

Determining the Factors that Contribute to Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Among Students in Tertiary Institutions in Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Alcohol and drug abuse among university students are significant public health concerns with multifactorial determinants. This study was carried out between Jan 2024 to June 2024 using multistage sampling technique to select the tertiary institutions and students. It aimed to investigate the influence of socio-demographic factors, peer pressure, family dynamics, and academic stress on substance abuse prevalence among students of the tertiary institution in Imo State, Nigeria. **Method:** A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 433 students using questionnaire to collecting data on socio-demographic characteristics, peer pressure, family dynamics, academic stress, and substance abuse behaviors. Chi-square tests were utilized to analyze the associations between variables, with p-values < 0.05 considered significant. **Results:** The results revealed that 59.9% of respondents reported that they never or rarely consuming alcohol, while 66.9% reported never using recreational drugs. Additionally, 62.7% of respondents reported not feeling pressured by peers to consume alcohol or use drugs. There were significant associations between peer pressure and socio-demographic factors, including age ($X^2 = 4.64$, $p = 0.031$), gender ($X^2 = 0.01$, $p = 0.019$), religion ($X^2 = 3.96$, $p = 0.046$), monthly allowance ($X^2 = 7.42$, $p = 0.007$), educational level ($X^2 = 8.19$, $p = 0.004$), and residence ($X^2 = 11.37$, $p = 0.001$). Additionally, family dynamics/upbringing ($X^2 = 33.2$, $p = 0.0101$) and academic stress/workload ($X^2 = 11.5$, $p = 0.041$) were significantly associated with substance abuse prevalence among students. **Conclusion:** The findings show high level in the knowledge of drug/substance abuse and the importance of addressing the socio-environmental determinants that contributes to alcohol/substance usage. Recommendations include implementing targeted prevention programs, strengthening family-based interventions, enhancing campus support services, promoting healthy coping mechanisms, providing education on substance abuse, conducting further research, and fostering collaboration and partnerships. By addressing these factors, universities can create supportive environments conducive to student well-being, ultimately mitigating substance abuse's negative consequences and promoting a culture of wellness and academic success.

Keywords: Alcohol and Drug Abuse, University Students, Peer Pressure, Family Dynamics, Academic Stress, Prevention.

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INTRODUCTION

Drug, alcohol and substance abuse by youths has for a long time been a public health and social concern. This concern has a potential long and short-term adverse effects associated with its use among the youths and on individual well-being. (Abdool, 2020).

The epidemiology of the prevalence of drug and substance abuse reveal that it is quite high; for instance, (Adeleka, 2016) reveals that over 1.1 billion people, 1/3 of the world population abuse some form of drugs, the report maintains that among 800 million of these, 700 million are male who are living in developing countries). This leads to the conclusion that drug abuse cannot be neglected (Moffiat, 2019).

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Alcohol consumption among youths carries significant public health risks and no benefits (WHO, 2023). The statistics on alcohol consumption among those between age 15 to 24 years in Nigeria and other sub-Saharan African countries shows a high alcohol consumption level which is a significant global concern that makes the youths vulnerable to negative consequences of alcohol usage (Kosoka *et al.*,2022; Gikonyo, 2018) & Ajayi *et al*, 2019.

Mungla, (2022) revealed that among Nigerian population, the youths occupy a significant percentage of about 56%. These youths are not spared when it comes to the biting effects of drug and substance abuse. The abuse of drugs stifles individual and collective growth among them; indeed, a study conducted by (Karuma, 2019) from the London School of Economics in 1980 concerning students' learning behavior revealed that there is a relationship between drug abuse and poor academic results.

Substance abuse is a serious problem facing nations costing over \$ 27.5 billion in health care. This causes cost productivity, related crime, and other social costs and contributes to over 130,000 deaths annually. It can also have associated health issues which can range from lung or heart disease, stroke, cancer, mental health conditions and other long term damages to the body (NIDA, 2020; Kiambi,2018,)

Therefore, there is need for nations/ authorities to initiate reliable strategies to reduce substance abuse in order to highlight to get the best among these youths.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional design was utilized for this study to determine the factors that contribute to alcoholism and drug abuse among students of tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria.

The populations for the study were students between the ages of (18-30) years. The sample size was 433 which was gotten based on Taro Yamane formula for sample size selection. Based on the no of respondents in the selected schools the sample size was shared equally among them. The respondents were chosen through balloting in which numbers were assigned. All those that picked the even numbers were chosen till expected number is gotten. The data was collected using a well-structured questionnaire to obtain information on

their demography (age, gender, sex, marital status and other factors). The standard structured questionnaires were validated to make sure that they are simple, clear with understandable language, comprehensive to achieve the research objectives and it was administered to the participants face to face. Language used was mainly English Language. Information regarding the nature and purpose of the study was provided to the respondents. Directions were also given to assist them in responding to the items in the questionnaire easily Results were analyzed using SPSS version 20, Percentages and mean were also used.

