well-being is being emotionally stable, having positive thoughts, having good social relationships, and having high career pursuits which require the active engagement of self-control processes such as emotion regulation pursuits (Brown and Ryan, 2003). Positive psychological well-being among youths helps in reducing the rate of death, vulnerability, dependence, and fatality and improves physical and mental alertness (Chida, 2008). Psychological well-being form part of the field of positive psychology, which evolved out of the humanistic movement which represented a swing away from focusing primarily on psychopathology towards enhancement of normal and optimal human growth, which is a basic precept of positive psychology (Bar-On, 2010). The psychological Well-being of youths can be viewed from the angle of being satisfied with life

expectancy, including education, family life, social relationship, association, and physical outlook (Patalay and Fitzsimons, 2018). According to Arnold (2007), the concept of psychological well-being is a relatively expansive idea that extends to include physical and psychological aspects. Positive psychology view, identify and amplify the strength and capabilities that individuals, families, and society needs to embrace to flourish The qualities every individual needs to blossom and experience profound satisfaction, knowledge, emotional, physical, and social well-being are the same assets that guide against stress, physical and mental illness (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Psychological well-being among youths can be measured with those associated with, the physical outlook of the individual, career advancement, education, and family members as major indicators that measures emotional and behavioral. Booker, C. L., Kelly, Y. J., and Sacker, A. (2018).

Unemployment among youths is a major crisis affecting not just the individual but the society and national economy which is a hindrance to national growth. Unemployment has greatly affected the mental health of a greater number of youths in Africa who have depended so much on how to advance the continent. This has greatly affected the growth of the African continent as most of the youth population migrated or have intentions to migrate to Europe and Asia in search of greener pastures. This has also caused a brain drain in Africa as the educated and skilled youths who could not secure jobs also migrate or plan to Europe where they settle to work.

The population of our country (Nigeria) increases day by day. Nigeria is among the most populated nations with increasing youth unemployment. In 2018, we have about 200 million people in Nigeria, and young people aged 18-35 years constitute about 80% of the population. Today, we have young people both with formal and non-formal education who are willing to work but do not have any job. Even higher degree holders are unemployed. The real cause of unemployment in Nigeria is the growing population. Other factors are recession, inflation, bad governance, corruption, disability, nepotism, and lack of positive will of the leaders to develop the country.

Every youth expects to have a job that will help in life expectancy. Employment helps a young person to meet life demands, it also can help one to have stable growth, high self-esteem, confidence, and self-discovery. Whereas unemployment led to depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and psychological harm, especially when all efforts to get employed met a brick wall. Unemployment can make youth to be unstable even in interpersonal relations, and managing family life and can lead someone to drug use and abuse which is so detrimental to personal growth and life advancement which is the dream of every young person. Nigerian Prisons are filled with young men and women of productive age who out of life frustration occasioned by unemployment turn to crime and other vices to meet up with life demands which is a burden to the unemployed population.

Unemployment is a crisis that led to a loss of personality worth, brushed ego, lack of confidence, loss of self-respect, and inferiority complex which greatly affect the psychological well-being of an individual. Unemployment is a global phenomenon that is so challenging, especially to the youths who are the production force of every economy, this can lead to economic recession, inflation, and other social vices which are not healthy for national growth. With the recent global recession around the world, the Covid-19 pandemic, and Russia- the Ukraine war, the youths in their productive ages are the worst hit, they bear the brunt as they are thrown out of jobs, which led to more youths back to the labor market and depression.

