

## Peer Pressure and Leisure Boredom as Predictors of Substance Use among Adolescents in Nkanu West Local Government Area

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### ABSTRACT

*The study investigated peer pressure and leisure boredom as predictors of substance use among adolescents, with one hundred and twelve (112) adolescents in Nkanu West L.G.A of Enugu State comprising 36 males and 76 females with the age range of 12-17 years ( $M= 14.25$ ,  $SD= 16.3$ ), was selected as participants with the aid of multi-stage (cluster, purposive and availability sampling techniques. Saini and Singh, (2016) peer pressure Scale Questionnaire-Revised PPSQ-r, Iso-Aho and Weissinger, (1987), leisure boredom scale and Berman, Berman, Palmstierna and Schlyter, (2003), the drug use disorder identification test were used for data collection. Correlational design was adopted, while multiple regressions were used for data analysis. The finding shows that peer pressure and leisure boredom jointly and significantly predicted substance use ( $R=.45$ ;  $F=6.88$ ;  $p<.001$ ) by accounting for about 21% ( $R^2 = .21$ ) of the variance in substance use. More so, independently, peer pressure ( $\beta=-.24$ ;  $p<.05$ ) predicted substance use, whereas leisure boredom did not. Hence, the findings underscore the urgency of addressing these factors in substance use prevention initiatives.*

### Keywords:

Adolescents

Leisure Boredom

Peer Pressure

Substance Use

## Introduction

Substance use is another concern that is common among adolescents, especially in industrialized societies. Among Nigerian youths, substance use is on the increase and has drawn enough attention to warrant clinicians, doctors and government agencies to set up facilities to monitor, check and disseminate information against drug use and drug peddling. Drugs taken by the youths/ adolescents include tranquilizers, marijuana, alcohol, mkpuru-mmiri, Rohyphnol, codeine, percocets, heroine, ice, colos, loud, Sk, tramadol benzos, cannabis, narcotics, ganja, kush, gbana and Cocaine, the list is endless, (Ebie & Pela, 1981).

A drug is any substance used as medicine to provoke a specific response when placed within a biological system. It can also modify, alter, or explore physiological and psychological systems or pathological conditions in a living organism. Substance use, according to Obot, (1989) means the consumption in any form of any substance to alter mood or behaviour. This ‘use’ implies culturally and socially sanctioned uses such as medical and traditional use, for example, therapeutic purposes, funeral celebrations, marriages and naming ceremonies, etc. When these substances are used in ways other than those socially and medically approved ones, misuse and abuse set in.

The reasons why adolescents take drugs include the following: adult society is increasingly becoming a “drug culture” which confirms that adolescent behaviour is merely a mirror of adult society Bandura, (1964). It may be an urge to rebel against adult constraints; it is used to satisfy curiosity about new experiences the adolescents may have heard about; or the hard-hit culturally deprived to escape into oblivion from an intolerable existence (Mussen et al., 1969) may use it. Whatever the reasons, several such adolescents end up being dependent on such drugs and go to all lengths to obtain them from adults who peddle them in society. Sometimes the use of these drugs in combination with other factors precipitates mental disorders in vulnerable adolescents.

Adolescents may engage in substance use due to peer pressure, a desire for experimentation, coping with stress, or simply succumbing to the allure of substances (Chen & Jacobson, 2022). Certain genes can increase the likelihood of developing addictive behaviours (Kendler, Jacobson, Prescott, & Neale,

2013). Adverse childhood experiences, trauma, and a stressful environment can contribute to substance use. Individuals exposed to early life stressors are at a higher risk of engaging in substance use as a coping mechanism (Dube, Felitti, Dong, Chapman, Giles, & Anda, 2013). Mental health disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and trauma-related disorders, can increase the risk of substance use. Individuals may use substances as a way to self-medicate or alleviate symptoms of psychological distress (National Institute on Drug Use, 2021; Burns & Darling, 2022).

Studies have indicated a strong connection between leisure boredom, peer pressure, and substance use (Borsari & Carey, 2021). Adolescents may yield to peer pressure and engage in substance use as a way to fit in or alleviate feelings of boredom and dissatisfaction (National Institute on Drug Use (NIDU), 2021, & Luk et al., 2020). The early use of drugs increases the lifetime risk of developing a substance use disorder. This suggests that children and teens who face high levels of peer pressure and give in to that pressure may have a higher lifetime risk of addiction. Adolescents may be especially vulnerable to peer pressure if they say that peer acceptance is important to them, or if they are sensitive to rejection.