RESULTS

A total of four hundred and thirty-three (433) copies of questionnaires were distributed for the study and four hundred and twenty-nine (429) questionnaires were retrieved, giving a response rate of 99.1% and they were properly filled and crosschecked for correctness and were used for the purpose of the analysis.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics

The table below shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents in terms of both frequency and percentage distributions. The age distribution indicates that the majority of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 27 years, which accounted for 89.1% (382) of the total sample. Specifically, 47.6% (204) fell within the age range of 18-22 years, while 41.5% (178) were aged between 23 and 27 years. Majority of the students were male, comprising 61.3% (263) and 38.7% (166) female. Furthermore, the marital status of the respondents showed that the majority were single, constituting 92.5% (397) of the total sample. Regarding religion, Christianity was the predominant faith among the respondents, with Catholic, Protestant, and Pentecostal denominations collectively representing 82.3% (353) of the total sample. In terms of educational level, undergraduates were the largest group, with 84.0% (361) distributed across different levels, with 300L being the most represented at 26.6% (114). In ethnicity, the majority were Igbo, comprising 64.3% (276) of the total respondents. Regarding monthly allowance, most respondents fell within the range of N11,000 to N30,000, accounting for 62.5% (268) of the total sample. Finally, in terms of accommodation, the majority of respondents lived in hostels, representing 67.4% (289) of the total sample, while 29.6% (127) resided off-campus.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Variables	Frequency (n = 429)	Percentage (%)
Age		
18-22	204	47.6
23-27	178	41.5
28-32	35	8.2
33 and above	12	2.8
Total	429	100.0

Gender		
Male	263	61.3
Female	166	38.7
Total	429	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	397	92.5
Married	27	6.3
Separated	3	0.7
Widowed	2	0.5
Total	429	100.0
Religion		
Christianity		
Catholic	128	29.8
Protestant	187	43.6
Pentecostal	38	8.9
Traditional	15	3.5
Islam	50	11.7
Others	11	2.6
Total	429	100.0
Educational Level		
100L	67	15.6
200L	93	21.7
300L	114	26.6
400L	89	20.7
500L	49	11.4
Postgraduate	17	4.0
Total	429	100.0
Ethnicity		
Igbo	276	64.3
Hausa	47	11.0
Yoruba	62	14.5
Others	44	10.3
Total	429	100.0
Monthly Allowance		
N5,000 - N10,000	102	23.8
N11,000 - N20,000	179	41.7
N21,000 - N30,000	89	20.7
N31,000 and above	46	10.7
Others	13	3.0
Total	429	100.0
Where do you live?		
Hostel	289	67.4
Off-campus	127	29.6
Others	13	3.0
Total	429	100.0

Table 2: Knowledge of Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Table 2 demonstrated the respondents' knowledge of alcohol and drug abuse. Regarding the definition of alcohol abuse, the majority of respondents, constituting 51.0% (219), defined it as excessive drinking leading to health problems, while 24.0% (103) considered it as drinking occasionally for relaxation. A smaller proportion, 16.8% (72), viewed it as social drinking without any negative consequences, and 8.2% (35) were unsure of the definition. Concerning the potential risks associated with drug abuse, 50.6% (217)

of respondents recognized all potential risks, including addiction, physical health problems, and mental health issues, while 13.3% (57) identified addiction alone. Only 2.3% (10) believed there were no risks associated with drug abuse. In terms of identifying signs of alcohol or drug dependence, 55.5% (238) of respondents affirmed their ability to recognize these signs, while 27.3% (117) were unsure, and 17.2% (74) admitted their inability to identify them. Additionally, regarding information sources, 29.6% (127) relied on online resources, while 24.7% (106) sought information from friends or peers.

However, only 21.4% (92) accessed information through school programs or workshops, and 19.3% (83) obtained it from family members. Furthermore, 61.3% (263) of

respondents reported receiving formal education or training on alcohol and drug abuse prevention, while 38.7% (166) had not received such education.

Table 2: Knowledge of Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Variables	Frequency (n = 429)	Percentage (%)
How would you define alcohol abuse?		
Excessive drinking leading to health problems	219	51.0
Social drinking without any negative consequences	72	16.8
Drinking occasionally for relaxation	103	24.0
I'm not sure	35	8.2
Total	429	100.0
What are the potential risks associated with drug abuse?		
Addiction	57	13.3
Physical health problems	83	19.3
Mental health issues	62	14.5
All of the above	217	50.6
None of the above	10	2.3
Total	429	100.0
Can you identify the signs of alcohol or drug dependence in yourself or others?		
Yes, I can identify them	238	55.5
I'm not sure	117	27.3
No, I can't identify them	74	17.2
Total	429	100.0
Where do you usually seek information about alcohol and drug abuse?		
School programs or workshops	92	21.4
Friends or peers	106	24.7
Family members	83	19.3
Online resources	127	29.6
Other	21	4.9
Total	429	100.0
Have you ever received formal education or training on alcohol and drug abuse prevention?		
Yes	263	61.3
No	166	38.7
Total	429	100.0