The employment status of the youths may determine their psychological well-being of the youths. When the youths after acquiring higher education or skills, are gainfully employed, they would



be productive and impact society positively. Employment is one factor that sets the pace for meaningful living. Once a youth is assured of having food on the table and receiving a salary for a job done, the youth tend to be stable psychologically. Employment helps the youth advance in life. Unemployment has greatly caused the rate of crime and other social vices to be very high in Nigeria. The youths after school continue to roam the streets in search of greener pastures and still depend on their parent for basic things such as shelter and food. Unemployment is a disease that is ravaging society and making the youths unproductive and psychologically unhealthy. The youth who is not gainfully employed cannot be psychologically healthy. Unemployed youth is financially unstable, depends on their parents for survival, cannot start life and family of their own, and cannot reason perfectly well. Only a youth who is psychologically balanced and stable can be able to achieve any good in life and advance in their chosen career, financial stability, and politically alert.

So, employment status may influence the psychological well-being of youths, it may determine how they relate with themselves and others. But unemployment may lead youths to self-neglect, self-destruction, looking haggard, and may negatively affect their thought processes.

Drug use among youths is yet another factor that may influence the psychological well-being of the youth. Substance Use includes the use of those Stimulants and depressant drugs (Alcohol, Nicotine/Tobacco, codeine, Cannabis, Cocaine, Heroin, methamphetamines) that interact with the Central Nervous System and distort the thinking abilities of the youth making the user vulnerable to incapable of self-realization. Substance use distorts the thinking ability and thinking patterns of the youths and hampers development and growth.

Unemployment and drug use go hand in hand because unemployment paves the way for drug abuse among youths. It is an evil that bedeviled society, does great harm to any developing economy, and helps push greater evils in the polity. The menace of Boko haram, kidnapping and banditry in Northern Nigeria, and cybercrime and agitations in Southern Nigeria are greatly caused unemployment rate in the society in which the youths are mostly affected. The youths have no other options left than to turn to the vices to demand a fair society and to make out a living. The youths who have no job and any other decent way of living normally turn to the drug to overcome shame and frustration without knowing the more harm causing to themselves and society.

Substance abuse according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder, (DS M-IV-TR,) represents a pattern of substance use and is manifested by recurrent adverse consequences related to the repeated ingestion of a substance, whether a drug of abuse or a medicinal drug (Obi-Nwosu 2011). Using drugs or taking any psychoactive elements communicates with the human brain, it interrupts mental processes and causes irrational behaviors, changes the perception of realities, and causes harm to the level of individual alertness, and perception of the world. Substance use or a psychoactive drug is any chemical substance that, when an individual takes a drug, alters how the body functions. It thwarts the physical and psychological components of the body (World Health Organization, 1989). The American National Institute of Drug Abuse reported that the use of substances can be a reverting and persistent illness for the brain acquired through the use or desire to use the drugs without paying attention or thinking about their side effects of it. (National Institute of Drug Abuse, 2014).

Substance use affects the psychological well-being of youths because drugs change the brain. Substance use and employment status of the youth may form the bases on which the psychological well-being of the youths stands.



When the youths are not gainfully employed, most turn to drug use and abuse, to ease off stress. This worsens the general wellness of the youths and makes them more vulnerable to societal ills, this has led the youths to engage in what they ought not to engage in if they are gainfully employed or engaged in profitable ventures.

Drug use causes a significant burden to youths and societies throughout the world. It is a global phenomenon that affects the whole world. It is also another way through which some youths contract diseases and deadly viruses especially HIV/AIDS as some drugs are taken by injecting into the body, this is especially when injecting materials are shared. It is a social and health burden on the youth population.

It is also of note that methamphetamines otherwise known as mkpuru mmili in Igbo areas of Nigeria have a great effect on the intellectual balance of the youths. It is now obtrusive that the use of mkpuru mmili precipitates psychotic signs and symptoms in some youths who are predisposed to mental disorder, however, who may not in any other case appear this malady. This is a great challenge now to the Igbos of Nigeria who are battling to save the situation, this has resulted in the use of absolute and brutal force to deter the users of these psychotic drugs. The wave at which the youths result in the use of drugs in Igboland of Nigeria is so alarming today that most parents of the users are now handicapped and rather depend on community efforts to save their children. The youth organizations have now taken it upon themselves to apprehend any drug user and manhandled the individual before handing the individual over to the police, this though has not saved the situation.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There have been several incidences of drug-related mental illness among the youths and from personal experiences gotten during clinical exposure in Enugu State University rehabilitation center Emene, Enugu State Nigeria, and Anambra State rehabilitation center Nteje, it was observed that many patients were mentally sick due to emotional trauma resulting from depression which was traced to the economic and financial stress which emanated from unemployment and chronic drug use. Therefore, it is pertinent to assess how employment status and drug use among youths could affect the psychological well-being of these youths.