However, beyond peer pressure, ‘leisure’ refers to the purposeful and intentional use of free time to engage in self-selected activities that are meaningful and intrinsically motivating to the person (World Youth Report, 2003). Boredom is a trait that has been described in the literature as a negative, dissatisfying, and emotional state (Mikulas & Vodanovich, 1993). Leisure boredom is defined as, the “subjective perception that available leisure experiences are not sufficient to instrumentally satisfy needs for optimal arousal” (Iso-Ahola & Weissinger, 1990, Unger, & Kernan, (1983). Caldwell (2008) as cited by Gaironeesa, Shazly, and Maria, (2015), found that leisure boredom compromises the reason adolescents engage in leisure activities, being that they want to, or because they have nothing to do.

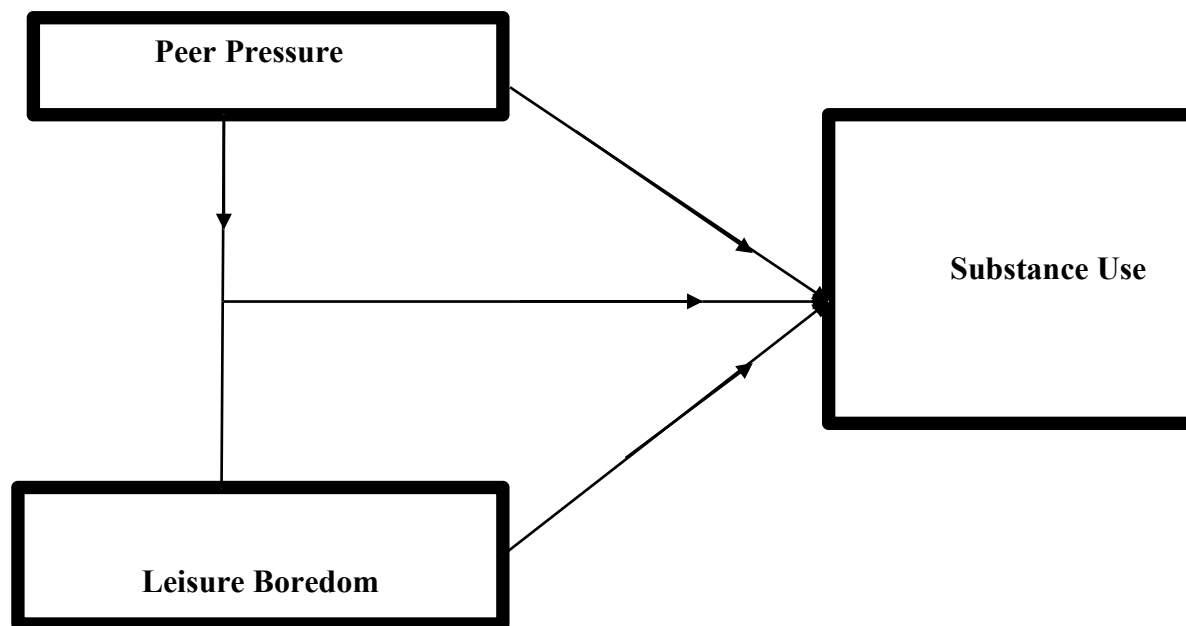
Adolescents’ often experience leisure boredom when their free time lacks structure, novelty, or engagement (Iso-Ahola & Weissinger, 2020). Boredom can lead individuals to seek excitement and stimulation from various sources, including substance use (Caldwell & Smith, 2015). When adolescents face boredom, they may turn to substances as a way

to escape monotony and experience temporary excitement (Morgan, Impara, & Schreiber, 2020). Note that adolescence in Nigeria or Africa as elsewhere therefore depends on cultural influences. The notion that adolescence is a period of storm and stress may be based on observations of adolescence in industrialized societies. A study of a sample of Nigerian middle-class adolescents' future orientation (Eya, 1987) suggests general optimism concerning the future but boys showed anxiety over possible inability to fulfil their roles as men because of prevailing circumstances hence substance use, peer pressure, and leisure boredom.