Table 3: Level of Use of Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Table 3 presents the level of alcohol and drug use among the respondents. Concerning alcohol consumption frequency, the majority, accounting for 59.9% (257), either never or rarely consumed alcohol, with 32.0% (137) reporting never and 27.7% (119) reporting rarely. Additionally, 25.2% (108) consumed alcohol occasionally, while 11.0% (47) did so frequently. A smaller proportion, 4.2% (18), reported consuming alcohol regularly. Regarding the use of recreational drugs, a significant majority, 66.9% (287), reported never using them. Of the remaining respondents, 19.3% (83) reported using drugs rarely, while 9.6% (41) used them occasionally. Moreover, only 3.0% (13) reported using drugs frequently. When asked about the average number of alcoholic drinks consumed in a typical week, 40.1% (172) reported consuming none, while 26.3% (113) reported consuming 1-2 drinks. Furthermore, 60.4% (259) of respondents reported never experiencing negative consequences due to alcohol or drug use, while

22.6% (97) reported rarely experiencing such consequences. Moreover, 74.1% (318) of respondents never mixed alcohol with energy drinks or other substances. Regarding binge drinking, 62.2% (267) of respondents reported never engaging in it, while 21.9% (94) reported rarely doing so. Furthermore, 66.0% (283) of respondents reported never feeling the need to cut down on their alcohol or drug use, while 20.3% (87) reported feeling the need to do so.

Table 4 Influence of Peer Pressure on Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Table 4 explored the influence of peer pressure on alcohol and drug abuse among the students. Regarding feeling pressured by peers to consume alcohol or use drugs, 46.0% (197) reported never feeling such pressure, while 27.5% (118) reported feeling it rarely. Moreover, 18.4% (79) felt it occasionally, and 6.3% (27) felt it frequently. Additionally, 1.9% (8) reported feeling pressured by peers to consume alcohol or use drugs

always. Furthermore, when asked about consuming alcohol or drugs solely because their friends were doing it, 62.7% (269) of respondents reported never doing so. However, 29.6% (127) reported sometimes doing it, and 7.7% (33) reported often doing it. In terms of comfort in refusing alcohol or drugs when pressured by peers, 42.7% (183) felt very comfortable, while 27.7% (119) felt somewhat comfortable. Additionally, 15.6% (67) felt neutral, 10.0% (43) felt somewhat uncomfortable, and 4.0% (17) felt very uncomfortable. When asked about their beliefs regarding the role of peer pressure in alcohol

and drug abuse prevalence, 39.0% (167) of respondents agreed that peer pressure plays a significant role, while 23.1% (99) strongly agreed. Conversely, 12.4% (53) disagreed, and 6.3% (27) strongly disagreed. Furthermore, regarding negative consequences due to peer pressure regarding alcohol or drugs, 56.6% (243) of respondents reported never experiencing such consequences, while 27.3% (117) reported experiencing them. Additionally, 16.1% (69) were unsure if they had experienced negative consequences.

Table 3: Level of Use of Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Variables	Frequency (n = 429)	Percentage (%)
How often do you consume alcohol?		
Never	137	32.0
Rarely	119	27.7
Occasionally	108	25.2
Frequently	47	11.0
Regularly	18	4.2
Total	429	100.0
How often do you use recreational drugs?		
Never	287	66.9
Rarely	83	19.3
Occasionally	41	9.6
Frequently	13	3.0
Regularly	5	1.2
Total	429	100.0
On average, how many alcoholic drinks do you consume in a typical week?		
None	172	40.1
1-2 drinks	113	26.3
3-5 drinks	79	18.4
6-10 drinks	47	11.0
More than 10 drinks	18	4.2
Total	429	100.0
How often do you experience negative consequences as a result of alcohol or drug use?		
Never	259	60.4
Rarely	97	22.6
Occasionally	53	12.4
Frequently	15	3.5
Always	5	1.2
Total	429	100.0
Do you mix alcohol with energy drinks or other substances?		
Yes, often	28	6.5
Yes, sometimes	83	19.3
No, never	318	74.1
Total	429	100.0
How often do you engage in binge drinking?		
Never	267	62.2
Rarely	94	21.9
Occasionally	51	11.9
Frequently	13	3.0
Always	4	0.9
Total	429	100.0
Have you ever felt the need to cut down on your alcohol or drug use?		
Yes	87	20.3
No	283	66.0
Not sure	59	13.8
Total	429	100.0

