

Prevalence, Awareness, and Attitudes towards the Dangers of Drug Abuse among Undergraduate Students in a Public University in Nigeria

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Abstract

The use of psychoactive substances among undergraduate students has become a subject of public concern worldwide partly because of its potential to contribute to unintentional and intentional injury. The major aim of this study is to assess the prevalence, awareness, and attitudes towards the dangers of drug abuse among undergraduate at University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos State. A descriptive cross sectional design was adopted to assess the prevalence, awareness, and attitudes towards the dangers of drug abuse among undergraduate. A multistage sampling technique was adopted in selecting 168 respondents. The data were processed using statistical software SPSS 27.0. The finding reported that 27.4% of undergraduate students had engaged in drug abuse, with alcohol (71.7%) being the most commonly abused substances. The primary reasons for drug abuse included coping with stress or academic pressure (60.9%), social gatherings (47.8%), and curiosity (30.4%). Awareness of drug misuse was high (89.9%). The overall attitudinal also showed that majority (69.0%) of respondents had a negative attitude. Key factors influencing drug misuse among undergraduates included peer influence (4.06 mean), curiosity and experimentation (4.05 mean). Regarding preventive measures, majority (58.9%) of respondents agreed that involving parents in drug prevention programs was highly effective (3.97 mean). The findings from this study reveal a significant prevalence of drug abuse among undergraduate students. Despite a high level of awareness regarding the implications of substance abuse, majority of respondents continues to engage in such behaviors. Hence, appropriate authorities should address the factors contributing to drug abuse and also enhance the knowledge of both students and healthcare professionals.

Keywords: Prevalence, Awareness, Attitude, Dangers, Drug Abuse, Undergraduate Students.

1. Introduction

The use of psychoactive substances among undergraduate students has become a subject of public concern worldwide partly because of its potential to contribute to unintentional and intentional injury (Olutende et al., 2021). It is estimated that 1 in 20 adults including undergraduate students, or a quarter of a billion people between the ages of 15 and 64 years used at least one drug (Dinma et al., 2021). On a Global scale, it has been estimated that about 585,000 people have died as a result of drug abuse and undergraduates and adolescents are not left out in this menace, an increase visit to the hospitals in the last decade (Hudgins et al., 2019; Metuge et al., 2022). According to an African the survey by Jatau et al., (2021), it was reported that the prevalence of 20–40% of drug abuse was reported among students.

In the Nigeria context, one in seven persons aged 15-64 years had used a drug in the past year corresponding to 14.3 million people of the adolescent age group who had used a psychoactive

substance in the past year for non-medical purposes (Dinma et al., 2021). Among undergraduate students in Nigeria, the rate of psychoactive drug abuse is reported to be far higher than what is reported among the general populace (Aguocha & Nwefoh, 2021). In Southwest Nigeria, 58.4% - 65% of undergraduates have used psychoactive substances at least once in their lifetime while 15.4% have reported current use. In Benin, South South Nigeria 46.6% lifetime rate has been found (Uwaibi et al., 2022).

Specifically, in a study conducted by Olarenwaju et al., (2022) on drug abuse prevalence among undergraduates in selected southwestern universities in Nigeria of which Lagos state university is inclusive, it was reported that one in every four students abused substances with a 45.7% prevalence. Failure to address the escalating rates of drug misuse among undergraduates can lead to dire consequences for both the individuals and the society at large (Muhia, 2021). The usage of addictive substances among the undergraduate's demography has been linked with lower academic performance, a higher probability of unemployment after graduation, and an increased risk of committing and experiencing sexual assault (Welsh et al., 2019).

Despite the increasing recognition of substance use as a prevalent issue among undergraduates globally, there exists a notable gap in the understanding of attitude of the students regarding drug abuse. There is need to explore the possible factors influencing the practice of drug abuse among undergraduates in the higher institutions of learning in which Lagos state University is among. Hence, this study is aimed at assessing the prevalence, awareness, and attitudes towards the dangers of drug abuse.

2. Objectives

The broad objective of this study is to assess the prevalence, awareness, and attitudes towards the dangers of drug abuse among undergraduate at University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos State. The specific objectives of this study are to:

- Determine the prevalence of drug abuse among undergraduate student at University of Lagos, Akoka,, Lagos State.

