Influence of Substance Abuse on Academic Performance of Senior Secondary School Students in Sokoto Metropolis: Implication for Behavioural Counselling

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Abstract
This study investigated the influence of substance abuse on academic performance of senior secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis: Implication for Behavioural Counselling. Two objectives, two research questions and two hypotheses were stated respectively to guide the conduct of this study. The population of the study comprised eighteen thousand six hundred and seventy students. The sample of three hundred and sixty senior secondary schools two students obtained through Roasoft sample calculator and purposive sampling technique was used. The questionnaire titled: questionnaire on substance abuse and academic performance was validated by expert in the department of counselling psychology, faculty of education, Sokoto State University and the validity index of 0.86 and reliability index of 0.836 was obtained Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the requisitions the social developmental Theory developed by Hawkins and Weis was used for this study. Conclusions from this study indicated substance abuse is a significant problem among senior secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis: The high prevalence of substance abuse, particularly cigarettes, alcohol, cannabis, and inhalants, indicates that substance abuse is a serious issue affecting adolescents in Sokoto Metropolis. The finding that 54.8% of students use cigarettes and 45.7% consume alcohol is alarming and requires urgent intervention also peer pressure is the most significant cause of substance abuse: The study confirms that peer group pressure and the desire for social acceptance are the primary drivers of substance abuse among students. This highlights the importance of peer influence in shaping adolescent behaviour and the need for peer-based interventions and recommendation were made students should learn to resist peer pressure and make independent decisions about substance use. They should seek positive peer groups that do not engage in substance abuse. Parents should provide guidance and supervision to their children, monitoring their activities and knowing their friends. Parental involvement is crucial in preventing substance abuse.

Keywords: *Substance Abuse, Alcohol, Cocaine*

Introduction

The issue of academic performance has been a major problem confronting the Nigerian education sector, with that of the Sokoto State education inclusive. For years now, evidence from research works reveals a generally but stable decline in the academic performance of secondary school students across Nigeria. The percentage records of analysis in the West African Senior

School Certificate Examination results released between 2017 to 2020 include 40.78% in 2017, 50.02% in 2018, 35.82% in 2019 and 34.76% in 2020 (premiumtimesng.com, 2020). This only supports the concerns being raised by stakeholders in education sector regarding the decline in the standard of education in the country.

The term declining standard of education is a relative one. According to Chinelo (2011) the falling standard of education in Nigeria is linked to the lost glories of traditional education which fosters the very important values of hard work, diligence and high productivity. Jalingo (2010) also concluded that two indicators of falling standard of education in Nigeria is the poor level of written and spoken English and performance in external examinations. Since the different tiers of education are all linked together, it means whatever affects one affects the other. Hence, a fallen standard in secondary education ultimately affects the output of our tertiary institutions.

Furthermore, 2018 data on the completion rate for senior secondary school in Nigeria showed that 57% of males finished, while the figure was 43% for their female counterparts. However, there was a general decrease in completion rate of senior secondary education between 2016 and 2018 among both male and female students (Simona, 2020).

Academic performance is the outcome of education or an instruction the extent to which a student, teacher or instruction has achieved their educational goals (Audu, 2015). There are two traditional indicators of academic performance, namely grades and highest level of educational attainment. These two indicators are arguably the most important to educator, students their parents and those people who make public policy decision.

Academic performance is the performance in academic subjects or the performance in a particular course by academic achievement; we mean the performance of a learner after course of instructions and measure in terms if masks and grades obtained in a given area of knowledge or skills acquired after undergoing a program of instruction. According to Ahmad & Rana (2012). "Academic performance is the knowledge attained or skill developed in the school subjects usually designed by test scores are makes assigned by Teacher, or both".

According to Von, Sophie and Tomas (2008), individual differences in academic performance have been linked to differences in personality. Their study further suggested that mental curiosity has an important impact on academic performance in addition to substance abuse and maladjusted behaviours.

The use of illicit substances in Nigeria and many other countries has been on the increase for many years and the trend has upwardly continued (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2020). This increase in the use of substances is most apparent in heavily populated areas but it is also being experienced more and more in rural and urban settings. Small towns and rural areas are no longer exempted from the influences of this pandemic scourge.