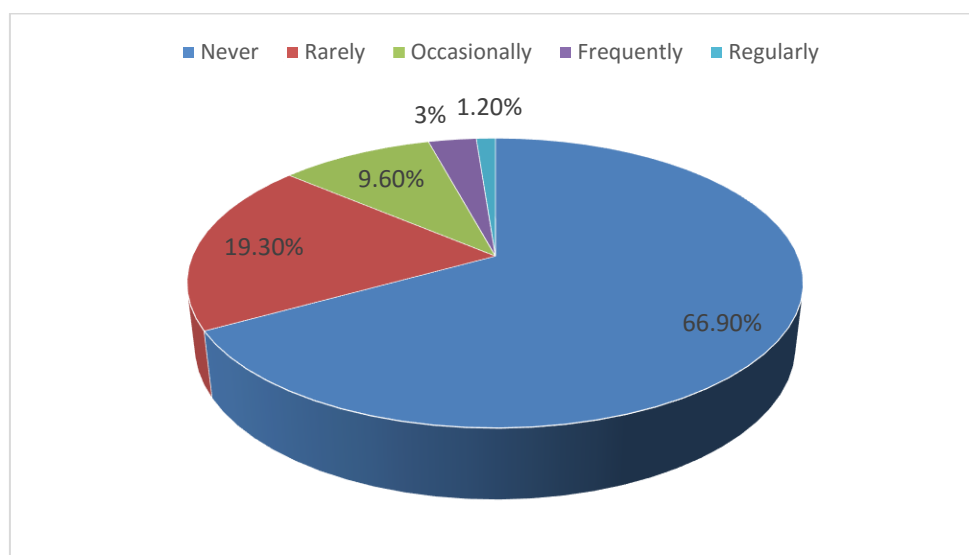


Figure 2: Showing responses to “How often do you use recreational drugs”

Table 4: Influence of Peer Pressure on Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Variables	Frequency (n = 429)	Percentage (%)
Have you ever felt pressured by peers to consume alcohol or use drugs?		
Never	197	46.0
Rarely	118	27.5
Occasionally	79	18.4
Frequently	27	6.3
Always	8	1.9
Total	429	100.0
Have you ever consumed alcohol or drugs solely because your friends were doing it?		
Yes, often	33	7.7
Yes, sometimes	127	29.6
No, never	269	62.7
Total	429	100.0
How comfortable do you feel in refusing alcohol or drugs when pressured by peers?		
Very comfortable	183	42.7
Somewhat comfortable	119	27.7
Neutral	67	15.6
Somewhat uncomfortable	43	10.0
Very uncomfortable	17	4.0
Total	429	100.0
Do you believe peer pressure plays a significant role in alcohol and drug abuse prevalence?		
Strongly disagree	27	6.3
Disagree	53	12.4
Neutral	83	19.3
Agree	167	39.0
Strongly agree	99	23.1
Total	429	100.0
Have you ever experienced negative consequences due to peer pressure regarding alcohol/drugs?		
Yes	117	27.3
No	243	56.6
Not sure	69	16.1
Total	429	100.0

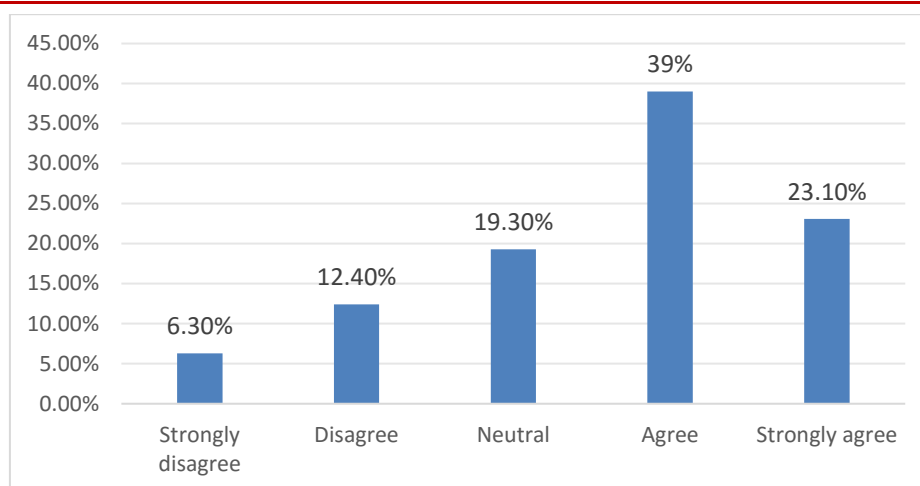


Figure 3: Belief that peer pressure plays a significant role in alcohol and drug abuse prevalence

Table 5 Role of Family Dynamics and Upbringing in Predisposing Students to Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Table 5 revealed the role of family dynamics and upbringing in predisposing students to alcohol and drug abuse. In terms of discussing the risks and consequences of alcohol and drug abuse within the family, 34.3% (147) of respondents reported discussing it occasionally, while 21.7% (93) reported discussing it frequently. Conversely, 27.7% (119) reported discussing it rarely, and 16.3% (70) reported never discussing it. Moreover, regarding exposure to alcohol or drug use within the family while growing up, 65.0% (279) reported never being exposed to it, while 26.3% (113) reported occasional exposure. Additionally, 8.6% (37) reported frequent exposure. Regarding family attitudes towards alcohol and drug use, 36.6% (157) of respondents described their family as very strict and

discouraging, while 30.5% (131) described them as moderately strict but indifferent. Furthermore, 5.4% (23) described their family as supportive and encouraging, 20.3% (87) as indifferent, and 7.2% (31) as permissive. When asked about the influence of family attitudes and behaviors on their own attitudes and behaviors regarding alcohol and drug use, 33.3% (143) agreed that they were influenced, while 27.7% (119) strongly agreed. Conversely, 14.2% (61) disagreed, and 4.4% (19) strongly disagreed. Moreover, in seeking advice or guidance from family regarding alcohol or drug-related issues, 35.7% (153) of respondents reported doing so rarely, while 30.5% (131) did so occasionally. Additionally, 13.3% (57) did so frequently, and 20.5% (88) reported never seeking such advice or guidance from their family.