- Assess the level of awareness amongst undergraduates regarding drug abuse at University of Lagos, , Akoka,, Lagos State.

- Investigate the attitude of undergraduates towards the consequences of drug abuse at University of Lagos, , Akoka,, Lagos State.

- Explore the factors that contributes to drug abuse amongst undergraduate student at University of Lagos, , Akoka,, Lagos State.

- Review the preventive measures that can help to control and eradicate the issues of drug abuse amongst undergraduate student at University of Lagos, , Akoka, Lagos State.

3. Literature Review

The epidemiology of drug abuse is involving the prevalence, distribution, and determinants of substance use and its associated consequences within populations. It encompasses a broad spectrum of psychoactive substances, including alcohol, illicit drugs, prescription medications, and tobacco. The global disease burden attributable to substance abuse is estimated at 5.4%, while 3.7% is attributable to tobacco use alone. Globally, 585,000 people are estimated to have died as a result of substance abuse (Metuge et al., 2022).

Drug misuse is a concern in Nigeria, as it is in other countries, but the severity of the problem varies depending on legislative, socioeconomic, and educational responses. According to presumptive evidence, death rates, suicide attempts, and cult activities are reaching crisis proportions as a result of increased use of psychoactive substances among our undergraduates. An examination of substance use at a Nigerian university revealed that the use of alcohol, codeine, tramadol, and cigarettes was widespread among undergraduate students (Adesida et al., 2022).

The prevalence of drug misuse in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria is as follows: North West 12%, North Central 10%, North East 13.8%, South West 22.4%, South East 13.8% and South South 16.6%, with South west Nigeria having the highest level of prevalence (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Furthermore, drug misuse is becoming a norm in Lagos state especially among undergraduates, with little consideration of its health consequences, Lagos state is also reported to have the highest prevalence (33%) of substance abuse in Nigeria (Idowu et al., 2019). Global efforts,

including those by organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), underscore the importance of epidemiological data in crafting evidence-based policies to combat drug abuse (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018).

Substance is any drug that, when ingested or injected, produces a specific euphoric feeling and may be harmful to the body (Josiah & Aina, 2020). Substance abuse has been recognized to be a complex and serious public health concern that encompasses the misuse of psychoactive substances, including alcohol, and other illicit drugs (Lo et al., 2020; WHO, 2023). This phenomenon is characterized by the excessive and harmful use of substances, leading to a wide range of physical, psychological, and social consequences (Jahan & Burgess, 2023). The ethiology of substance abuse are multifaceted, often influenced by a confluence of genetic, environmental, and psychosocial factors (Olutende et al., 2021).

Individuals may engage in substance abuse for various reasons, such as seeking pleasure, alleviating stress, coping with mental health issues, or succumbing to peer pressure (Jumbe et al., 2021; Adejoh et al., 2020). Substance abuse has profound societal implications, affecting not only individuals but also leading to unwanted behaviors, such as domestic violence, with over 80% of victims engaging in such actions. United Nations Office of Drug and Crime findings further underscore the association between substance misuse and criminal activities. (Akindipe & Aina 2021).

The symptoms of substance abuse include extreme weight loss in a short period of time, feeling no hunger, having some difficulty breathing and becoming tired quickly, choosing to stay outside the home, frequently demanding money, feeling content in solitude, sleeping for long periods of time, remaining lazy, developing pale faces and trembling fingers, experiencing stomach problems, particularly constipation, at work, and other activities (Sajid et al., 2020). However, one of the challenges associated with substance abuse is the potential development of dependence and addiction (Nawi et al., 2021). Dependence occurs when the body adapts to the regular presence of a substance, leading to tolerance and withdrawal symptoms upon discontinuation while addiction, involves compulsive drug-seeking behavior despite consequences (Chavan et al., 2020).