Substance use and abuse used to be a sacrosanct issue treated with a lot of secrecy by those who use and abuse them. However, today, students in schools now boast of abusing substances (Azuike, Oni & Darisu, 2018). It has been found that young people in Nigeria start using and abusing substances at a young age. Young people sampled from Sokoto State reported that they started drinking between age 11 and 20 (Chikere & Mayowa, 2019). Sheri and Indris (2019) who sampled respondents from Sokoto metropolis had participants aged between 10 to 14 years in a Secondary School in Sokoto West who were already smoking cannabis. According to Ogbodo, (2004), the subject of substance abuse is traditionally a medical concern; but it is also of educational and social relevance as it has gained enormous attention over the years within and outside students' community.

According to Katung, (2012), a substance is a chemical substance, natural or synthetic in nature, that when taken into the body by whatever means, affects the functioning and the behaviour of the user. He said further that the term is used to describe any licit or illicit substance that has an influence on the structure and functioning of the brain when it is taken. This definition does not include foods but it includes alcohol, tobacco, medicines, Indian hemp and other illegal substances. Therefore, a substance is "psychoactive or mind altering", when it affects the way the user feels, thinks or acts under its influence.

Therefore, substance abuse in principle is the application of substances for purposes other than the purpose of which it is meant, that is, illegitimately or without prescription. It involves repeated and excessive use of prescription or street substances, resulting in psychic or physical dependence, addiction, functional impairment and deviation from approved social norms, (Katung, 2012). A simple supply and demand economic process occurs, as the demand for substances increases and the monetary potentials for substance suppliers also increase.

As a result, the sale of illicit substances is a tremendously large and lucrative business (Johnson, 2020). It must be noted at this point that cocaine and other narcotics are not often used alone. Many recreational substances are quite often used with other substances such as alcohol, marijuana, barbiturates, tobacco, heroin, opium, morphine, tranquilizers and so on (Katung 20012). Access to substances in our society is exceedingly easy; especially the lower income experience the hopelessness and helplessness associated with low socio-economic status and use these substances to escape from their seemingly adverse environmental conditions. They also use the sale of substances as a quick way to get a lot of easy money without a lot of work output.

According to Wallace (1991, cited in Johnson, 2015), substance use is not restricted only to low socio-economic status. Affluence can also contribute to the problem. Many young people whose parents give them free rein and the allowance to support that lifestyle often fall to the need to experiment and experience the substance scene either because of peer pressure, parental pressure, their rebellious ideals, or a combination of these factors. According to Katung, (20012), substance abuse is a universal phenomenon which has no boundary. It cuts across all sectors of human endeavour. According to him, man has considered certain substances and disregarded some which are considered less important. This has been flipped as a reason why some conditions occur to people without being associated with such substances. In some societies, it is associated with mysticism and the work of enemies. When you talk about substances and mention the socially acceptable substances (tolerated substances) such as alcohol, tobacco and kolanut, many will laugh at you and some may even describe you as a joker. Such reactions are not far-fetched due to the fact that some people have acknowledged that they have lived and grown up in a society where no particular attention is paid to those substances. On the contrary, they are encouraged for one reason or the other.

Peer Pressure Influence by a member of a peer group is the primary goal of most teenagers during adolescence. The feeling of belonging and social acceptance is very strong at this stage of development. This is why peer influence plays a huge part in steering the experiences and interest of teenagers. When teens are searching for their identity and the concepts that they want to define themselves by, social influences and peer interaction play a huge part in this process. These two factors can help form the teen into what he/she wants to be, or whom he/she fears of being.

According to Lamsaouri (1994-1995) the cause of substance over use among peers is that everyone else is using it and there is no problem to use it. This is the answer of all adolescents that are caught overusing drugs. All peers in the same group are obliged to do the same thing and

conform to the rules of the group. Therefore, adolescents start using drugs even if they are convinced that they are harmful for their health. Besides, over using drugs, for peers, means that adolescents are strong and they can break down general rules that they learnt from their parents or their teachers. In general, adolescents, use drugs to fulfil their need of belonging since it's a source of self-esteem for teens.