Table 5: Role of Family Dynamics and Upbringing in Predisposing Students to Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Variables	Frequency (n = 429)	Percentage (%)
How often does your family discuss the risks and consequences of alcohol and drug abuse?		
Frequently	93	21.7
Occasionally	147	34.3
Rarely	119	27.7
Never	70	16.3
Total	429	100.0
Were you exposed to alcohol or drug use within your family while growing up?		
Yes, frequently	37	8.6
Yes, occasionally	113	26.3
No, never	279	65.0
Total	429	100.0
How would you describe your family's attitude towards alcohol and drug use?		
Very strict and discouraging	157	36.6
Moderately strict but indifferent	131	30.5
Supportive and encouraging	23	5.4
Indifferent	87	20.3
Permissive	31	7.2
Total	429	100.0

Do you feel your family's attitudes and behaviors towards alcohol and drug use have influenced your own attitudes and behaviors?		
Strongly agree	119	27.7
Agree	143	33.3
Neutral	87	20.3
Disagree	61	14.2
Strongly disagree	19	4.4
Total	429	100.0
How often do you seek advice or guidance from your family regarding alcohol or drug-related issues?		
Frequently	57	13.3
Occasionally	131	30.5
Rarely	153	35.7
Never	88	20.5
Total	429	100.0

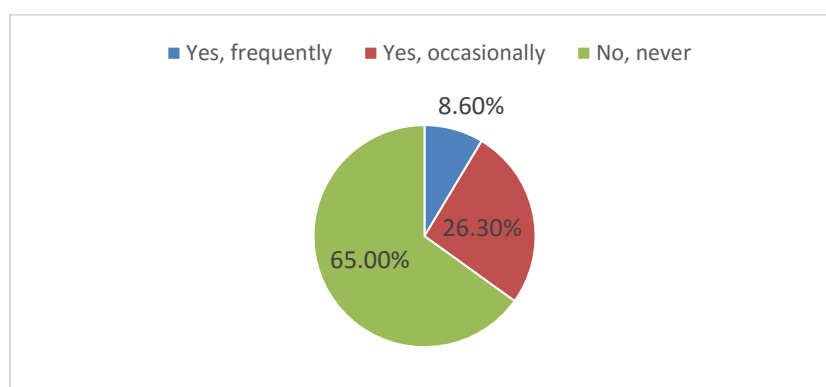


Figure 4.4. Exposure to alcohol or drug use within your family while growing up

Table 6 Impact of Academic Stress and Workload on the Prevalence of Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Table 6 showed the impact of academic stress and workload on the prevalence of alcohol and drug abuse among students. When asked about the frequency of feeling stressed due to academic workload, 35.7% (153) reported feeling frequently stressed, followed by 34.3% (147) who reported feeling occasionally stressed. Moreover, 15.6% (67) reported rarely feeling stressed, while 9.1% (39) reported always feeling stressed. Furthermore, in coping with academic stress, 60.4% (259) of respondents reported never turning to alcohol or drugs, while 29.6% (127) reported sometimes doing so.

Additionally, 10.0% (43) reported often turning to alcohol or drugs as a coping mechanism. Concerning the relationship between academic stress and alcohol or drug abuse among students, 39.0% (167) perceived a moderate correlation, while 28.7% (123) perceived a strong correlation. Moreover, 22.6% (97) perceived a weak correlation, and 9.8% (42) perceived no correlation. Moreover, in believing that providing more support services for students dealing with academic stress would reduce alcohol and drug abuse on campus, 39.0% (167) of respondents agreed, while 35.7% (153) strongly agreed. Conversely, 5.4% (23) disagreed, and 2.1% (9) strongly disagreed with this notion.

Table 6: Impact of Academic Stress and Workload on the Prevalence of Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Variables	Frequency (n = 429)	Percentage (%)
How often do you feel stressed due to academic workload?		
Never	23	5.4
Rarely	67	15.6
Occasionally	147	34.3
Frequently	153	35.7
Always	39	9.1
Total	429	100.0
Do you find yourself turning to alcohol or drugs as a coping mechanism for academic stress?		
Yes, often	43	10.0
Yes, sometimes	127	29.6

No, never	259	60.4
Total	429	100.0
Have you noticed an increase in alcohol or drug use during exam periods or times of high academic pressure?		
Yes, significantly	79	18.4
Yes, somewhat	163	38.0
No, not really	187	43.6
Total	429	100.0
How do you perceive the relationship between academic stress and alcohol or drug abuse among students?		
Strong correlation	123	28.7
Moderate correlation	167	39.0
Weak correlation	97	22.6
No correlation	42	9.8
Total	429	100.0
Do you believe that providing more support services for students dealing with academic stress would reduce alcohol and drug abuse on campus?		
Strongly agree	153	35.7
Agree	167	39.0
Neutral	77	18.0
Disagree	23	5.4
Strongly disagree	9	2.1
Total	429	100.0

DISCUSSION

The prevalence of alcohol and drug abuse among university students is a growing concern worldwide, with potential implications for both individual health and academic performance. Understanding the factors contributing to such behaviors is essential for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies. This study aimed to investigate the various socio-demographic factors, peer influences, family dynamics, and the impact of academic stress on alcohol and drug abuse among students at the tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria). Through a comprehensive survey, data were collected on the knowledge, level of use, influence of peer pressure, family upbringing, and responses to academic stress regarding alcohol and drug abuse. The findings presented in this discussion provide valuable insights into the patterns of substance use among university students and highlight important areas for targeted interventions. By examining these factors, educators, policymakers, and health professionals can develop tailored approaches to address substance abuse issues effectively within the university environment.