The societal repercussions of substance abuse are profound, encompassing a range of issues from impaired academic and occupational functioning to strained interpersonal relationships and increased rates of crime and accidents (Masese, 2020; Paul et al., 2024; Were, 2021). Moreover, the economic burden associated with substance abuse is substantial, considering healthcare costs, legal expenses, and lost productivity (Hsiung et al., 2022). Prevention and intervention strategies are crucial components in addressing substance abuse and this can be achieved through educational programs, and appropriate treatment options in mitigating the prevalence and consequences of substance misuse (Public Safety Canada, 2022)

4. Statement of Problem

The use of psychoactive substances among undergraduate students has become a subject of public concern worldwide partly because of its potential to contribute to unintentional and intentional injury (Olutende et al., 2021). It is estimated that 1 in 20 adults including undergraduate students, or a quarter of a billion people between the ages of 15 and 64 years used at least one drug (Dinma et al., 2021). On a Global scale, it has been estimated that about 585,000 people have died as a result of drug misuse and undergraduates and adolescents are not left out in this menace, an increase visit to the hospitals in the last decade (Hudgins et al., 2019; Metuge et al., 2022). According to an African the survey by Jatau et al., (2021), it was reported that the prevalence of 20–40% of drug abuse was reported among students.

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Despite the increasing recognition of substance use as a prevalent issue among undergraduates globally, there exists a notable gap in the understanding of attitude of the students regarding drug misuse. Furthermore, the existing literatures lack a detailed exploration of the precise sociodemographic factors influencing the practice of drug abuse among undergraduates at Lagos state University. Hence, this study is aimed to assess the prevalence, awareness, and attitudes towards the dangers of drug misuse among undergraduate at University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos State.

5. Theoretical Framework

The Social Ecological Model (SEM) is a comprehensive theoretical framework used in public health and social sciences to understand the complex interplay of factors that influence health behaviors and outcomes. Developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner in the 1970s, this model provides a multi-dimensional lens through which researchers and practitioners can examine the various layers of influence that shape individual behaviors and, ultimately, public health. This model considers the complex interplay between individual, relationship, community, and societal factors. It allows us to understand the range of factors that put people at risk for violence or protect them from experiencing or perpetrating violence. The overlapping rings in the model illustrate how factors at one level influence factors at another level. This model consists of multiple interconnected levels or constructs, each of which contributes to our understanding of the determinants of health behaviors. These constructs, which range from the individual level to the societal level, help identify the factors that influence an individual's choices and actions.

6. Methodology

The study adopted the use of cross-sectional survey design, which provides a way of supplying answers to the research questions and also assist in achieving the objectives for this study. Cross-sectional survey design would be suitable to evaluate the relationship between parental conflict and emotional development, providing a brief representation of how parental conflicts might relate to emotional issues. The reason for applying the survey design is to effectively analyze the adolescent's experiences and thoughts about this topic. The population of the study would consist of only 100 and 200 level students of the faculty of social sciences in the University of Lagos. The faculty is made up of Mass Communication, Social work, Sociology, Psychology, Geography, Political Science and Economics. The faculty has a number of 2394 students in both 100 and 200 level with 1391 students in 100 level which includes Social work department 136, Economics department 234, Sociology department 213, Mass communication department 267, Psychology department 157, Political Science department 190, Geography department 194 and 200 level with 1003 students which includes Social work department 97, Sociology department 165, Economics department 180, Mass communication department 177, Psychology department 104, Political Science department 149, Geography department 131.

This study area is University of Lagos which was established in 1962, located in Akoka, Lagos. It has three campuses the main campus at Akoka, the medical campus at Idi-Araba (College of Medicine), and a campus at Yaba, Lagos. The University enrolls over 57,000 students, including over 9,000 undergraduate students. The University offers a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs across multiple faculties, which includes, Arts, Business Administration, Dental Sciences, Basic Medical Sciences, Education, Law, Engineering, Environmental Sciences, Pharmacy, Social Sciences, College of Medicine. The sampling of this study was taken from the University of Lagos,

precisely faculty of social sciences. The sampling technique multistage random sampling was used to derive the sampling size population. It was very effective as regards to the population of the study. In this technique, the researcher created clusters but trim down the sample by applying random sampling. The first stage of sampling is made up of the faculties at University of Lagos, which were, Arts, Business Administration, Pharmacy, Basic Medical Sciences, Clinical Sciences, Dental Sciences, Education, Law, Engineering, Environmental Sciences, College of Medicine and Social Sciences At the second stage, faculty of Social Sciences was selected at random. At the third stage, all the departments in faculty of Social Sciences were used for evaluation. The faculty of Social Sciences is made up of Communication, Geography, Economics, Political Science.

