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DRUG ABUSE AND YOUTH RESTIVENESS AMONG STUDENTS OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The involvement of students in drug abuse and youth restiveness has become a pressing social problem in Nigeria that demands immediate attention. This study, therefore, examined the relationship between drug abuse and youth restiveness among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State. Three research questions were raised, and three research hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. A correlation research design was employed in this study. The population of the study was 15,424 students in three tertiary institutions in Oyo State, while a sample of 389 respondents was selected through a simple random sampling technique from the population. Data were collected using the Drug Abuse Scale (DAS) and the Youth Restiveness Questionnaire (YRQ), both of which comprised 20 items and yielded reliability coefficients of 0.82 and 0.87, respectively. The data generated were analysed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation and a correlation matrix at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed a significant relationship between drug abuse and youth restiveness among students. However, age, gender, and place of residence were not significantly related to either drug abuse or youth restiveness. Based on these findings, it was recommended that undergraduates should be made aware of the dangers of drug abuse through orientation programmes, seminars, and workshops organised by guidance counsellors, as such initiatives can help reduce youth restiveness on campus.

Keywords: Drug abuse, Youth restiveness, Students, Tertiary institutions and Oyo state

Introduction

The school environment represents a critical period for personal growth, academic development, and socialisation. However, it is also a time when students are exposed to various factors such as academic stress, bullying victimisation, lack of confidence, and emotional instability, which can lead to drug abuse. The term *drug* refers to any substance that, when taken into a living organism, may modify one or more of its functions, while *abuse* implies the use of a drug in a manner that is more destructive than constructive to society or the individual (Kabbash et al., 2025). Drug abuse involves the misuse of medication, self-medication, and the consumption of illegal substances. It is a pervasive problem that cuts across all boundaries of age, gender, place of residence, and social class (Abuoma, 2026). As a maladaptive behaviour, drug abuse hinders societal development and poses serious threats to life, health, dignity, and the overall well-being of individuals.

Drug abuse is a problem that is of serious concern to school authorities, psychologists, guidance counsellors and governments in Nigeria. The problem is very common among students who in most cases are ignorant about the dangers inherent in drug abuse. The most common types of abused drugs according to Nlemchukwu et al. (2023) are categorised as (a) Stimulants: These are substances that directly act and stimulate the central nervous system. Users at the initial stage experience pleasant effects such as energy increase. The major source of these comes from caffeine substance. (b) Hallucinogens: These are drugs that alter the sensory processing unit in the brain, thus, producing distorted perception, feeling of anxiety and euphoria, sadness and inner joy, they normally come from marijuana, LSD etcetera (c) Narcotics: These drugs relive pains, induce sleeping and

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they are addictive. They are found in heroin, codeine, opium. (d) Sedatives: These drugs are among the most widely used and abused. This is largely due to the belief that they relieve stress and anxiety, and some of them induce sleep, ease tension, cause relaxation or help users to forget their problems. They are sourced from valium, alcohol, promotazine, chloroform. (e) Miscellaneous: This is a group of volatile solvents or inhalants that provide euphoria, emotional disinhibition and perpetual distortion of thought to the user. The main sources are glues, spot removers, tube repair, perfumes, and chemicals. Tranquilizers (They are believed to produce calmness without bringing drowsiness; they are derived from Librium, Valium).

The widespread availability and easy access to drugs in and around school environments significantly contribute to the growing problem of drug abuse among students. Abdullahi (2024) noted that over 1.8 million students between the ages of 18 and 30 consume alcohol, barbiturates, and amphetamines annually in Nigeria. Therefore, drugs such as cannabis and stimulants have the capacity to alter mood and reduce self-control, thereby increasing the likelihood of students engaging in violent or destructive behaviour (Garba, 2024). Under the influence of these drugs, students may react more aggressively to conflicts or situations they perceive as unfair on campus. Maciver and Igbojinwaekwu (2020) observed that such reactions can escalate minor disagreements into serious episodes of restiveness. Impaired reasoning and poor judgment resulting from drug use weaken students' ability to resolve conflicts peacefully, thereby triggering behaviours that threaten peace and stability within educational institutions.