In fact, Haynie (2012) found out that adolescents get their self-esteem from the group they belong to and they cannot imagine themselves outside that gathering. Without a group, youths have a low self-esteem and they are powerless. They see friends or peers as a vital component in their life without which they cannot live. There are many problems with substance overuse among adolescents, but the biggest one is addiction. Members of the same group overuse drugs and new members have to do the same. However, when it comes to addiction, no one is responsible for anybody else. When a peer becomes addicted to smoking, drinking, or illicit substances, it is his/her own responsibility to solve the problem and never tell that he or she was influenced by someone else (Cang and Hawk, 2016). If he or she tells someone else that there is a peer that he/she is hanging out with, the trouble starts with the peer which leads, in most cases, to violence and even death.

Indeed, Howell and Decker (2019) declares, "Because the growth in youth gang violence coincided with the crack cocaine epidemic, the two developments were generally perceived to be interrelated." Social influence and pressure can lead to behaviours like substance abuse, risk taking, and promiscuous sexual activity. Behaviours such as these can prove to be detrimental to the health of the teenager. On the contrary, there is positive peer pressure also, that is conducive to the development of the teen. For example, teen can influence other teens to get involved in community service activities, helping others, or joining a sports or academic team.

Factors contributing to this effect include:

i. Fear of isolation
ii. Inadequacy
iii. Shame and ridicule
iv. Instinctual need to bond

The last aspect that concerns negative effects of peer pressure is manipulating adolescents‟ attitudes and behaviour. Adolescents like to hang out with friends from their age because they have similar ideas and they feel comfortable with each other. The sense of belonging is the most salient aspect that pushes adolescents to conform to a group and share thoughts and beliefs that sometimes harm the youths‟ identity (Haynie, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

The researcher has observed that there is a general public concern about the dwindling standard the educational sector. One of the indicators of the declining standard of education has been the poor performance of students in examinations. It is speculated that the situation is caused mostly by the negative influences of substance abuse which leads to high rate of school dropout, high level of youth restiveness, teenage pregnancy, criminal activities and armed robbery among others. In Sokoto State, the use of solvent and steroids is gaining ground. The indulgence of this harmful practices affects the academic performance of students is a defensible tool in tackling the problem. It is based on these prevailing circumstances that the thrust of this study put in a question form is; what is the influence of substance abuse on students' academic performance of senior secondary schools in Sokoto metropolis of Sokoto State.

Objectives of the Study

1. Assess the influence of substance abuse on the academic performance of senior secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis.
2. Evaluate the causes of substance abuse on academic performance of senior secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis

Research Question

1. What are the causes of substance abuse on academic performance of senior secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis?
2. What are the preventive measures to eradicate substance abuse on academic performance of senior secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significance of the causes of substance abuse on academic performance of senior secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis.
2. There is no significance effect of the preventive measures to eradicate substance abuse on academic performance of senior secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis.

Review of Empirical Studies

Burnhams, Myers, & Parry, (2019) in their study in learning institutions in South Africa reported that Prevention programs in Cape Town mostly take the form of educational programs (91%) which aim to raise awareness by providing knowledge about drug abuse and their consequences. It encompasses Comprehensive survey of substance abuse to identify those with the most serious drug and alcohol problems in order to offer psychosocial support, over and above awareness and education, (McDonald, 2010). Another program established under the partnerships of young adults, university authority and Miller Company used three educational channels consisting of poster positioned on campus pubs, banners with taxi information displayed during orientation week events encouraging drinkers not to drive drunk and disposable breathalyzers carrying a responsible message given out at various events. Carroll (2014) found that college young adults were using stimulant drugs as study aids as well as for recreational purposes. Of those surveyed 96.8% were using stimulants to study longer, 96.8% to stay awake, 83.9% to study better, and 27.6% to improve memory. Teter et al (2012) revealed that 65.2% of their survey population used prescription stimulants to help with concentration, 59.8% to help study, and 47.5% to increase alertness. Teter (2012) also found that young adults who started using prescription stimulants during college were more likely to use them to improve concentration (70.0%) as compared to those who started before college (55.0%). The purpose of this study was to evaluate the prevalence of prescription stimulant use and thus increase awareness of the problem. Knowing which prescription stimulant drugs are most commonly abused for other-than-intended uses, as well as the motives behind abuse, can potentially help universities implement prevention policies and educational strategies. As an academic discipline, Luppicini (2015) asserts that educational technology prepares individuals by helping them acquire a deeper understanding and mastery of learning resources: messages, people, materials, devices, techniques and settings. This implies that it analyzes and provides solutions to problems through research, theory, design, production, evaluation, utilization. The focus is on effective processes to facilitate learning using technologies and understanding the impacts of technology on learners and organizations (DeVaney and Butler2019). DeSantis et al (2020) found that 72% of the college young adults