7. Findings

7.1. Results of Analysis

7.2. Introduction

The data presented below is based on the information retrieved from one hundred and sixty-eight (168) undergraduates. All distributed questionnaires were retrieved showing a response rate of 100%. Furthermore, frequency tables were used to present data.

Table 1: Socio-demographic data of undergraduates

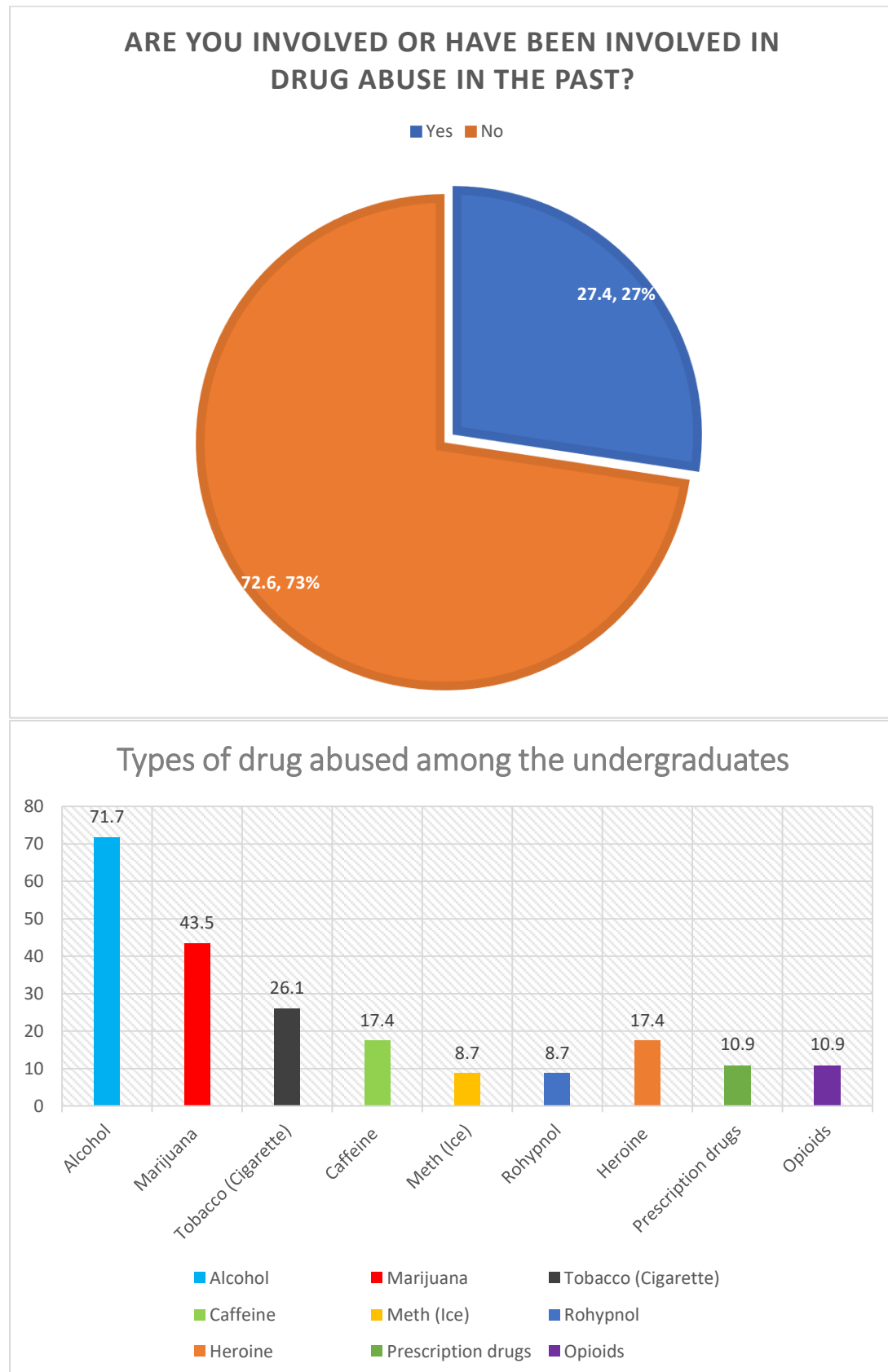
Table 1: Socio-demographic data of undergraduates			
	Valid	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age as at last birthday	16-20 years	79	47.0
	21-25 years	71	42.3
	26-30 years	18	10.7
	Total	168	100.0
Sex	Male	91	54.2
	Female	77	45.8
	Total	168	100.0
Religion	Christianity	105	62.5
	Islam	59	35.1
	Traditional	4	2.4
	Total	168	100.0
Ethnicity	Yoruba	104	61.9
	Igbo	51	30.4
	Hausa	13	7.7
	Total	168	100.0
Marital status	Single	152	90.5
	Married	12	7.1
	Others	4	2.4
	Total	168	100.0
Department	Social work	8	4.8
	Sociology	19	11.3
	Economics	6	3.6
	Mass communication	68	40.5
	Psychology	7	4.2
	Political science	37	22.0
	Geography	23	13.7
	Total	168	100.0
Level of study	200 level	29	17.3
	300 level	60	35.7
	400 level	79	47.0
	Total	168	100.0