Therefore, by providing diverse leisure opportunities, promoting mindfulness, involving parents, and engaging communities, society can mitigate the

negative impact of leisure boredom on adolescents, fostering their overall well-being and development. Parental involvement can play an important role by involving themselves in their children's leisure activities. Spending quality time together can foster stronger parent-child bonds and provide adolescents with emotional support, but where such is lacking, the reverse would be the case (Caldwell & Smith, 2016). Moreover, educational initiatives focusing on resisting peer influence and enhancing coping skills can empower adolescents to make healthier choices, reducing the prevalence of substance use in this community. Thus, the overall aim of the study is to determine whether peer pressure and leisure boredom influence substance use among adolescents in the Nkanu West local government area in Enugu State.

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1** According to the diagram, peer pressure and leisure boredom demonstrates as predictor variables whereas substance use is a criterion variable.

### Theoretical Framework

Among the theories reviewed, the social learning theory (Bandura, 1963) best fits this study because social learning theory emphasizes that individuals learn from observing others. In substance use among adolescents, peer pressure acts as a social influence, and adolescents often imitate the behaviours of their

peers, especially when they observe their friends engaging in substance use. Adolescents are particularly susceptible to social influences, making social learning theory highly relevant to this age group. Adolescents tend to model their behaviour based on the actions of their peers, aligning with the core principles of social learning theory. Social learning theory also accounts for the influence of the

environment. Adolescents experiencing leisure boredom may seek out exciting or stimulating activities. If substance use is observed among their peers, they might imitate these behaviors to alleviate boredom, which is consistent with the theory's emphasis on the environmental context influencing behaviour. Social learning theory provides a framework for understanding how peer interactions, including peer pressure, shape adolescents' attitudes and behaviours. It explains how social cues and modeling behaviour within peer groups can lead to the adoption of substance use patterns.

### Statement of the Problem

Adolescence is a period of significant vulnerability to various risk factors, including substance use, which can have detrimental consequences on physical, mental, and social well-being. In the context of Nkanu West L.G.A of Enugu State, the rising concern revolves around the predictors of substance use among adolescents. Two prominent factors that have been identified as potential predictors are peer-pressure and leisure boredom. Understanding the relationship between peer pressure, leisure boredom, and substance use is critical in developing effective preventive strategies tailored to the specific needs of adolescents in this region. While the influence of peer pressure and leisure boredom on substance use among adolescents is widely acknowledged in the literature, there exists a gap in understanding how these factors specifically operate within the unique socio-cultural context of Nkanu West L.G.A in Enugu State. Limited research has been conducted to explore the intricate interplay between peer pressure, leisure boredom, and substance use among adolescents in this region. Consequently, there is a pressing need to investigate these relationships comprehensively, taking into account the local nuances and cultural factors that may exacerbate or mitigate the impact of peer pressure and leisure boredom on substance use. In summary, the study aims to bridge the knowledge gap by exploring how peer pressure and leisure boredom act as predictors of substance use among adolescents in Nkanu West L.G.A of Enugu State, thereby addressing a critical public health concern and contributing to the overall well-being of the community's youth population. Therefore, the purpose of this study was specifically to investigate whether peer-pressure and leisure boredom would jointly predict substance use among adolescents. Again, to determine whether peer pressure and leisure boredom would individually

predict substance use among adolescents. And it was hypothesized that:

1. Peer pressure and leisure boredom would jointly predict substance use among adolescents
2. Peer pressure and leisure boredom would individually predict substance use among adolescents

### Method

#### Participants

One Hundred and twelve adolescents drawn from four secondary schools in Nkanu West local government area participated in this study. The participants comprising of 36 males and 76 females between the ages of 12 to 17 years ( $M= 14.25$ ,  $SD= 1.63$ ). The age bracket was adopted because adolescence begins from over 12 to 17 years (Jean Piaget), Cluster and purposive sampling techniques were used which guided the inclusion and exclusion criteria to select the participants. Among the participants, 32 students were gotten from Ozalla secondary school Obe, 35 students were selected from comprehensive secondary school Umueze, 27 students were gotten from Alins comprehensive secondary school Agbani, and 18 students were gotten from Yumac high school Agbani. Participation in this study included only adolescents. Age and gender were explored as control variables.