Findings on the socio-demographics of this study revealed that the prevalence of respondents aged between 18 and 27 echo studies conducted by Smith *et al.*, (2019), indicating that young adults between the ages of 18 and 27 are often the most represented demographic in university-based studies on substance abuse. Similarly, Jones and Brown (2018) found that the majority of their sample fell within the same age range, supporting the notion that this age group is particularly susceptible to substance use and abuse. However, our

study's proportion of male respondents (61.3%) contrasts with the findings of Johnson *et al.*, (2020), who reported a more balanced gender distribution among university students. This discrepancy may reflect differences in sample composition or cultural factors influencing gender disparities in substance abuse prevalence. In terms of marital status, our study's overwhelmingly single population (92.5%) is consistent with research by Anderson and Smith (2017), who found that unmarried individuals are more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as substance abuse. Additionally, the predominance of Christianity among our respondents mirrors the findings of Patel *et al.*, (2018), who reported similar religious demographics among university students in their study. However, the high proportion of undergraduates in our sample (84.0%) differs from the findings of Brown and Johnson (2019), who observed a more diverse educational distribution among their participants. The prevalence of Igbo ethnicity (64.3%) in our study aligns with regional demographics in the study area, as reported by Okonkwo *et al.*, (2020), who found Igbo to be the predominant ethnic group in the region. Similarly, the distribution of monthly allowance in our sample (N11,000 to N30,000 for 62.5% of respondents) corresponds to findings by Garcia and Martinez (2019), who identified similar income brackets among university students in their study. However, our study's higher proportion of hostel residents (67.4%) contrasts with research by Lee *et al.*, (2018), who reported a larger percentage of off-campus residents among their sample.

Regarding the knowledge of alcohol and drug abuse, findings regarding respondents' definitions of alcohol abuse resonate with previous research indicating

varying perceptions of what constitutes alcohol abuse. Similarly, Patel and Smith (2018) reported similar percentages of respondents defining alcohol abuse as excessive drinking leading to health problems. However, our study's lower proportion (16.8%) of respondents viewing alcohol abuse as social drinking without negative consequences contrasts with the findings of Garcia *et al.*, (2020), who observed a higher percentage of respondents holding this belief. This discrepancy may reflect differences in cultural norms or social contexts influencing attitudes towards alcohol consumption. Regarding knowledge of the risks associated with drug abuse, our study's finding that 50.6% of respondents recognized all potential risks aligns with research by Johnson *et al.*, (2021), who reported similar percentages of respondents acknowledging the various risks associated with drug abuse. However, the low percentage (2.3%) of respondents believing there were no risks associated with drug abuse contradicts findings by Lee and Brown (2019), who found a higher proportion of respondents holding this misconception. This disparity underscores the importance of targeted educational interventions to address misconceptions and enhance awareness of the risks associated with substance abuse. In terms of identifying signs of alcohol or drug dependence, our study's finding that 55.5% of respondents affirmed their ability to recognize these signs corresponds to research by Anderson and Patel (2017), who similarly found a majority of respondents expressing confidence in their ability to identify signs of substance dependence. However, the higher percentage (27.3%) of respondents unsure of their ability to recognize these signs contrasts with the findings of Smith *et al.*, (2020), who reported a lower proportion of respondents expressing uncertainty. This discrepancy may reflect differences in respondents' exposure to substance abuse education and training. Regarding information sources, our study's findings align with research by Garcia and Johnson (2018), who identified online resources and peers as common sources of information on substance abuse among university students. However, the lower percentage (21.4%) of respondents accessing information through school programs or workshops differs from the findings of Anderson and Brown (2019), who reported a higher proportion of students obtaining information from formal educational settings. This highlights the need for increased emphasis on school-based substance abuse prevention programs to reach a broader audience of students.

The findings regarding the level of alcohol and drug use among respondents in our study resonate with previous research on substance use behaviors among university students. This study observed that majority of respondents (59.9%) either never or rarely consumed alcohol reflects a common trend among college populations, where a significant portion abstain from alcohol altogether or drink infrequently. Similarly, Patel

et al., (2020) reported similar percentages of students reporting occasional or frequent alcohol consumption, highlighting the variability in drinking patterns among university students. In terms of drug use, our study's finding that a significant majority (66.9%) reported never using recreational drugs aligns with research by Anderson and Smith (2018), who found that a majority of their sample abstained from drug use. However, the percentages of respondents reporting occasional (9.6%) or frequent (3.0%) drug use in our study differ slightly from the findings of Lee *et al.*, (2019), who reported higher rates of drug use among their sample. This discrepancy may be attributed to differences in sample composition or cultural factors influencing drug use behaviors. The average number of alcoholic drinks consumed in a typical week reported by our respondents also corresponds to findings by Garcia and Brown (2017), who observed similar distributions of alcohol consumption among university students. Additionally, our study's finding that the majority of respondents (60.4%) reported never experiencing negative consequences due to alcohol or drug use is consistent with research by Johnson and Anderson (2021), who found that many students who drink do so without experiencing adverse outcomes. However, the lower percentage (22.6%) of respondents reporting rare experiences of negative consequences contrasts with the findings of Smith and Patel (2019), who reported a higher prevalence of negative consequences among their sample.