The table presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the undergraduates. The finding revealed that the majority (47.0%) was between the ages of 16-20 years. Also, more than half (54.2%) of the respondents were male. In terms of their religion, Christianity was the most (62.5%) practiced religion. Regarding their ethnicity, the majority (61.9%) of them belong to the Yoruba ethnic group. Furthermore, most of the respondents (90.5%) were single. Regarding their department, the finding showed that the majority (40.5%) were from the Mass Communication department. Also, in terms of their level of study, most of the respondents (47.0%) were in their 400 level.

Research Question 1: What is the prevalence of drug abuse among undergraduates at University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos State?

Tables 2: Prevalence of drug abuse among undergraduate students

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Are you involved or have been involved in drug abuse/misuse in the past?		
Yes	46	27.4
No	122	72.6
If yes, Indicate the type of drug you abuse/misuse below? (Multiple response)		
Alcohol	33	71.7
Marijuana	20	43.5
Tobacco (Cigarette)	12	26.1
Caffeine	8	17.4
Meth (Ice)	4	8.7
Rohypnol	4	8.7
Heroine	8	17.4
Prescription drugs	5	10.9
Opioids (e.g. Codeine, Tramadol, Pentazocine)	5	10.9
How often have you used any of the following drugs in the past 12 months?		
Daily	10	6.0
Occasionally (2-4 times a year)	7	4.2
Weekly	23	13.7
Monthly	6	3.6
In what context do you typically use drugs? (Multiple response)		
Social gatherings/parties	22	47.8
To cope with stress or academic pressure	28	60.9
Out of curiosity	14	30.4
Peer pressure	11	23.9
How do you usually obtain the drugs you use? (Multiple response)		
Friends	30	65.2
Online	13	28.3
Street vendors	19	41.3
Pharmacies (without a prescription)	9	19.6



Bar charts showing the types of drugs abused among the undergraduates

Research Question 3: What is the level of awareness of undergraduates regarding drug misuse at University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos State?

Tables 3: Awareness of drug abuse among undergraduates

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Have you ever heard of the term "drug abuse"?		
Yes	151	89.9
No	17	10.1
Which of the following do you think constitutes to drug abuse? (Multiple response)		
Using prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription	124	73.8
Taking more than the prescribed dose of medication	106	63.1
Using drugs to enhance academic performance	67	39.9
Mixing drugs with alcohol	44	26.2
Using drugs for recreational purposes	41	24.4
Are you aware of the health risks associated with drug abuse?		
Yes	158	94.0
No	10	6.0
Are you aware of the legal consequences of drug abuse?		
Yes	147	87.5
No	21	12.5

Table 2 presents the awareness of drug abuse among undergraduate students; the finding showed that the majority (89.9%) had heard of the term "drug abuse." Also, majority of the respondents (73.8%) identified using prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription as a form of drug abuse. Furthermore, a vast majority (94.0%) were aware of the health risks associated with drug abuse, while 87.5% acknowledged awareness of its legal consequences.