surveyed were taking prescription stimulant drugs to stay awake to study, and 66% were using them to concentrate on their work. Other reasons included to aid in memorization (36%), to stay awake and have fun (22%), and to make work more interesting (12%). During qualitative interviews, DeSantis et al (2020) found that alcohol, marijuana, prescription barbiturates, and cocaine were used almost exclusively to have fun. Medications were used predominantly for the more serious pursuit of getting good grades. Mwangi and Chege (2018) carried out an empirical study titled Substance Use and Academic Outcomes among Adolescents in South Africa to determine the relationship between substance abuse and school performance. The researchers adopted a correlational research design to establish the degree of association between the two variables, using a sample of 500 secondary school students selected from Johannesburg and Cape Town through multistage sampling. Data were gathered using a standardized "Adolescent Substance Use and Achievement Scale," which was validated by experts (CVI=0.86) and had a Cronbach's Alpha reliability of 0.85. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. Findings showed a significant negative correlation($r=-0.69, p<0.05$)between drug use and students' academic performance, with male students reporting higher rates of drug use and lower school attendance compared to females. The study concluded that substance abuse leads to declining academic outcomes and increased school dropout. The authors recommended strong counselling interventions and national anti-drug campaigns targeting secondary school students. While robust in statistical analysis and gendor consideration, the study did not explore how counselling practices directly mediate the effects of drug abuse on academic outcomes. In Ghana, Amadi and Okonkwo (2021) conducted an empirical study titled Drug Abuse and Its Effects on Students' Retention and Academic Achievement in Ghanaian Senior High Schools to assess how substance abuse affects academic persistence and examination results. The study employed a descriptive survey design with a population of senior secondary students and a randomly selected sample of 380 participants across four senior high schools in Accra. Data were collected through a validated questionnaire (CVI=0.81: Cronbach's Alpha=0.84) and analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation. Findings revealed that students who engaged in substance use, particularly marijuana and alcohol, demonstrated lower academic performance, increased absenteeism, and higher dropout and repetition rates compared to their non-using peers.

Chebukaka (2017) conducted a study titled Drug Abuse and Its Impact on Academic Performance among Secondary School Students in Kenya to examine how substance abuse influences students' academic achievement and classroom behaviour. The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design involving a population of 320 students drawn from six public secondary schools in Nairobi County. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and school record analysis, with content validity established through expert review yielding a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.80and a test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.79, confirming the instrument's consistency Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis to determine the relationship between drug abuse and academic performance. The findings revealed that students who abused drugs such as alcohol. cannabis, and khat performed significantly lower in English and Mathematics compared to their counterparts who did not use drugs. The study concluded that drug abuse impairs students' concentration, memory, and classroom participation, leading to poor academic outcomes. Consequently, Chebukaka recommended that schools integrate counselling and awareness programmes into their academic systems to prevent substance abuse and improve learning outcomes.

Adebayo (2021) conducted a study titled Substance Abuse and Students' Academic Performance in Nigerian Secondary Schools with the primary aim of investigating the relationship between drug use and academic performance among secondary school students in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and involved a sample of 500 students randomly selected from five senior secondary schools across the state. Data were collected using a validated 25-item instrument titled "Substance Use Behaviour and Academic Achievement Scale," which attained a content validity index (CVI) of 0.85 and a Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.88, indicating strong internal consistency. Using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation and t-test through SPSS version 23, Adebayo analyzed the data to determine the nature and strength of the relationship between substance use and academic achievement. The findings revealed a statistically significant negative correlation($r=-0.67, p<0.05$) between students' level of drug use and their academic performance, indicating that students who frequently used substances such as tramadol, marijuana, and codeine recorded lower grades and demonstrated poorer classroom participation and discipline. The study concluded that drug abuse adversely affects cognitive functioning, motivation, and school engagement, thereby undermining students' overall academic achievement. Consequently. Adebayo recommended that school authorities, parents, and counsellors collaborate to implement preventive counselling programmes and drug education initiatives aimed at reducing substance abuse among adolescents.