Therefore, this study is meant to answer the following questions.

- i. Would employment status significantly affect the psychological well-being of the youths?
- ii. Would there be any significant effect of drug use on the psychological well-being of the youths?

## KEY DEFINITION OF VARIABLES

- i. **Employment Status:** Refers to the occupational state of an individual, that is whether the youth is gainfully employed or is still an applicant.
- ii. **Drug Use:** Refers to the use of any substances that can alter the functions of the brain and affect the mental state of the individual youth such as cannabis (marijuana), Nicotine, Caffeine, and methamphetamines.
- iii. **Psychological Well-Being:** Refers to a state of psychological, mental, and cognitive wellness and balance. That is, the ability to think well.
- iv. **Youth:** Refer to young adults between the ages of 19 years and 37 years.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A total number of one hundred and forty-three (143) youths drawn from two social groups: Obinwanne and Omambala in Anambra; served as the participants in the study. The researchers used a simple random sampling technique in choosing the participants. This gives the participants equal opportunity to be selected for the study. They consist of twenty-seven (27) females and a hundred and sixteen (116) males. Their ages ranged from 19 - 37 years and their mean age was 28.32 with a standard deviation of 4.28.

The researchers employed Psychological Well-Being Index (PWBI), developed by Ryff and Keyes, (1995). It is an 18-item scale that measured the components of psychological functioning.

The second instrument is Drug Use Questionnaire (DAST-20). A twenty (20) item scale that measured drug use among mini-bus drivers, was developed by (American Addiction Research Foundation, 1982).

The researchers modified the questionnaires and took them to an independent supervisor who vetted the instruments for face, content, and construct validity. The researchers, however, included some demographic variables such as gender, age, employment status, type of employment, and marital status, to form a single questionnaire. The researchers obtained a Coefficient alpha reliability of 0.80 on the drug use questionnaire and 0.89 on the psychological well-being scale, through a pilot study and subjecting it to factor analysis using fifty (50) participants.

The researchers distributed a total of Two hundred (200) copies of the questionnaire across the target population within 2 weeks. The researchers created a good rapport and friendly atmosphere with participants, to make them feel free and secure before handing out the questionnaires. The researchers explained to them how to answer the questions. After the administration of the questionnaire, the researchers appreciated them, and subjected the data obtained in the research to SPSS analysis; and only one hundred and forty-three were valid and relevant for the study.

### Design and Statistics

The study is a survey study; it has employment status and drug use as its independent variables and psychological well-being as the dependent variable. Two by two factorial designs were adopted for the study and two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistics was used to test the hypotheses of this study.



## RESULTS

The result of the statistical analysis of the data obtained in the study is presented in tables 1 and 2.

**TABLE 1:** Summary table of the mean and standard deviation of employment status and drug use concerning psychological well-being among youths.

Employment status	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Employed	39.69	67	15.01
Unemployed	73.30	76	14.71
Total	57.55	143	22.41
Drug Use	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Using drugs	69.86	74	18.69
Not using drugs	44.35	69	18.25
Total	57.55	143	22.41

Table 1 above indicates that employment status is remarkable to the psychological well being of youths. The youths who are employed showed a higher level of psychological well-being while the unemployed youths were found to have a lower level of psychological well-being. Also, the table above indicates that drug use among youths also had a remarkable influence on their psychological well-being. That is, those who used drugs had a lower level of psychological well-being while non-drug users were found to have a high sense of alertness, mental balance, and self-consciousness.