Research Question 3: What is the attitudinal level of undergraduates towards drug abuse at University of Lagos, Akoka,, Lagos State

Table 4: Attitude of undergraduates towards drug abuse

Variables	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
It is acceptable to use prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription if you need them.	17	10.1	26	15.5	21	12.5	80	47.6	24	14.3
Occasional drug abuse is not harmful and can be controlled.	18	10.7	24	14.3	61	36.3	48	28.6	17	10.1
Students who abuse drugs are more likely to have academic success.	24	14.3	25	14.9	43	25.6	60	35.7	16	9.5
I believe that drug abuse among undergraduates is a serious issue that needs more attention.	15	8.9	12	7.1	31	18.5	69	41.1	41	24.4
Peer pressure is a valid reason for someone to abuse drugs.	11	6.5	23	13.7	40	23.8	63	37.5	31	18.5
I feel that there should be stricter penalties for students	8	4.8	12	7.1	41	24.4	67	39.9	40	23.8

caught abusing drugs.										
I am confident that I can resist the temptation to abuse drugs, even if others around me are doing so.	11	6.5	3	1.8	36	21.4	67	39.9	51	30.4
Universities should provide more education and resources on the dangers of drug abuse.	9	5.4	12	7.1	24	14.3	79	47.0	44	26.2
I believe that seeking help for drug abuse is a sign of weakness.	19	11.3	19	11.3	20	11.9	92	54.8	18	10.7

Table 4 presents the attitude of undergraduates towards drug abuse; the findings revealed that the majority (47.6%) agreed that it is acceptable to use prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription if needed. Similarly, most respondents (36.3%) remained neutral on whether occasional drug abuse is harmful and controllable. Regarding the impact on academic success, the majority (35.7%) agreed that students who abuse drugs are more likely to succeed academically. Furthermore, majority (41.1%) agreed that drug misuse among undergraduates is a serious issue requiring more attention. Peer pressure was considered a valid reason for drug misuse by 37.5% of respondents. Regarding preventive measures, the majority (39.9%) agreed that there should be stricter penalties for students caught abusing drugs. In terms of personal resistance, most respondents (39.9%) agreed that they could resist the temptation to misuse drugs despite peer influence. Furthermore, majority (47.0%) agreed that universities should provide more education and resources on the dangers of drug abuse. However, the majority (54.8%) agreed with the belief that seeking help for drug abuse is a sign of weakness.

Table 5: Overall attitudinal level of respondents on drug abuse

Attitudinal level	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean score
Negative attitude	116	69.0	28.54.5
Positive attitude	52	31.0	
Total	168	100.0	

Scoring criteria: Negative attitude = <28.5, Positive attitude=28.5. Minimum score=9, Maximum score=45

Table 5 presents the overall attitudinal level of the respondents towards drug abuse; the findings indicated that the majority (69.0%) exhibited a negative attitude, while 31.0% demonstrated a positive attitude.

Research Question 4: What are the factors contributing to drug abuse amongst undergraduates at University of Lagos, Akoka,, Lagos.

Table 6: Factors influencing drug abuse among undergraduates

Variables	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Curiosity and experimentation	7	4.2	3	1.8	11	6.5	101	60.1	46	27.4	4.05
Peer group influence	7	4.2	0	0	19	11.3	92	54.8	50	29.8	4.06
Societal acceptance of some drugs e.g. alcohol	9	5.4	7	4.2	25	14.9	68	40.5	59	35.1	3.96
Experience of parents' drug use and abuse	9	5.4	1	0.6	32	19.0	95	56.5	31	18.5	3.82
Lack of parental care	7	4.2	6	3.6	40	23.8	80	47.6	35	20.8	3.77
Desire to feel popular	3	1.8	7	4.2	22	13.1	89	53.0	47	28.0	4.01

among colleagues											
Media influence i.e. social media	0	0	11	6.5	24	14.3	94	56.0	39	23.2	3.96
To get away from worries	1	0.6	13	7.7	24	14.3	91	54.2	39	23.2	3.92

