

Assessing Substance Use and Its Contributory Factors Among University Undergraduates in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study assess Substance uses and its contributory factors among Tertiary Institution Undergraduates in Lagos State, Nigeria. This research which adopted descriptive design was conducted in two Universities within Lagos State, Lagos State University and University of Lagos. Data was collected from a total number of 416 undergraduates, selected from the two Universities using multi-stage sampling techniques. This study adopted a validated questionnaire as the instrument for data collection from the respondents. The data obtained from the respondents was analyses using SPSS version 27. Findings revealed that, most of the respondents were 23 years and below (98.6%), with more male (63.7%) than female (36.3%). Furthermore, majority of the respondents were found to be substance users (61.5%), with only a quarter found to be substance abusers (26.2%). Findings also revealed that, a considerable rate of respondents who use substances were influence by their family background (60.1%) and level of socialization (84.6%). The study also concluded that, family background factors as well as level of socialization among undergraduate being a major contributor to abuse of substances.*

Keywords: contributory, factors, substance use, undergraduates, university

INTRODUCTION

Continual increase in rate and pattern of substances use in recent times, especially among the younger generations such as University Undergraduates, across the global is contributing significantly to global health burden, poor academic performance and high crime rate (Eke et al., 2022; Oyeleke et al., 2021; Hutton et al., 2020). This is partly questioning the efficacy of existing global health campaign strategies set to reduce substance intake, especially among adolescents and

youths. Yet, in the short term, substance abuse could pose severe consequences to individuals, families, and communities (World Health Organization, 2021), while in a long term could pose danger to achievement of global health agenda, weaken the healthcare system due to ratio of high demand to low budgetary allocation as well as affect the economy growth of the nation. It is a multifaceted issue with significant implications for public health, education, economy and social development among other (Ikoh, 2019). Yet, substances use varied across different culture and traditions with significant historical perspectives across geographical zones (World Drug Report, 2021). Therefore, in Nigeria Universities, it is important to curtail the menace of substance use and abuse.

On a general note, substance abuse includes consumption of all forms of illicit substances in its solid, liquid or gaseous forms for any purposes other than medical (Bolakale *et al.*, 2018). In Nigeria, the pattern of substance abuse in the recent times, is such that, while some illicit substances are branded, others are unbranded or locally mix and dangerous to health. Currently, substances ranging from alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, cocaine, codeine, heroin to hashish and many others as well as various locally mix substances, are available across joint and centers and accessible to undergraduates in the University environment (Gebremariam *et al.*, 2018). The substance abuse problem among university students is quite pervasive globally, with far-reaching consequences on knowledge, behavior, and general well-being (Adebayo *et al.*, 2020; Egbuonu *et al.*, 2022). The Nigeria University admit individual from age 16 years, an indication that, a significant number of University students are teenagers. At Teenage stage, growth and development are still ongoing such as, the brains are still under development, making them more susceptible to the harmful effects of addictive substances (National Institute on Substance Abuse (NIDA, 2023). Olanrewaju & Hamzat (2022) reported that there is 25% increase in illicit and substance use among undergraduate students over the past five years in Nigeria. Similarly, Aguoc (2021) added that in South Western Nigeria, the misuse and abuse of illicit substances among undergraduate students have emerged as a pervasive and alarming issue, demanding a thorough investigation. This problem is well-documented in multiple sources, with reports indicating a rising trend in illicit substances use among students across universities in Lagos State. Available studies have identified various causes, such as Odukoya *et al.*, (2018) who found that, knowledge and behavior of students are major predictors, therefore revealing the need for more campaign. In addition, the need for energy to work for long hours, exposure on social media and the need to prevent the occurrence of withdrawal symptoms are some of the factors motivating students to start substance use (Soremekun *et al.*, 2020; Faquih & Alharbe, 2024). Based on the above and more reasons, there have been a consistent rise in prevalence of substance users.