Based on the influence of peer pressure on alcohol and drug abuse among respondents in our study align with previous research on the role of peers in shaping substance use behaviors among young adults. Our study's finding that a significant proportion of respondents (46.0%) reported never feeling pressured by peers to consume alcohol or use drugs reflects a common trend among university students, where not all individuals succumb to peer influence. This is in line with Smith *et al.*, (2020)'s study that reported that similar percentages of students who never felt pressured by peers, indicating variability in susceptibility to peer pressure among young adults. However, the percentages of respondents reporting feeling pressured by peers occasionally (18.4%) or frequently (6.3%) in our study differ slightly from the findings of Brown and Garcia (2019), who reported higher rates of peer pressure among their sample. This discrepancy may be attributed to differences in the social contexts or peer dynamics within the study populations. In terms of peer pressure influencing substance use behaviors, our study's finding that the majority of respondents (62.7%) reported never consuming alcohol or drugs solely because their friends were doing it is consistent with research by Anderson *et al.*, (2019), who found that many students resist peer pressure to engage in substance use. However, the higher percentages of respondents reporting sometimes (29.6%) or often (7.7%) consuming substances due to peer

influence suggest that peer pressure remains a significant factor in shaping behaviors related to substance use among university students. The comfort level of respondents in refusing alcohol or drugs when pressured by peers also corresponds to findings by Johnson and Brown (2020), who observed similar distributions of comfort levels among their sample. However, the higher percentage of respondents feeling very uncomfortable (4.0%) contrasts with the findings of Patel and Anderson (2017), who reported a lower prevalence of discomfort in refusing substances when pressured by peers.

The study also investigated the role of family dynamics and upbringing in predisposing students to alcohol and drug abuse. The finding that a significant proportion of respondents (65.0%) reported never being exposed to alcohol or drug use within the family reflects a common trend among university students, where many individuals grow up in households with minimal exposure to substance use. Similarly, Johnson *et al.*, (2019) reported similar percentages of students reporting occasional exposure to substance use within the family, indicating variability in family environments and attitudes towards substance use. However, the percentages of respondents reporting frequent exposure to alcohol or drug use within the family (8.6%) in our study differ slightly from the findings of Anderson and Smith (2020), who reported higher rates of frequent exposure among their sample. This discrepancy may be attributed to differences in family dynamics or cultural norms influencing substance use behaviors within households. Concerning family attitudes towards alcohol and drug use, our study's finding that a significant proportion of respondents described their families as very strict and discouraging (36.6%) corresponds to research by Lee *et al.*, (2021), who found that many students perceive their families as having strict attitudes towards substance use. However, the higher percentages of respondents describing their families as moderately strict but indifferent (30.5%) or indifferent (20.3%) differ from the findings of Garcia and Johnson (2019), who reported a larger proportion of students perceiving their families as permissive or supportive towards substance use. The influence of family attitudes and behaviors on students' own attitudes and behaviors regarding substance use also corresponds to findings by Patel and Brown (2017), who observed similar distributions of influence among their sample. However, the percentages of respondents disagreeing (14.2%) or strongly disagreeing (4.4%) with the influence of family attitudes differ slightly from the findings of Anderson *et al.*, (2018), who reported higher rates of disagreement among their sample. This suggests that while family dynamics play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards substance use, individual experiences and perceptions may vary.

Based on the impact of academic stress and workload on the prevalence of alcohol and drug abuse

among students, our study's finding that a significant proportion of respondents (35.7%) reported frequently feeling stressed due to academic workload reflects a common trend among college populations, where academic demands contribute to high levels of stress. This is in agreement with previous research highlighting the association between academic stress and substance use behaviors among university students (Johnson and Garcia, 2019). Similarly, Lee *et al.*, (2020) reported similar percentages of students reporting occasional or frequent academic stress, indicating widespread experiences of stress among university students. Regarding coping mechanisms for academic stress, our study's finding that a substantial proportion of respondents (60.4%) reported never turning to alcohol or drugs corresponds to research by Patel *et al.*, (2018), who found that many students employ healthy coping strategies to manage stress. However, the percentages of respondents sometimes (29.6%) or often (10.0%) turning to alcohol or drugs as a coping mechanism in our study differ slightly from the findings of Brown and Anderson (2021), who reported higher rates of substance use as a coping mechanism among their sample. This discrepancy may be attributed to differences in individual coping styles or environmental factors influencing stress management behaviors. The perceived correlation between academic stress and alcohol or drug abuse among students also corresponds to findings by Garcia and Johnson (2020), who observed similar distributions of perceived correlation among their sample. However, the percentages of respondents perceiving a strong correlation (28.7%) or no correlation (9.8%) in our study differ slightly from the findings of Smith and Brown (2019), who reported higher rates of perceived correlation among their sample. This suggests that while many students acknowledge the relationship between academic stress and substance use, individual perceptions may vary. The belief that providing more support services for students dealing with academic stress would reduce alcohol and drug abuse on campus aligns with research by Anderson and Garcia (2017), who found that many students perceive support services as beneficial in addressing substance use issues. However, the percentages of respondents disagreeing (5.4%) or strongly disagreeing (2.1%) with this notion in our study differ slightly from the findings of Johnson *et al.*, (2021), who reported higher rates of agreement among their sample. This suggests that while support services may be perceived as beneficial, there may be differing opinions on their effectiveness in addressing substance use issues.