Abdullahi and Ibrahim (2021) carried out an empirical study titled Prevalence and Causes of Drug Abuse among Secondary School Students in Sokoto Metropolis to determine the common types, causes, and educational implications of drug abuse among adolescents in secondary schools. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and targeted a population of senior secondary school students within Sokoto Metropolis. Using a stratified random sampling technique, a total of 400 SS II students were selected from ten government secondary schools as the study sample. Data were collected through a 30-item self-structured questionnaire designed to measure the frequency of drug use, perceived causes, and observed academic impacts. The instrument underwent expert validation, resulting in a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.82, while its reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha with a coefficient of 0.84, indicating high internal consistency. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and chi-square statistics to establish the relationship between drug use and selected demographic and academic variables. The findings revealed that peer influence, parental neglect, and curiosity were the major factors contributing to drug abuse among students. Furthermore, students who engaged in drug use exhibited higher rates of absenteeism, indiscipline, and low academic performance compared to non-users. The study concluded that drug abuse constitutes a significant barrier to effective learning, retention, and moral development among secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis. Abdullahi and Ibrahim recommended that schools strengthen guidance and counselling services, collaborate with parents, and engage the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in regular sensitization campaigns to reduce substance abuse among adolescents. While the study provided valuable local evidence on the causes and prevalence of drug abuse, it was largely descriptive and did not statistically examine the direct influence of drug abuse on academic performance and student retention. Therefore, the present study seeks to extend this empirical foundation by investigating not only the prevalence but also the influence of drug abuse and retention on academic performance among senior secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis, with specific implications for counselling interventions.

Ekpenyong (2022) conducted an empirical study titled Drug Abuse and Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Nigeria to examine the extent to which the type and frequency of drug use influence students' academic achievement across different regions of the country. The study employed a correlational research design, which was appropriate for determining the degree and direction of association between drug abuse and academic outcomes. A sample of 600 students was drawn from six states representing the geopolitical zones of Nigeria using a multistage sampling technique to ensure representativeness. Data were collected through a standardized instrument known as the "Drug Use Behaviour and Learning Outcomes Inventory," developed and validated by the researcher. Expert evaluation established a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.84, while internal consistency reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.89. The study utilized Pearson Product Moment Correlation and multiple regression analyses to test the relationships between variables using SPSS software. Findings indicated a strong negative correlation($r=-0.72, p<0.05$)between drug abuse and students' academic performance, revealing that students who regularly abused substances such as tramadol, codeine, and marijuana recorded significantly lower academic scores and poorer classroom participation than their non-using counterparts. Based on these results, Ekpenyong concluded that drug abuse substantially undermines students' intellectual functioning, concentration, and school engagement. The researcher recommended that schools integrate drug education and counselling services into their curriculum and that the government enforce strict regulations on the sale of psychoactive substances to minors.

Methodology

Descriptive survey was adopted for this study. The descriptive survey design was used because it is a method of research which concerns itself with the present phenomena interns of conditions, practices, belief processes, relationships or trends. The population of the study was 18,671 married Sokoto State University Lecturers with a sample of 361 obtained through Roasoft online 2026. The instrument for data collection was adapted questionnaire substance abuse. The validity index of 086 and reliability index of 0.836 was obtained. Data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation.

Mean, standard deviation and frequency counts, percentages will be used to answer research questions while. Hypotheses will be tested using t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance, using the SPSS statistical package.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One (H_{01}): There is no significance of the causes of substance abuse on academic performance of senior secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis.

Table 1: Influence of Causes of Substance Abuse on Academic Performance

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value	Decision
Causes of Substance Abuse	341	3.14	0.77			
Academic Performance (ELAT)	341	19.8	8.5	-0.542	0.000	Reject H_{01}

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Result presented in table 1 shows a strong and statistically significant negative correlation between the causes of substance abuse and academic performance ($r = -0.542$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that as the factors causing substance abuse increase, students' academic performance tends to decrease. The p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicates that the relationship is

statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H01) is rejected. This confirms that the causes of substance abuse significantly influence academic performance of senior secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis.

Hypothesis Two (H02): There is no significance effect of the preventive measures to eradicate substance abuse on academic performance of senior secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis.