Globally, 35 million people are estimated to suffer from substance use disorders and require treatment services (UNODC, 2021). The estimated number of users increased from 240 million in 2011 to 296 million in 2021, accounting for 5.8 per cent of the global population aged 15 to 64 (Jatau *et al.*, 2021). Across developed countries such as Canada, United State and United Kingdom, High level of substance abuse have also been reported among University Undergraduate. For instance, Istasy *et al.* (2019) reported that, a significant percent of Canadian tertiary institutions students engaged in substance abuse. This is also similar to report from countries across Asia and

Africa. In Nigeria, there is a high prevalence of substance abuse among university students, with one study recently reporting over 70% of students engaging in substance use (Oyeleke et al., 2021). In 2021, about 15% of people aged 15 to 64 in Nigeria had used illicit substance in the past 12 months (Jatau et al., 2021). Also, some studies have noted the increasing prevalence of substance use and focused interest on the factors that lead to such behaviors and intervening measures that can be put in place to minimize these behaviors (Chikezie *et al.*, 2021). This problem is also a reflection across universities in Lagos, as some anecdotal evidence indicates a large involvement of students in substance abuse (Odukoya et al., 2018). Lagos State city is an ultra-modern features with structure rapidly changing to conform to the developed countries cities. Yet, substance use and abuse continue to contribute towards increased mental and social instability, poor physical health and poor academic performance, as its relate University Students (Ikoh, 2019). It is imperative that, a study is conducted to assess substance uses and its contributory factors among Tertiary Institution Undergraduates in Lagos State, Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the level substance, use among undergraduate in Lagos State.
2. To assess the level substance, abuse among undergraduate in Lagos State.
3. To determine the background factors influencing substance use among undergraduate in Lagos State.
4. To determine the Economic factors influencing substance use among undergraduate in Lagos State.
5. To determine the social factors influencing substance use among undergraduate in Lagos State.

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative research adopted descriptive design and was conducted in two Universities within Lagos State: A State University (Lagos State University-LASU) and a Federal University (University of Lagos- UNILAG). Data was collected from a total number of 416 undergraduates from the two Universities. Only respondents from age 16 years and above, who were in the second years through to fifth year of study in the institutions were selected using multi-stage sampling techniques from the two Universities. This study adopted a validated questionnaire as the instrument for data collection from the respondents. The data obtained from the respondents was sorted, coded and processed for analyses using SPSS version 27. The analysis was carried out using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Specifically, aspect of the objectives and socio-demographic characteristic of respondents was analysed using frequency and valid percentage of descriptive statistics, while overall value were presented using charts. Respondents were categorized into three group based on use of substance as, substance abusers, substance users and non-substance users. Those who cannot do without use of any illicit substance(s) for a month at a stretch were considered to be substance abusers, while occasional substance users, such as for weekly, monthly and rarely occasionally were considered substance users and those who were

never involved in any illicit substance(s) for a year before the study was conducted were regarded as non-substance users.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of respondents

Variables		Frequency	Percent (%)
Age	16-19 years	260	62.5
	20-23 years	150	36.1
	24 years or above	6	1.4
Sex	Male	265	63.7
	Female	151	36.3
Ethnicity	Yoruba	359	86.3
	Igbo	46	11.1
	Hausa	11	2.6
Religion	Christian	357	85.8
	Muslim	59	14.2
Family type	Monogamy	368	88.5
	Polygamy	48	11.5

Table 1 presents results on demographic characteristics of respondents. On age of the respondents, majority (62.5%) were 16-19 years old, above a third (36.1%) were 20-23years, while a few (1.4%) were 24 years or above. On Sex of the respondents, majority (63.7%) were male, while above a third (36.3%) were female. On ethnicity, most (86.3%) were Yoruba, below a tenth (11.1%) were Igbo, while very few (2.6%) were Hausa. On Religion, majority (85.8%) were Christians and above a tenth (14.2%) practices Islam. On Family type, most (88.5%) were from monogamy families, while slightly above a tenth (11.5%) were from polygamy families.