#### Instruments

The instruments used in this study included the following:

1. Peer Pressure Scale Questionnaire-Revised PPSQ-r (Saini & Singh, 2016).
2. Leisure boredom scale (Iso-Aho & Weissinger, 1987)
3. The drug use disorder identification test (Berman, Berman, Palmstierna & Schlyter, 2003).

#### *The peer pressure questionnaire - Revised (Sunil Saini & Sandeep Singh., 2016)*

PPQ-R is a 29-item self-report scale that assesses peer influences in everyday life situations. It is a 5-point Lickert scale with strongly disagrees, disagree, can't say, agree and strongly agree. Peer Pressure Scale Questionnaire-Revised (PPSQ-r) is an instrument developed in 2016 by Saini and Singh to



measure peer pressure susceptibility among adolescents. This is the revised version of the first version of the questionnaire, which was developed in 2010. It comprises 25 items based on scenarios or self-perspectives that describe situations related to negative peer pressure. This instrument is extensively deployed with the primary objective for measuring the susceptibility risk of adolescents toward negative peer pressure, and it focuses on the individual itself. The scale consists of five subscales and a high score on each subscale indicates higher peer pressure in that form. PPSQ-r is a tool for assessing the susceptibility of adolescents to peer pressure.

#### ***Leisure boredom scale (Iso-Aho & Weissinger 1987)***

Iso-Ahola and Weissinger (1987) devised the LBS on the basis of literature regarding leisure and boredom constructs. They found that the LBS measures individual differences in perceptions of boredom in leisure. This 16 item instrument is scored on a 1 to 5 Likert Scale with higher scores indicating high leisure boredom. Participants were requested to indicate the extent to which they 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' (Iso-Ahola & Weissinger, 1987).

#### ***The drug use disorder identification test (Berman, Berman, Palmstierna & Schlyter, 2003)***

Drug use was assessed using the *Drug Use Disorders Identification Test (DUDIT)* (Berman et al., 2003) which consists of 11 items. Items 1-9 are scored 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4; while items 10-11 are scored 0, 2, and 4. The minimum scorable point on DUDIT is 0 and maximum scorable point is 44. When the DUDIT is used in a group where one does not expect to find many drug users, a cut-off point of 6 or more for men with drug related problems and a cut-off point of 2 or more for women are stipulated (Berman et al., 2003). Empirical evidence supports the psychometric adequacy of DUDIT (Abikoye & Awopetu, 2017; Berman et al., 2003). In the present study, a high internal consistency ( $\alpha$  0.91) was obtained for DUDIT.

## **Procedures**

A letter of identification was obtained from the Head of Psychology Department, permission and clearance was granted from the relevant authorities. Once the schools were contacted, the researchers scheduled a meeting with the principals and the dean of studies to discuss an appropriate day, time, and venue for the questionnaires to be administered. The questionnaires were administered at each school in the administration period and took approximately 20 minutes to complete. This study ensured that no harm was done to any participants and participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study. Accordingly, participation in this study remained voluntary, which allowed the participants to withdraw at any time. Before administration of the questionnaires, information about anonymity and confidentiality were discussed. Cluster and purposive sampling techniques were adopted; while participants were selected from four secondary schools in Nkanu West Local Government Area, 35 from Comprehensive secondary school Umueze, 32 from Ozalla secondary school Obe, 18 from Yumac high school Agbani and 27 from Alins comprehensive secondary school Agbani. Participation in this study included only adolescents, age and gender were explored as control variables. The researchers read and explained the instructions on how to fill the questionnaires. Only participants who were between the ages of 12 to 17 years were allowed to participate. Participants were informed that data will only be discussed among the researchers directly involved in the study. After everything, the researchers gathered one hundred and twelve (112) properly filled questionnaires out of 150 that were distributed, 31 were not correctly filled, while 7 were missing, 112 were scored and analyzed.

## **Design and Statistics**

Co relational design was employed as the design for this study, while multiple regression analysis was the statistical tool adopted to test the hypothesis, SPSS version 26 was used.