Table 6 presents the factors influencing drug abuse among undergraduates, the finding showed that the majority (60.1%) agreed that curiosity and experimentation is a major factor, with a mean score of 4.05. Peer group influence was also a major factor, as 54.8% agreed and 29.8% strongly agreed, with a mean score of 4.06. Furthermore, societal acceptance of certain drugs, such as alcohol, was reported as an influencing factor by 40.5% of respondents, with a mean score of 3.96. Parental influence was also reported, as majority (56.5%) agreed that experiencing parental drug use contributed to drug abuse, with a mean score of 3.82. Furthermore, majority (47.6%) of respondents agreed that lack of parental care was a contributing factor (mean = 3.77). Furthermore, majority (53.0%) agreed that the desire to feel popular among colleagues influenced drug misuse (mean = 4.01). Media influence, particularly social media, was also identified as a strong factor, with 56.0% agreeing (mean = 3.96). Furthermore, majority (54.2%) of respondents agreed that drug use was a way to escape worries (mean = 3.92).

Research Question 5: What are the preventive measures that can help in controlling the issues of drug abuse among undergraduate at University of Lagos, Akoka,, Lagos

Table 7: Preventive measures against drug abuse among undergraduates

Variables	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Enacting strict laws against any student abusing drugs	8	4.8	8	4.8	17	10.1	97	57.7	38	22.6	3.89
Educating students about the dangers of drug	7	4.2	7	4.2	20	11.9	92	54.8	42	25.0	3.92
Peer-led discussion on drug	8	4.8	10	6.0	31	18.5	92	54.8	27	16.1	3.71
Access to mental health resources and counselling services	7	4.2	4	2.4	28	16.7	96	57.1	33	19.6	3.86
Engaging undergraduates in extra-curricular activities	5	3.0	7	4.2	24	14.3	104	61.9	28	16.7	3.85
Promoting a supportive social environment	7	4.2	7	4.2	34	20.2	81	48.2	39	23.2	3.82
Awareness and campaign against drug abuse	8	4.8	6	3.6	20	11.9	93	55.4	41	24.4	3.91
Involving parent and family in drug abuse prevention programs	7	4.2	4	2.4	17	10.1	99	58.9	41	24.4	3.97

Table 7 presents the preventive measures against drug abuse among undergraduates, the finding showed that the most reported strategy was involving parents and family in prevention programs, with 58.9% agreeing and 24.4% strongly agreeing (mean = 3.97). Educating students about the dangers of drug abuse was also supported, with 54.8% agreeing and 25.0% strongly agreeing (mean = 3.92). Enacting strict laws against student drug misuse received significant support, with

57.7% agreeing (mean = 3.89). Access to mental health resources and counseling services was also considered effective, with 57.1% of respondents agreeing (mean = 3.86). Similarly, engaging students in extracurricular activities was seen as a valuable preventive measure, with 61.9% agreeing (mean = 3.85). Promoting a supportive social environment had 48.2% agreement (mean = 3.82), while awareness campaigns against drug abuse were supported by 55.4% of respondents (mean = 3.91). Finally, peer-led discussions on drug misuse had slightly lower endorsement compared to other measures, with 54.8% agreement (mean = 3.71).

8. Discussion of Findings

The findings from this study on drug abuse among undergraduates at the University of Lagos reveal below-average prevalence, with the majority of respondents not involved in substance use. This aligns with Bolakale et al. (2018), who reported that about a quarter of Nigerian students had used substances in their lifetime. In contrast, Metuge et al. (2021) found a significantly higher prevalence in Cameroon, where nearly all students reported substance use. Among those who admitted to drug use in the present study, alcohol emerged as the most commonly abused substance, while methamphetamine (Ice) and Rohypnol were the least abused. This pattern is consistent with findings from Metuge et al. (2021) and Aguocha & Nwefoh (2021), who also identified alcohol as the most frequently used substance among students. The widespread use of alcohol may be attributed to its legal status, ease of access, and social acceptance, unlike more restricted and expensive substances such as heroin, meth, and cocaine. Similar trends were observed in Benue State, Nigeria, where Dimas et al. (2021) reported frequent abuse of alcohol, Rohypnol, cocaine, and marijuana. Most respondents in the current study reported weekly use, often as a coping mechanism for stress and academic pressure, which contrasts with Adesida et al. (2022), who found that students used drugs occasionally. Friends and street vendors were identified as the primary sources of these substances.