The abuse of drugs is linked to many factors such as excessive unsupervised free time, peer pressure, easy accessibility to drugs, academic stress, the desire for social acceptance, low self-esteem, misinformation, and self-medication (Modebelu & Adeniyi, 2023). These underlying factors are closely linked to the symptoms commonly observed among students, as academic stress and low self-esteem may manifest in irritability and withdrawal from social activities, peer pressure and social acceptance may encourage persistent use resulting in slurred speech and bloodshot eyes, while misinformation and self-medication may contribute to changes in appetite and noticeable weight loss. The interaction between these causes and symptoms disrupts students' physical health, emotional stability, academic performance, and peer relationships, and may ultimately culminate in youth restiveness.

Youth restiveness has recently become a prominent issue in Oyo State. The extent to which youth restiveness poses a threat to national security is a growing concern that has drawn attention from both Nigerians and the international community (Nalah, 2022). Youth constitute a significant proportion of students in tertiary institutions across the state. The youth population between the ages of 18 and 30 in Oyo State is estimated at 1.2 million (Abdullahi, 2024). The term "youth" refers to individuals who have passed childhood but have not yet reached full adulthood, while "restive" describes a state of being difficult to control, unable to remain still or quiet, or showing dissatisfaction with certain decisions, changes, or existing laws deemed unfavourable (Oke & Ahoton, 2024; Ezecheta, 2025).

Restiveness is an anti-social behaviour that manifest in the acts of violence, cultism, aggression, arms possession, disobedience to school rules and regulations. Maciver and Igbojinwaekwu (2020) described restiveness as a function of one's emotional and temperamental reactions to events or situations, due to wrong cognitive perception, appraisal and interpretation of such events with resultant state of nervousness, restlessness, uneasiness, obstinacy and uncontrollable behaviour. According to Fareo and Babale (2021), restiveness in Nigeria is generally categorised into two forms: constructive and destructive. Constructive restiveness refers to situations where youths channel their grievances and demands for change through peaceful and lawful means, such as dialogue, advocacy, and community engagement (Ibiteye & Awomoyi, 2023). This form of restiveness promotes positive transformation and encourages mutual understanding between youths and authorities. Destructive restiveness, however, is marked by violent actions, vandalism, and other disruptive behaviours intended to forcefully achieve desired goals (Abdullahi, 2024; Garba, 2024). Such actions often lead to social instability, property damage, and strained community relations. While constructive restiveness can drive sustainable development, destructive restiveness often fuels social vices such as drug abuse, as frustrated youths may resort to drug use as a coping mechanism or to embolden violent actions (Nalah, 2022).

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Several higher institutions in Oyo State have witnessed youth restiveness in recent years, often fueled by insecurity, fee hikes, cultism, and drug abuse. For instance, in 2023, Oke-Ogun Polytechnic experienced a series of crises, including student protests, violent attacks, and clashes with police, leading to loss of lives and reported cases of sexual assault on campus. These developments disrupted academic activities, as strikes and ongoing instability affected the smooth functioning of the institution (Araromi, 2026). At Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso, students protested in April 2024 after a colleague was allegedly killed by a security agent (Vanguard, 2024). Similarly, at the University of Ibadan, multiple protests occurred in 2024 and 2025 over tuition hikes and student activism, resulting in suspensions and other disruptions (Guardian, 2024; Sahara Reporters, 2025). At Adeseun Ogundoyin Polytechnic, Eruwa, in 2023, students staged demonstrations against robbery and sexual assault incidents that disrupted campus life (Ogbefun, 2025). Furthermore, at the Lanlate College of Education, Oyo State, student union leaders were suspended following violent protests (Punch, 2020). These incidents highlight recurring patterns of unrest across tertiary institutions in the state, showing how factors such as drug abuse, insecurity, and poor learning conditions contribute significantly to youth restiveness.

