

**Research Article**

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Substance Abuse Among Tertiary School, Students in Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri West, Imo State

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Particularly in emerging regions like the Sahara Desert, substance abuse—the dangerous overuse of drugs or alcohol—poses a serious threat to public health. The purpose of the study was to investigate substance abuse among Polytechnic Nekede students in Owerri West, Imo State. Its main objectives were to ascertain the frequency of substance usage, identify substances that are frequently abused, and investigate related factors. Out of 15,000 pupils, 90 respondents were chosen for the study's survey descriptive research design. The results showed that substance misuse was very common among pupils. Prescription drugs (10%), cocaine (15%), alcohol (30%), marijuana (40%), and synthetic drugs (5%), were the most frequently abused substances. Peer pressure (45%), academic stress (30%), and family influence (25%), among other factors, were factors that contributed to substance misuse. Substance misuse has also been shown to have a detrimental impact on students' health and academic achievement. Many adolescents misuse drugs to feel "big," fit in socially, or as a result of peer pressure, it was determined. In order to address student substance misuse, the report suggested community mobilisation, treatment programs, and preventive education.

Keywords: substance abuse, students, polytechnic nekede, owerri.**INTRODUCTION**

It is a well-known fact that certain drugs have been a medical boon to humanity, hence substance usage by itself does not constitute evil. Herbs, roots, and bark leaves have been utilised for pain relief and illness prevention since ancient times. According to history, until the 18th century, the Chinese utilised opium to treat diarrhoea. It was known that European nations like Britain and Holland traded tea and silk with China for opium grown in their colonies [1]. Unfortunately, certain substances have developed into a problem of dependence and abuse despite initially producing alluring effects like euphoria, power, peace, and a sense of well-being [2]. The prevalence of substance abuse is concerning on a global scale nowadays. Over 3.3 million deaths are caused by substance misuse each year, with alcohol and illegal drugs being the main culprits. This worldwide pattern is reflected in the circumstances in Nigeria. Substance addiction is increasing, especially among young people and students, according to the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) [3].

Substance misuse has grown to be a major global public health issue, and higher education institutions are no exception. Students frequently experiment with and occasionally become victims of substance addiction at these schools, which are centres of youthful vitality, intellectual endeavour, and social engagement. Substance misuse is a contemporary social issue. It has been recognised as a social cancer that has aroused the interest of our society and both urban and rural inhabitants. New forms of substance misuse are combining, especially those that are not yet regulated globally. The problem has gotten so bad that there is a development or what is equivalent to adding subculture to our society, which is represented by its own fashion sense, music, entertainment, and gathering spots. Several locations on "Drug Abuse" have been provided by witnesses to drug misuse. Drug abuse is the root cause of broken families, lost wages, destroyed school property, and soaring medical costs. As parents, children, teachers, government personnel, taxpayers, and workers, we are all affected by this problem [4].

The strong need to acquire and use more and more of any substance—including alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, codeine, nicotine, and other harmful substances—is known as drug abuse. It's critical to differentiate between drug abuse and drug addiction or dependency, which describes the bodily need for drugs to survive. Drug abuse is defined as the self-administration of drugs in a way that is not consistent with the socially acceptable norm [5]. In contrast to drug "outside medical practice for personal pleasure is abuse of drugs." Substance abuse is described as the improper or unlawful use of drugs, including illicit substances that can change one or more bodily processes when consumed [6]. The "arbitrary" overuse or dependence on a particular drug, whether or without a prior prescription from a licensed healthcare professional, is known as substance addiction. The "arbitrary" overuse or misuse of a particular drug, whether or whether a qualified health professional has previously diagnosed it, is another definition of substance abuse [7].

Substance addiction as the risky use of medications that affect consciousness. The issue of substance and substance misuse has gotten so serious that the word is commonly used to represent problems with illegal substances, but it can also apply to harmful use of legal prescription prescriptions, such as self-medication [8]. Hardly a day goes by that you don't hear about drug usage or location infractions whether you turn on the radio or open a newspaper. Mothers and women, especially pregnant mothers, are increasingly abusing drugs and engaging in human trafficking, according to the current global audience. Although it has been around for decades, it has recently spread alarmingly across political, social, and economic boundaries. In Nigeria, terrible student behaviour is widespread and has alarmed the public, the government, and other stakeholders. Substance misuse among college students has been connected to the decline of our society's norms and standards as well as a generation that is morally bankrupt, corrupt, and wasted. Nobody seems to be able to claim ignorance in this case [9]. "One cannot sit and pretend that he/she has not seen the menace of drug abuse among adolescents". Substance addicts could find refuge in any nation that drug barons utilise as a transit route. Because it destroys society, encourages crime, spreads diseases like AIDS, and kills young people and the nation's future, substance abuse puts national security at risk.

Most young people in Nigeria use drugs for a range of everyday purposes, such as moral, political, and social ones. These substances include things like tobacco, Indian hemp, cocaine, morphine, heroin, alcohol, ephedrine, Madras, caffeine, glue, barbiturates, and amphetamines. Panadol, Benilyn, "Burukutu," local beer, cigarettes, solution, and beer are among the other medicines that are frequently abused [10]. Without a question, youth substance abuse has continued unchecked in many parts of Nigeria, leading to a social and emotional disaster for both users and society as a whole, as they have now become a burden on their families. A person's expression of themselves, whether positive or bad, is known as socio-emotional conduct. The largest rate of alcohol consumption is among young individuals. Students are among the many young people who abuse alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs [11].

Premarital sex and drug addiction are social evils that have long plagued higher education. According to [12], drug addiction has been identified as a major obstacle to the effective teaching and learning process in the Nigerian educational system.