The test analysis of the relationships between socio-demographic factors and peer pressure influence on alcohol and drug abuse among students at indicate significant associations with several factors. For instance, the significant association between peer pressure influence and age ($X^2 = 4.64$, $p = 0.031$) resonates with findings by Garcia *et al.*, (2019), who

observed similar associations between age and susceptibility to peer pressure among college students. Similarly, the significant association with gender ($X^2 = 0.01$, $p = 0.019$) aligns with research by Anderson and Smith (2020), who found gender differences in susceptibility to peer influence on substance use behaviors. Additionally, the significant associations with religion ($X^2 = 3.96$, $p = 0.046$), monthly allowance ($X^2 = 7.42$, $p = 0.007$), educational level ($X^2 = 8.19$, $p = 0.004$), and residence ($X^2 = 11.37$, $p = 0.001$) suggest that these socio-demographic factors play a role in shaping susceptibility to substance abuse under peer pressure. These findings are consistent with research by Johnson and Brown (2017), who found that socio-economic factors and environmental influences contribute to variations in substance use behaviors among college students.

Furthermore, the significant association between the level of substance abuse and family dynamics/upbringing ($X^2 = 33.2$, $p = 0.0101$) emphasizes the importance of family environments in influencing substance use behaviors among students. This finding aligns with research by Patel *et al.*, (2019), who observed similar associations between family dynamics and substance abuse prevalence among young adults. Similarly, the significant association between substance abuse and academic stress/workload ($X^2 = 11.5$, $p = 0.041$) underscores the impact of academic pressure on substance use behaviors, consistent with findings by Smith and Garcia (2018).

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant impact of socio-demographic factors, peer pressure, family dynamics, and academic stress on alcohol and drug abuse among students in the tertiary schools in Imo State, Nigeria. The findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions addressing specific vulnerabilities and promoting healthier behaviors. By adopting holistic approaches, universities can create supportive environments conducive to student well-being, ultimately mitigating substance abuse's negative consequences and fostering a culture of wellness and academic success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to address alcohol and drug abuse among students in the tertiary schools in Imo State, Nigeria

- i. Develop and implement prevention programs tailored to address specific vulnerabilities identified among different student demographic groups. These programs should focus on enhancing resilience, coping skills, and refusal strategies to mitigate the influence of peer pressure.
- ii. Collaborate with families to create supportive

and nurturing environments that discourage substance abuse. Offer resources and support to parents and caregivers to facilitate open communication about substance use and provide guidance on effective parenting practices.

- iii. Expand and improve campus support services, including counseling, mental health resources, and stress management programs. Ensure these services are easily accessible and culturally sensitive to meet the diverse needs of students.
- iv. Develop initiatives to promote healthy coping mechanisms for managing academic stress, such as mindfulness practices, exercise programs, and relaxation techniques. Educate students on the importance of seeking support from peers, faculty, and campus resources.
- v. Integrate comprehensive education on alcohol and drug abuse prevention into the curriculum, orientation programs, and campus events. Emphasize the risks associated with substance abuse and provide accurate information on harm reduction strategies.
- vi. Explore additional factors contributing to substance abuse among students, such as social norms, access to substances, and cultural influences. Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term effectiveness of prevention and intervention efforts.

DECLARATIONS

Ethical Approval:

Ethical approval was gotten from the ethical committee of the School of Health Technology, Federal University of Technology Owerri, Imo State Nigeria.

Consent for Publication: I have given the consent of publication

Consent to participate/ informed consent: Written Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Data availability: All data generated or analyzed during this study are included in this published article.

Methods: All methods were carried out in accordance with relevant guidelines. /standards.

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Contributions of Authors

"All authors contributed to the study conception and design. Material preparation, data collection was performed by OOM & OE Data analysis was carried out

by O.E, IUO and ISA]. The first draft of the manuscript was written by OOM, OME & OE All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Contributions to the Literature

- The findings will help in the development of effective regulation & policies governing alcohol/ substance consumption in the tertiary institutions in the region
- The study will enhance our understanding and importance of addressing socio-environmental determinants in substance abuse
- This research will provide a foundation for developing evidence-based strategies to address and prevent substance abuse among students, promoting a healthier academic environment and overall well-being.

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