The literature establishes a strong relationship between drug abuse and youth restiveness among students. Drug abuse can contribute to youth restiveness by altering chemistry, impairing judgement, and increasing impulsivity, which can lead to aggressive behaviour, rebellion, and disillusionment (Nlemchukwu, et al., 2023). Conversely, youth restiveness can also drive drug abuse as students may turn to drugs as a coping mechanism for stress, frustration, and emotional pain. Hence, drug abuse can exacerbate feelings of restiveness and aggression among students (Abonyi, et al., 2023). The abuse of drugs such as methamphetamine, cannabis, tramadol, and codeine has increased among students, causing antisocial behaviours (Hanafi, 2025). Many students who engage in restive activities, such as protests that escalate into violence, are found to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. These substances can amplify feelings of anger, frustration, and perceived injustice, making individuals more prone to confrontations (Fareo & Babale, 2021). Also, the school environment, when lacking adequate regulation, may expose students to various drugs that impair their reasoning and self-control. This loss of inhibition can make them more susceptible to engaging in protests, riots, or other disruptive actions. Students who experience restiveness may turn to drug abuse as a coping mechanism, further exacerbating the problem.

The interplay between drug abuse and youth restiveness can have severe consequences, including increased risk of violence behaviour, mental health problems, and academic underperformance (Attamah & Nwosu, 2024). The psychological effects of drug abuse can intensify youth restiveness. Drugs can heighten feelings of paranoia, suspicion, and aggression, causing students to interpret ordinary disciplinary actions as threats (Agbo, et al., 2025). In a school environment, such distorted perceptions can lead to confrontations with school authorities, sometimes escalating into riots or destruction of property. Drug abuse can also exacerbate underlying mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, which, if left unaddressed, may manifest as hostile behaviour (Nlemchukwu, et al., 2023). This phenomenon can be further explained using Social Learning Theory by Bandura (1977), which posits that individuals learn behaviours through observation, imitation, and modelling within their social environment. In the context of Nigerian tertiary institutions, students may observe peers or older students engaging in drug use and restive behaviour and imitate these actions, particularly when such behaviours appear to provide social acceptance, reduce stress, or assert power. The school environment, when poorly regulated, thus becomes a social setting where drug abuse and youth restiveness are learned and reinforced through peer interactions, further perpetuating the cycle of antisocial and disruptive behaviours.

Gender, age, and place of residence shape the relationship between drug abuse and youth restiveness among students (Enem, et al., 2024). Male students are generally more likely to engage in drug abuse and restive acts than female counterparts, often due to societal expectations linking masculinity to risk-taking and physical dominance (Nalah, 2022; Agbo, et al., 2025). In contrast, female students may engage less frequently in drug use but could still exhibit restiveness when drugs are used as a coping mechanism for stress, discrimination, or emotional challenges (Abdullahi, 2024). Age differences also emerge, with younger students tending to abuse

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drugs out of curiosity, peer influence, or a desire for social acceptance, while older students may use substances to cope with prolonged academic pressure, unemployment fears, or personal problems (Kabbash, et al., 2025). As a result, younger students' restiveness is often impulsive and unplanned, whereas older students' unrest may be more organised and goal-driven. These differences suggest that gender norms and developmental stages both contribute to how drug abuse manifests in restive behaviour (Maciver & Igbojinwaekwu, 2020).

Place of residence also contributes in the relationship between drug abuse and youth restiveness among students. On-campus students may face more concentrated peer influence and exposure to group activities that normalise drug use, which can spark collective restive actions (Onigbogi et al. 2023). Off-campus students, by contrast, have more freedom and less institutional oversight, which can increase their access to drugs and association with individuals who encourage anti-authority behaviour. This freedom often makes off-campus restiveness more difficult to monitor and control compared to incidents on campus. While both living arrangements can foster drug-related unrest, the key difference lies in the level of supervision and the nature of social services available to the students (Abdullahi, 2024). These contrasts highlight the need for targeted interventions that consider gender, age, and residence as interconnected factors influencing drug-related restiveness.