Awareness of drug abuse was notably high among respondents, with most having heard of it and understanding its legal and health implications. This finding is supported by Obi et al. (2024) and Ofili et al. (2022), who reported good knowledge of drug abuse among Nigerian students. However, Yadav & Parajuli (2021) found poor awareness among students in their study, suggesting regional differences in drug education and campaign efforts. The variation in awareness may also be influenced by academic discipline, with health-related students likely to possess greater knowledge. The current study also found that respondents recognized alcohol and cigarette use as forms of drug abuse, a perception supported by Obi et al. (2024), Ofili et al. (2022), and Duru et al. (2017), possibly due to the legal acceptance of these substances in Nigeria.

In terms of attitude, most respondents exhibited a negative stance toward drug abuse, echoing findings by Ezeaka et al. (2022). However, Das et al. (2024) reported a more positive attitude among students in their study. Interestingly, many respondents in the present study remained neutral on whether occasional drug use is harmful, whereas Oni et al. (2024) found that most students believed it was detrimental to health. A majority agreed that drug abuse among undergraduates is a serious issue requiring attention, a sentiment shared in a Jordanian study by Abuhammad et al. (2021). Respondents also supported stricter penalties for offenders and increased educational efforts by universities. Despite this, many still viewed seeking help for drug abuse as a sign of weakness.

Several factors were identified as influencing drug abuse among undergraduates. Peer pressure and the desire for popularity were prominent, reflecting the vulnerability of young adults to social influences. Curiosity and the thrill of experimentation also played a role, consistent with Manghani et al. (2022), who found curiosity to be a common motivator. The societal normalization of alcohol further contributed to its widespread use, as seen in Olutende et al. (2021), who linked substance use to peer pressure and poor parenting. The role of parenting was emphasized, with inadequate supervision and involvement cited as contributing factors. This aligns with Josiah and Aina (2020), who found that poor parental monitoring influenced substance use among Nigerian students.

Preventive measures suggested by respondents included involving parents and families in intervention programs, a strategy supported by Dennhardt & Murphy (2013) and Kugbey (2023), who highlighted the effectiveness of parental supervision. Educational initiatives, strict laws, access to

mental health resources, and engagement in extracurricular activities were also endorsed. Promoting a supportive social environment and conducting awareness campaigns were seen as valuable, though the latter received mixed support. Overall, the findings underscore the multifaceted nature of drug abuse among undergraduates and the need for comprehensive, community-based prevention strategies.

9. Conclusion

These findings reveal a significant prevalence of drug abuse among undergraduate students. Despite a high level of awareness regarding the implications of substance abuse, majority of respondents continues to engage in such behaviors. These results show the urgent need for interventions, comprehensive education, and supportive resources. Addressing the factors contributing to drug abuse and enhancing the knowledge level of both students and healthcare professionals, we can promote healthier behaviors and improve academic outcomes among this vulnerable population.

10. Recommendations

Governments should develop and implement comprehensive drug abuse policies that address the specific needs of undergraduate populations. These policies should encompass preventive measures, educational programs, and support services, and involve collaboration with academic institutions and healthcare providers to create a holistic approach.

Academic administrators should collaborate with healthcare professionals to integrate drug abuse education into the curricula of undergraduate programs. This includes incorporating modules on the consequences of drug abuse, factors influencing student behaviors, and strategies for prevention and early intervention.

Social workers should work collaboratively with academic institutions to establish integrated care models that prioritize the mental and physical health of undergraduate students. This may involve creating on-campus health clinics, offering counseling services, and facilitating referrals to specialized treatment centers when needed.

Policy makers should advocate for policies that prioritize mental health within the broader healthcare framework while the general public, including parents, friends, and peers, should actively contribute to the creation of responsible social norms. Encouraging positive social interactions, supporting friends in making healthy choices, and fostering a sense of community responsibility can contribute to a culture that discourages drug misuse among undergraduate populations.

11. Limitation of the Study

The findings are based on participants' responses to survey questions, which may be subjected to social desirability bias or underreporting due to the sensitive nature of drug abuse.

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