**TABLE 2** Summary table of two-way analysis of variance of the influence of employment status and drug use on psychological well-being among youths.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	42477.29	3	14159. 10	68.19	.00
Employment Status	19110.87	1	19110.87	92.03	.00
Drug Use	1869.98	1	1869.98	9.01	.00
Employment Status * Drug Use	266.20	1	266.10	1.28	.26
Error	28864.07	139	207.66		

Total	544998.00	143			
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Based on the above table 2, the results indicate that the overall model is statistically remarkable ( $F = 68.19, p = 0.00$ ). The variable, employment status is statistically remarkable at ( $F = 92.03, p = 0.00$ ), drug use is statistically remarkable at ( $F = 9.01, p = 0.00$ ). However, the interaction between employment status and drug use is not statistically remarkable ( $F = 1.28, p = 0.26$ ).

Consequently, hypothesis One which stated that employed and unemployed youth will remarkably differ in their level of psychological well-being; was accepted. Hypothesis Two which stated that drug users and non-drug users will significantly differ in their level of psychological well-being was also accepted at  $p < 0.05$ .

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effect of employment status and substance use on the psychological well-being of youths. Two hypotheses were tested. Hypothesis one which stated that employed and unemployed youth will remarkably differ in their level of psychological well-being; was accepted at  $p < 0.05$ . These findings align with the findings of many studies which try to measure indicators of mental well-being and mental hygiene, which ranges from simple code of life fulfillments and self-advancement to a multi-complex measure of states of mind; these are then statistically analyzed with a labor market status that is; employment and unemployment. It is also speculated that youth would be more vulnerable and, therefore, more affected by unemployment.

Hypothesis two which stated that drug users and non-drug users will remarkably differ in their level of psychological well-being was also accepted at  $p < 0.05$ . In consideration of the abuse of medical drugs by the youths, there are high chances of harmful interactions between such drugs and other substances used which can alter the mental health and prone the user to more harm. Hall and Pacula (2003).

Though some substance use may not be entirely harmful to the body, however, it depends on the level of usage and body build. The kind of food one takes also plays a role in maintaining body balance during drug use. The challenge, most youth face is unemployment which leads them to excessive drug use without good feeding. A wide range of harm is associated with substance use, which can be physical, psychological, social, financial, or legal, these can greatly affect society since the affected youth will be a nuisance and unproductive to family, friends, and the community.

The researchers, with regards to the findings of the study, conclude that employment plays a vital role in the life of every individual who is supposed to be in the labor market. Hence it is pertinent to say that unemployment is a factor that militates against the psychological well-being of any unemployed person.

Thus, unemployment should be seen and dealt with as a social menace. As a result of the findings, the researchers thus accepted the first and second hypotheses. Hence, other factors like environmental antecedent interaction such as the personality of the individual might influence how far the individual will experience psychological disturbances when unemployed



or under drugs. The researchers thereby recommend that the government should make available, efficient techniques of job search, and vocational training for this disadvantaged unemployed group. Also, the services of qualified psychologists are needed in schools; to counsel and direct students (undergraduates) where and when necessary. This will immensely reduce the rate of unemployment by awakening the spirit and zeal of entrepreneurship among the youth population.

## IMPLICATION OF THIS STUDY

This study has indeed added to the existing knowledge about psychological well-being. It has showcased unemployment and drug use as factors that expose the youth population to poor mental health and hygiene. This will indeed help the policymakers, in their efforts to reduce unemployment, crime, and drug abuse to have an in-depth understanding of the causes and implications of unemployment and drug use. It will also add value to society because control of substance use should be seen as a step to the prevention of mental disorders, and crime in society. Society and the government are being informed about the relationship between unemployment, drug use, and psychological well-being.

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