## Results

**Table 1: Summary Table of Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among the Study Variables for Substance Use (N =112)**

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1 Substance Use	3.96	6.92	1				
2 Age	14.25	1.63	.33***	1			
3 Gender	1.68	.47	-.28**	-.17	1		
4 Peer Pressure	61.77	19.22	.35***	.32	-.24	1	
5 Leisure Boredom	50.36	6.68	.09	.26	.00	.00	1

Note: \* =  $P < .05$ , \*\* =  $P < .01$  and \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ . Gender was coded 0 = Females, 1 = Males.

Results in Table 1, indicate that age and gender significantly related to substance use among adolescents. Also, peer pressure related significantly with the criterion variable. Meaning that increases or decreases in these control variables and one predictor variable do significantly relate to increases or decreases in the criterion variable, substance use.

**Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Peer Pressure and Leisure Boredom as Predictor of Substance Use (N = 112)**

Variables	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>R</i>	$R^2$	<i>F</i>
Age	.23*	2.48*	.45	.21	6.88***
Gender	-.18*	-2.00*			
Peer pressure	.24*	2.53*			
Leisure Boredom	-.04	-.46			

Note: \* =  $P < .05$ , \*\* =  $P < .01$  and \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ .

Results of the multiple regressions as presented in Table 2. The control variables age and gender significantly predicted substance use of ( $\beta = -.23$ ;  $p < .05$ ) and ( $\beta = -.18$ ;  $p < .05$ ), respectively. Furthermore, a combination of the predictor variables (peer pressure and leisure boredom) jointly and significantly predicted substance use ( $R = .45$ ;  $F = 6.88$ ;  $p < .001$ ) by accounting for about 21% ( $R^2 = .21$ ) of the variance in substance use. More so, independently, peer pressure ( $\beta = -.24$ ;  $p < .05$ ) predicted substance use whereas leisure boredom did not. These implied that age and gender of adolescents are factors in substance use. Again, peer pressure and leisure boredom put together are more prone to substance use whereas peer pressure alone exposes adolescents to substance use.

### Summary of the Results

Based on the above outcomes, it will be summarized that:

1. Peer pressure and leisure boredom jointly predicted substance use among adolescents.

2. Peer pressure independently predicted substance use among adolescents but leisure boredom did not.

### Discussion

In light of the obtained results, the hypothesis posited that peer pressure and leisure boredom would jointly predict substance use among adolescents was

supported. The findings underscore that both peer pressure and leisure boredom significantly predicted substance use among adolescents. This study aligns with previous research by Smith and Johnson (2020), Martinez and Nguyen. (2021), and Park and Lee (2018) who identified substantial connections between peer pressure, leisure boredom, and substance use among adolescent populations.

The interpretation of these results revolves around the influence of peer pressure and leisure boredom on adolescent behavior. Adolescents often succumb to substance use due to pressure from their peers, seeking acceptance and belonging in social circles. Also, when adolescents experience leisure boredom, they are more likely to engage in substance use as a means of filling the void and escaping monotony. This study provides valuable insights into the factors that contribute to adolescent substance use, shedding lights on the significance of addressing peer pressure and leisure boredom in substance use prevention efforts. It is important to note that the findings of this study challenge the misconception that peer pressure and leisure boredom are trivial concerns in the context of substance use among adolescents.

On the contrary, these factors play pivotal roles in shaping adolescents' decisions related to substance use. The pressure to conform and the lack of engaging recreational activities contribute significantly to the vulnerability of adolescents towards substance use.

The second hypothesis stated that peer pressure and leisure boredom will individually predict substance use among adolescents. Peer pressure independently predicted substance use, but leisure boredom did not. Hence, this study is in line with Wang, & lee, (2022); Wegner et al., (2006) and Par & Kim, (2018) which revealed that peer pressure independently predicted adolescent substance use but leisure boredom did not significantly predict adolescent substance use independently because adolescent in Nkanu west local government area do not lack leisure skills and are not constrained from participating in leisure activities.

Moreover, this study indicates a need for targeted interventions aimed at addressing peer pressure and leisure boredom among adolescents. Prevention programs should focus on empowering adolescents with effective coping strategies to resist peer pressure

and providing them with engaging leisure activities to alleviate boredom. Schools and communities must collaborate to create supportive environments where adolescents can develop essential life skills, build self-esteem, and foster positive peer relationships.