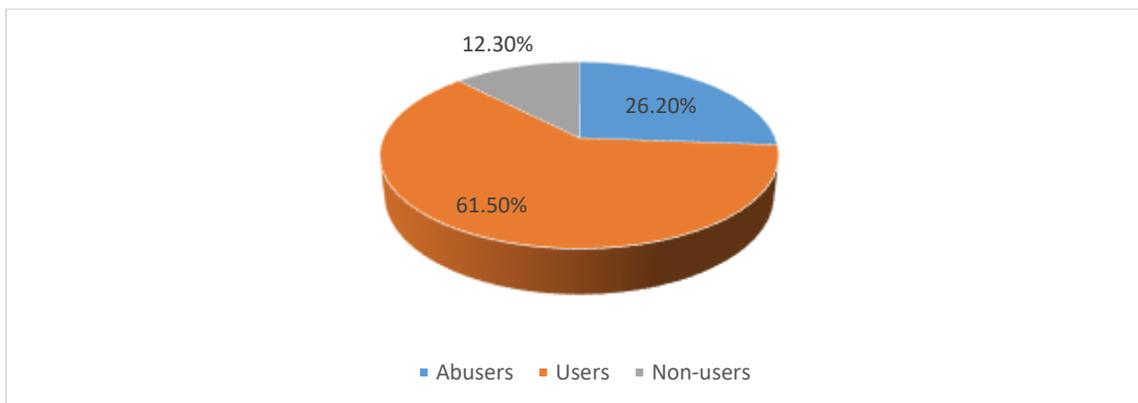


Figure 1: Overall Substance Abuse

Results shows that, over a quarter (26.2%) of the respondents were substance abusers, 61.5% were substance users but not Abuser, and while slightly above a tenth (12.3%) were never involved in substances abused substances

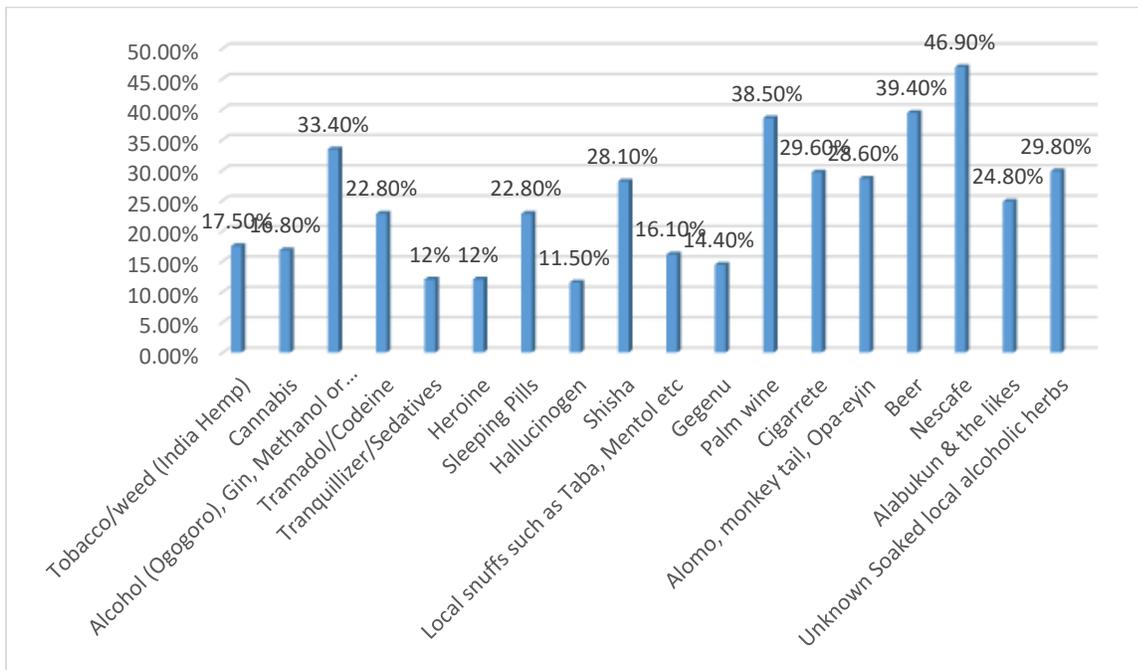


Figure 2: Commonly Abused Substance

Results shows that, Nescafe (46.9%) was the most commonly used substance, followed by, Beer (39.4%), Palm wine (38.5%), Gin and the like (33.4%), unknown soaked local alcohol (29.8%), Cigarette (29.6%) , shisha(28.1%) among others.

Table 2: Overall Undergraduate from Family Background with high risk of Substance Use

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid High Risk	250	60.1	60.1	60.1
Low Risk	166	39.9	39.9	100.0
Total	416	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 above presents overall undergraduates from various family background with risk of substance abuse. Results shows that, only 39.9% of the respondents were from a low risk background, while majority (60.1%) were from high risk background.