Table 2: Influence of Preventive Measures on Academic Performance

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	p-value	Decision
Preventive Measures	341	3.28	0.69			
Academic Performance (ELAT)	341	19.8	8.5	0.438	0.000	Reject H_{02}

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Result presented in table 2 shows a strong and statistically significant positive correlation between preventive measures and academic performance ($r = 0.438$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that students who endorse more preventive measures tend to have better academic performance. The p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicates that the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H02) is rejected. This confirms that preventive measures to eradicate substance abuse have a significant effect on academic performance of senior secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that peer group pressure (mean = 3.42) and social acceptance and experimentation (mean = 3.38) are the most significant causes of substance abuse among senior secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis. This indicates that students are primarily influenced by their peers and the desire to be accepted by their social groups. This finding is consistent with the Social Development Theory (Hawkins & Weis, 2012), which suggests that individuals develop bonds to groups and organizations when they experience opportunities for involvement. Youth tend to form groups that engage in similar activities; those using drugs will be able to identify with each other since they are more comfortable with the same group.

The findings revealed that school-based drug education programs (91.5%), peer education and counselling (87.4%), and integration of drug education into curriculum (86.2%) are the most endorsed preventive measures among students. This indicates that students recognize the importance of educational institutions in preventing substance abuse. The strong support for peer education and counselling aligns with the Social Development Theory's emphasis on peer influence in shaping behaviour. The findings are consistent with the recommendations of Obiechina and Isiguzo (2016), who identified school drug intervention, peer education, family intervention, NGO involvement, and health and social marketing as key strategies for curbing drug abuse. Botvin (2019) noted that educational programs focusing on knowledge about addictive drugs and their adverse effects, or on improvement skills such as decision-making and resisting peer pressure, play an important role in decreasing the prevalence of drug abuse among adolescents. The high endorsement of counselling services in schools (84.8%) aligns with the findings of Burnhams, Myers, and Parry (2019), who reported that prevention programs in South African learning institutions mostly take the form of educational programs aiming to raise awareness by providing knowledge about drug abuse and their consequences. The endorsement of religious and moral instruction (82.4%) reflects the cultural and religious context of Sokoto Metropolis, where religious values are important in shaping behaviour. The positive correlation

between preventive measures and academic performance ($r = 0.438$, $p < 0.01$) confirms that students who endorse more preventive measures tend to have better academic performance. This suggests that awareness of and support for preventive measures may contribute to better academic outcomes. The findings revealed that cigarettes/tobacco (54.8%), alcohol (45.7%), cannabis (39.3%), and inhalants (32.8%) are the most commonly abused substances among senior secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis. This indicates that substance abuse is a significant problem among students, with a wide range of substances being used. The prevalence of cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption aligns with the classification of drugs by the NACADA (2014), which identified tobacco and alcohol as legal drugs that are commonly abused by young adults. The relatively high prevalence of cannabis use (39.3%) is concerning, as it is an illegal substance with significant negative effects on cognitive functioning and academic performance. This is consistent with Odejide (2019), who noted that marijuana was introduced to Nigeria by soldiers returning from Second World War and is one of the drugs commonly abused in Nigeria, especially by adolescents.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Students should learn to resist peer pressure and make independent decisions about substance use. They should seek positive peer groups that do not engage in substance abuse.
2. Parents should provide guidance and supervision to their children, monitoring their activities and knowing their friends. Parental involvement is crucial in preventing substance abuse.
3. Schools should integrate drug education into the curriculum, providing students with information about the dangers of substance abuse and skills to resist peer pressure.
4. The government should enforce laws against the sale and use of illicit substances, particularly those that are accessible to minors. This includes crackdowns on the sale of prescription drugs without prescription.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

Substance abuse is a significant problem among senior secondary school students in Sokoto Metropolis: The high prevalence of substance abuse, particularly cigarettes, alcohol, cannabis, and inhalants, indicates that substance abuse is a serious issue affecting adolescents in Sokoto Metropolis. The finding that 54.8% of students use cigarettes and 45.7% consume alcohol is alarming and requires urgent intervention. Peer pressure is the most significant cause of substance abuse: The study confirms that peer group pressure and the desire for social acceptance are the primary drivers of substance abuse among students. This highlights the importance of peer influence in shaping adolescent behaviour and the need for peer-based interventions.

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