Essentially, a number of empirical studies have been conducted on the nature of drug abuse and youth restiveness in and outside Oyo State. For instance, Fareo and Babale (2021) investigated perceived causes of youth restiveness from the perspectives of security personnel in Adamawa State, Nigeria; Maciver and Igbojinwaekwu (2020) explored causes and effects of youth restiveness, terrorism, and militancy as perceived by undergraduates at Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State; Olanrewaju et al. (2022) assessed drug and substance abuse prevalence, awareness, and motives among undergraduates across four southwest Nigerian universities; Abdullahi (2024) examined prevalence and determinants of drug abuse among students of University of Ibadan in Oyo State, Nigeria. Although previous studies have contributed significantly to the issue of drug abuse and youth restiveness in Nigeria, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, none have examined the relationship between these two issues within tertiary institutions in Oyo State. However, there remains a noticeable gap in the literature concerning the relationship between drug abuse and youth restiveness among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State. This study seeks to address the gap by investigating the relationship between drug abuse and youth restiveness among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State, thereby contributing valuable insights to both research and intervention efforts.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between drug abuse and youth restiveness among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State. Therefore, the main objectives were to:

1. determine the relationship between drug abuse and youth restiveness among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State.
2. investigate the relationship between gender, age, place of residence and drug abuse among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State.
3. examine the relationship between gender, age, place of residence and youth restiveness among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State.

Research Hypotheses

(1) There is no significant relationship between drug abuse and youth restiveness among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State.
(2) There is no significant relationship between gender, age, place of residence and drug abuse among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State.
(3) There is no significant relationship between gender, age, place of residence and youth restiveness among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State.

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Methodology

Correlation research design was employed for the study to determine the relationship between the major two variables- drug abuse and youth restiveness. Correlation research design investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them. The population comprised all students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State, while the target population consisted of students from Oyo State College of Education Lanlate, Oke-Ogun Polytechnic Saki, and Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo. Multi-stage sampling procedure was considered in selecting the respondents. The total population of students in these institutions was 15,424. Based on the Research Advisor Sample Size Determination Table (2006), a sample size of 370 was recommended for the population of this magnitude at 95% confidence level and 5.0% margin of error. In order to cater for attrition, 5% (5 × 370/100 = 18.5, approximately 19) of the sample size was added to make a total of 389 respondents. Hence, in the first stage, purposive sampling was used to select three tertiary institutions in Oyo State based on the nature of the issue: Oyo State College of Education, Lanlate; Oke-Ogun Polytechnic, Saki; Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo. In the second stage, proportional sampling was used to select a total sample of 389 students from these institutions, with the distribution as follows: 32 respondents from Oyo State College of Education Lanlate; 222 respondents from Oke-Ogun Polytechnic Saki; 135 respondents from Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo.

Table 1: **Proportional Sample of Students from Targeted Institutions in Oyo State**

Institution	District	Population	Sample Size
Oyo State College of Education Lanlate	Oyo South	1,279	32
Oke-Ogun Polytechnic, Saki	Oyo North	8,796	222
Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo	Oyo Central	5,349	135
Total		**15,424**	**389**