### **Implication of the findings**

The findings of this research will be helpful to parents and teachers in perceiving how adolescents are engaged in risk-taking behaviours. The features and drawbacks of peer pressure, as well as the way it affects their judgments and, eventually, their lives, can be explained, hence the consequences of peer pressure to the adolescents. The findings can be applied to develop practical strategies for mitigating adverse effects and fostering beneficial influences.

The implications of this study are multifaceted and hold relevance for warrant clinicians, Psychotherapists, doctors and government agencies, parents, and policymakers. Educators can integrate substance abuse prevention modules into school curricula, emphasizing the dangers of peer pressure and the importance of developing strong coping mechanisms. Parents play a crucial role in fostering open communication with their children, helping them navigate peer pressure situations, and encouraging participation in constructive leisure activities.

Policy makers should allocate resources to implement evidence-based prevention programs in schools and communities, addressing both peer pressure and leisure boredom. Mental health professionals can provide counseling services tailored to adolescents, focusing on enhancing their resilience, self-esteem, and coping skills. Furthermore, community organizations can organize recreational activities and skill-building workshops to engage adolescents positively, mitigating the effects of leisure boredom.

In the context of Bandura's social learning theory, the findings suggest that adolescents are influenced by both direct (peer pressure) and indirect (leisure boredom) social factors in the development of substance use behavior. This supports the idea that observational learning and modeling play a crucial role in shaping individuals' behavior, as adolescents may observe and imitate substance use patterns exhibited by peers. Additionally, leisure boredom could contribute to substance use as individuals may turn to substances to alleviate boredom, reinforcing the role of environmental influences in shaping behavior within the framework of social learning theory.

### Limitations of the Study

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, certain limitations should be acknowledged. One limitation pertains to the study's correlational design, inability to cover larger sample size, although the sample size used in this research is representative, but may not encompass the entire diversity of adolescents, necessitating caution when generalizing the findings.

The data was collected from four schools only, so the outcomes of the study may not be generalized to the general population of adolescents in the Nkanu West Local Government Area in Enugu Nigeria. Moreover, the sample was limited to school-going adolescents in the Nkanu West Local Government Area.

The instruments itself require further research in the Nigerian context to further examine the validity and reliability of the scale among adolescents in Nkanu West Local government. Future research endeavors should consider employing longitudinal designs to discern the temporal relationships between peer pressure, leisure boredom, and substance use among adolescents, thereby strengthening the evidence base.

### Suggestions for further studies

In light of the limitations observed in this study, future research endeavors should focus on expanding the scope of investigation. Researchers could explore the moderating factors that influence the relationship between peer pressure, leisure boredom, and substance use among adolescents. Longitudinal studies spanning extended periods could provide valuable insights into the developmental trajectories of these relationships, offering a nuanced understanding of adolescent substance use dynamics. Future researchers should consider mixed method form of research. Also, researchers are encouraged to delve into the effectiveness of specific intervention strategies tailored to mitigate peer pressure and leisure boredom among adolescents. Comparative studies evaluating the impact of different prevention programs and identifying the most efficacious approaches would enhance the knowledge base, guiding practitioners and policymakers in designing evidence-based interventions.

### Summary and Conclusion

In summary, this study has shed more light on the critical roles played by peer pressure and leisure boredom in predicting substance use among adolescents.

Hence:

Peer pressure and leisure boredom jointly predicted substance use among adolescents.

Peer pressure independently predicted substance use among adolescents but leisure boredom did not.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that most adolescents want acceptance, especially in adolescence. Being subject to peer rejection can be very painful, and a person who feels unable to tolerate rejection may find it very difficult to resist using drugs and alcohol if their peers do so. For this reason, it is important to find peers who either do not use drugs or alcohol or accept those who do not.

This study humbly suggests that adolescents who feel overwhelmed by peer pressure may find strength and support from family members, friends, or a therapist. Adolescents who do not know how to handle peer pressure, leisure boredom should talk with a Clinician, health Professional and trusted adult or invest in relationships with friends who do not use drugs or alcohol.

People who commonly experience difficult family situations, feelings of rejection and alienation, or rejection sensitivity may find that learning to manage these issues makes it easier to resist peer pressure, leisure boredom and substance use.

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