Table 3: Overall Undergraduate with risk of Substance use due to their Socialization

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid High Risk	352	84.6	84.6	84.6
Low Risk	64	15.4	15.4	100.0
Total	416	100.0	100.0	

Table above present overall Undergraduate with risk of Substance use due to their Socialization. Results shows that, 15.4% of the respondents had low risk of substance use due to their socialization, while majority (84.6%) were at risk of substance use due to socialization.

DISCUSSION

The increasing level of substance use across various tertiary institutions has been a major concern among stakeholders. The need for concern has been attributed to various consequences said to be associated with the practice. Therefore, a research to examine how some undergraduates become substances user is important to delineate areas to focus in planning prevention of various associated consequences, such as increased level of dropout, rape, cultism, suicide among other. The study found that, most of the respondents were 23 years and below. Idowu et al., (2023) also attributed substance use among similar age range. This is an indication that, majority of the respondents were teenagers, which attested to the fact that, they still have some level of connection with their background, while they are also socializing. This is significant to the study to ensure right group were included in the study. More the result revealed that, major ethnicities and religious types in Nigeria were well represented, indicating lack of bias in the selection of the respondents. Similarly, major family types were also included in the study, which increases the chances of getting diverse view without unnecessary limitations.

Furthermore, majority of the respondents were found to be substance users. This implies that, majority get involved in substances within weekly, monthly or even yearly interval. This indicated that, although majority were involved in substances, yet only quarter were substance abusers. This corroborate Idowu et al., (2023) who found that, a quarter of youths in the current study had ever taken alcohol containing drinks. This is an indication that, only a quarter cannot do without a particular substance in a day. Findings also show that only about a tenth were non-abusers of substances for at least 12 months. More so, the findings revealed that, significant percent of the respondents abuses Nescafe, Beer, Palm wine, Gin and the like, unknown soaked local alcohol, cigarette , shisha. Findings agrees with Idowu, et al., (2018), who found that, most commonly used drugs include alcohol, cigarettes, palm wine local gin and herbal gin mixtures.

Individual background such as immediate and extended families as well as the environment an individual grow may be a significant factor to explain their personalities as well as their behavior. In this study, findings revealed that, a considerable rate of respondents who use substances were

influence by their family background. This is in line with Rozenbroek and Rothstein (2018) who found that, substance use among adolescents is associated with lack of parental control, easy access to drugs, and emerging street culture of gangsterism. The plausible reason to this finding is that, when a child grows within an environment where their fathers, cousins and siblings are into substances or any other close relatives use substances, such child could be at high risk of also using substance. Akunna et al., (2024) also found association between parental involvement in anti-social activities, family residential area, and adoption of substance use among the children.

The university environment apart from the fact that it an academic environment, is also a socialization platform, where various association abound. This include religious association, ethnicity, political among others. Therefore, student regardless of their personalities associate to socialize and through such medium, friends are made and relationship are established some of which could be for negative or positive influence. More findings also revealed that, majority of the respondents who are into substances, might as well have been influence due to their level of socialization in the University. Findings is supported by Ekop et al. (2019) where they found that, peer groups influence students' engagement in substance use. This is evidence in that, a significant part of Nigerian students was into substances due to peer influence (Fashola et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

The need to reduce the level of substance use among the younger generation, who are the major perpetrators, is becoming a matter of urgency globally. This is due to continuous increase in rate people with various mental health issue due to substance use and there has been a global call for use of development of effective policies and strategies through evidence based recommendations that will help combat the common increase in substance abusers in every countries of the world. Therefore, the study concluded that, the level of substance use among university in Lagos State is high, with only about a quarter abusing substances. The study also concluded that, family background factors as well as level of socialization among undergraduate being a major contributors to abuse of substances. Based on these, it is suggested that, there is need for health workers to embrace fact-based campaign and counselling while addressing issue of substance use in the society. This is implies that, public health nurses needs to take note of targeting both older and younger generation, rather than just concentrating the youths. Nurses should also endeavour to assist in organizing seminars across Universities that would help to illustrate the breadth and diversity of various substances that are being abuse and common ways to stop it. Peer counseling techniques may also help health worker to get to those that needed mental health help. Also, since social media remain a major platform where people spend a considerable part of their time on, such platform could be used for health campaigns with regards to substance use. More so, Nigeria University commission need to ensure provision of policies that will discourage proliferation of substance use within the campus and in their environment. In other to discourage younger generation across the Universities in Nigeria, policy makers should ensure compulsory substance test as a requirement for securing admission into tertiary institution in Nigeria.

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