At the third stage, simple random sampling was used to select the necessary number of respondents from each of the selected institutions shown in table 1. The selection was based on dip-hat method during General Studies Classes (GNS Classes). A total of 389 respondents were included in the study. This study employed drug abuse scale while youth restiveness questionnaire was constructed by the researchers. The Drug Abuse Scale (DAS) was developed by Skinner Harvey in 1982, consist of 20 items designed to assess the severity of drug abuse among students; Youth Restiveness Questionnaire (YRQ) contained 20-constructed items. Two instruments were administered on the respondents. The two instruments were later tagged: The Drug Abuse and Youth Restiveness Questionnaire (DAYRQ). So, the instrument was given to five lecturers in the Department of Social Work and two lecturers in the Department of Sociology, University of Ilorin for face and content validity. The reliability of the instruments also was established through a test re-test method within an interval of two weeks using 20 students from Social Work Department, University of Ilorin. The twenty (20) students that were selected for reliability were not part of the respondents but they possessed the same characteristics similar to that of respondents under the study. The instrument was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. A coefficient value obtained for Drug Abuse was 0.82 while 0.87 for the Youth Restiveness; this indicated that the instrument was reliable. Both instruments were rated on a 4-point modified Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA) =4points, Agree (A) =3points, Disagree (D) =2points and Strongly Disagree (SD) =1point.

Ethical issues were duly considered in the course of the research. In terms of informed consent, participants' approval to take part in the study was obtained through the completion of an informed consent form. No participant was forced to take part in the research. Participants were also assured of confidentiality, as the secrecy of their responses was guaranteed. In addition, the statistical methods used in this study included the Pearson Product Moment Correlation and the correlation matrix. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to analyse hypothesis one, while the correlation matrix was used to analyse hypotheses two and three. All statistical tests were conducted at a 0.05 level of significance.

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Results

A total of 389 copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents, but 387 were properly filled and analysed.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between drug abuse and youth restiveness among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State

Table 2: Pearson 'r' showing a relationship between drug abuse and youth restiveness among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	Calc. Value	p-value	Decision
Drug Abuse	387	26.68	2.85				
				385	0.433*	0.000	Rejected
Youth Restiveness	387	26.68	3.29				

Table 2 presented the relationship between drug abuse and youth restiveness among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State. The analysis revealed a p-value of 0.000, which was less than 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis was rejected, indicating a significant relationship between drug abuse and youth restiveness among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State. The findings revealed a significant relationship between drug abuse and youth restiveness, showing that higher involvement in drug abuse is linked to increased restive behaviour among students.

Hypothesis 2*:* There is no significant relationship between gender, age, place of residence and drug abuse among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State

Table 3: Summary of Correlation Matrix Showing the Relationship between the Age, gender, place of residence and drug abuse among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State

		Drug Abuse	Age	Gender	Residence
Drug Abuse	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
Age	Pearson Correlation	.027	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.769			
Gender	Pearson Correlation	.012	.591**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.641	.000		
Residence	Pearson Correlation	.046	.843**	.825**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.810	.000	.000	

The results from Table 3 revealed that age ($r = 0.027$, $p > 0.05$), gender ($r = 0.012$, $p > 0.05$), and place of residence ($r = 0.046$, $p > 0.05$) had no significant relationship with drug abuse among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State. This implied that age, gender, and place of residence do not significantly influence drug abuse among students, suggesting that the issue is pervasive across the school environment and requires institution-wide interventions.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between gender, age, place of residence and youth restiveness among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State

Table 4: Summary of Correlation Matrix Showing the Relationship between the Age, gender, place of residence and youth restiveness among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State

		Youth Restiveness	Age	Gender	Residence
Youth Restiveness	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
Age	Pearson Correlation	.015	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.540			
Gender	Pearson Correlation	.012	.591**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.619	.000		
Residence	Pearson Correlation	.011	.843**	.825**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.662	.000	.000	

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The results from Table 4 revealed that age ($r = 0.015$, $p > 0.05$), gender ($r = 0.012$, $p > 0.05$), and place of residence ($r = 0.011$, $p > 0.05$) had no significant relationship with youth restiveness among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State. This implied that youth restiveness cuts across the school environment and calls for comprehensive school-based strategies such as guidance and counselling services, conflict resolution programmes, student engagement activities, and the provision of supportive learning conditions.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings revealed a significant relationship between drug abuse and youth restiveness among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State, implying that students who engage in drug abuse are more likely to exhibit violent and disruptive behaviours that undermine discipline and safety within the school environment. This finding aligns with Igbo and Ikpa (2024) and Fareo and Babale (2021), who noted that drug abuse increases aggression, peer conflicts, and involvement in violent activities, although Hanafi (2025) argued that socio-political factors play a stronger role. The reason for this finding might be due to the fact that drug use impairs judgment, reduces self-control, heightens aggression, and weakens adherence to school rules, while Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory suggests that such behaviours are learned through peer interaction. In the Nigerian context, the situation is exacerbated by the widespread availability of illicit substances on and around campuses, weak enforcement of campus regulations, and peer networks that normalise drug use, making students more vulnerable to engaging in restive and antisocial behaviours that disrupt the academic environment.

The findings revealed that age, gender, and place of residence were not significantly related to drug abuse among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State. This aligns with Mandal (2021), who noted that drug abuse cuts across demographic groups due to its easy accessibility and normalisation among youths, although it contrasts with studies reporting higher risks among younger or male students (Nalah, 2022; Abdullahi, 2024). Theoretically, this can be explained using Strain Theory (Merton, 1938), which suggests that students may resort to drug use when facing academic and social pressures. In the Nigerian context, widespread drug availability, peer influence, and academic stress make drug abuse a pervasive challenge, highlighting the need for school-based and societal interventions. Students' engagement in drug use not only affects their personal health but also disrupts the learning environment, fostering indiscipline and restive behaviours. Therefore, proactive measures such as counselling, awareness campaigns, and strict campus regulations are essential. Addressing these issues holistically can help reduce drug abuse and its negative consequences on both students and the broader school community.

The findings revealed that age, gender, and place of residence had no significant relationship with youth restiveness among students of tertiary institutions in Oyo State. This contrasts with Olanrewaju et al. (2022) and Onigbogi et al. (2023), who found that younger students were more easily influenced into restive activities due to immaturity and peer pressure, and Garba (2024), who reported that male students were more prone to restiveness than females because of cultural expectations of toughness. However, the result supports Ibiteye and Awomoyi (2023), who argued that youth restiveness is more strongly associated with social and political problems, such as poverty and corruption, than with demographic factors. Theoretically, this can be explained using Strain Theory (Merton, 1938), which posits that individuals may engage in deviant behaviours when social and institutional pressures prevent them from achieving societal goals through legitimate means. In the Nigerian context, students are often exposed to systemic issues such as inadequate educational resources, political instability, and economic hardship, which create frustration and feelings of marginalisation, leading to youth restiveness.

Conclusion

The findings revealed that drug abuse is a significant factor contributing to youth restiveness among students in Oyo State, while demographic variables such as age, gender, and place of residence showed no significant relationship. This implies that restive behaviours are more strongly driven by social and environmental factors, particularly drug abuse, rather than personal characteristics; hence, addressing drug abuse through targeted counselling, awareness programmes, and mentorship by school counsellors, psychologists, social workers, and other education stakeholders is essential. However, a limitation of this study is its reliance on self-reported

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data, which may be affected by underreporting or bias, and it did not examine other factors such as peer influence or socio-economic status that could also contribute to youth restiveness.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that;

1. Undergraduates should be educated on the dangers of drug abuse through orientation programmes, seminars, and workshops organised by guidance counsellors, as this approach will significantly help to reduce youth restiveness on campus.
2. Tertiary institutions should implement prevention programmes, including peer education initiatives, counselling services, and recreational activities, to reduce drug abuse and promote a safer campus environment, regardless of students' age, gender, or place of residence.
3. Counselling centres in tertiary institutions should adopt inclusive programmes such as drug abuse prevention education, anger management, conflict resolution, peer mentoring, and life skills training to address youth restiveness, ensuring equal support for all students regardless of age, gender, or place of residence.

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