Substance abuse is turning into a global public health concern, with distinct issues in every part of the world. It has presented a serious danger to nearly every aspect of existence. People's social, political, economic, and psychological well-being may suffer as a result. In recent years, substance usage has transcended generational boundaries, with both young and old using drugs. Because both men and women participate in antisocial behaviour, cultural and gender differences have little bearing on drug misuse. Around 275 million people, or 5.5% of the population aged 15 to 64, took drugs in the previous year, and over 36.3 million people, or 13% of all drug users, suffered from drug use disorders, according to the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) most recent world drug report-2021. The number of drug users rose by 22% between 2010 and 2019, partly due to population growth worldwide. Current projections, based only on demographic patterns, show that drug usage would rise by 11% globally by 2030, with a 40% increase in Africa as a result of rapid growth among the continent's youth. It is estimated that over 11 million people inject drugs globally, with nearly one in eight of them having HIV and half having Hepatitis C. The most common cause of drug-related illness is still opioids. Four areas of international concern—organized crime, illicit financial flows, corruption, and terrorism/insurgency—have also been connected to the burden of drug misuse (consumption, abuse, and trafficking), which poses a serious threat to national security [13]. Therefore, a thorough understanding of the prevalence, often implicated drugs, commonly involved populations, drug sources, and risk factors associated with drug addiction is necessary for global efforts to reduce substance misuse, including its impact on health, governance, and security. Substance abuse has spread over the world, and what is even more alarming is how many young people—students—are engaging in this dangerous behaviour, which poses a serious risk to society at large. The study found that one of the schools dealing with the problem of student substance misuse is Poly Nekede in Owerri. Developing successful treatments and support systems requires an understanding of the subtleties of this issue in the context of Poly Nekede. The purpose of this study is to look at substance usage among Poly Nekede students in Owerri West, Imo State, who attend postsecondary institutions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

Research designs are thought of as a broad approach taken by the researcher in which several study elements are logically combined to effectively address a research problem. The researcher used a survey research design for this investigation. This is because the study's design involves sampling people's opinions and viewpoints. According to Singleton & Straits, (2009), Survey research can use quantitative research strategies (e.g., using questionnaires with numerically rated items), qualitative research strategies (e.g., using open-ended questions), or both strategies (i.e. mixed methods). Surveys are commonly utilized in social and psychological research because they are frequently used to describe and explore human behavior.

Population of Study

The tertiary school students enrolled at Poly Nekede, Owerri West, Imo State will make up the study's population. This study was carried out to examine substance abuse among tertiary school students at Poly Nekede, Owerri West, Imo State. Poly Nekede is one of the prominent tertiary institutions in the region, attracting a diverse student body from various socio-economic backgrounds and different parts of Nigeria. The total student population at the time of the study is approximately 15,000.

Sample and Sample Techniques

Convenience sampling was used in this study to choose the respondents from the entire population. In order to estimate the sample size for this study, the researcher used a practical sampling technique. The researcher simply chose 95 respondents as the sample size for this study from among the total student body from Poly Nekede, Owerri West, Imo State, consisting of 45 students from 200 level and 50 students from 300 level.

Research Instrument and Administration

The questionnaire was the research tool employed in this study. The enrolled participants were given access to a physical survey that contained a number of questions. The questionnaire was split into two pieces; the first asked about respondents' demographic or personal information, and the second was in keeping with the study's aims and sought to answer the research questions. To respond, participants had to check the relevant box in the column. The researcher gave the questionnaire to participants by self.

Ethical Consideration

The Department's Project Committee approved the study. Before enrolling in the trial, all study participants provided informed consent. The study was carried out with the permission of the appropriate authorities. The day to visit the study site for questionnaire distribution was set in advance.

The study adheres to ethical guidelines in conducting research. Informed consent is obtained from all participants, ensuring they understand the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time. Confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents are maintained by assigning codes to the questionnaires instead of using names. The data collected is stored securely and used solely for the purposes of this study.

Method of Data Collection

Data were gathered using primary source and secondary source methodologies, respectively. Utilizing surveys served as the major source, while textbooks, the internet, journals, published and unpublished articles, and government documents served as secondary sources.

Method of Data Analysis

The responses were examined using frequency tables, mean and standard deviation, and the research questions were answered. In using the mean score, the four points rating scale will be given values as follows:

SA = Strongly Agree	4
A = Agree	3
D = Disagree	2
SD = Strongly Disagree	1

Decision Rule:

To ascertain the decision rule; this formula was used

$$\frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.5$$

Any score that was 2.5 and above was accepted, while any score that was below 2.5 was rejected. Therefore, 2.5 was the cut-off mean score for decision taken. While the hypothesis were tested using Chi-square Statistical tool.

Validity of the Study

The degree or extent to which an instrument truly measures what it is designed to measure is referred to as validity. A valid instrument is one that is suited to fulfill the study objectives. The researcher created the study's questionnaire and presented it to the project supervisor, who used his intellectual understanding to critically, analytically, and logically assess the instrument's relevance of the contents and assertions and then approved the instrument for use in the study.

Reliability of the Study

The study instrument's dependability was determined. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was employed to assess the instrument's dependability. The research instrument was relatively reliable, as evidenced by a co-efficient value of 0.68. A reasonable reliability range is between 0.67 and 0.87.

Results

This chapter presents the analysis of data obtained from 100 questionnaires administered to respondents in the study region. Findings from key informant interviews also contributed to the basis for analysis and interpretation. The data analysis depicts the simple frequency and percentage of the respondents, as well as the interpretation of the information gathered. Out of the 100 questionnaires distributed, 95 were returned. After validation, a total of 90 questionnaires were deemed appropriate for the analysis.

Results

The table below presents a summary of the survey based on 100 questionnaires. Initially, a sample size of 100 was calculated for this study. Out of this, a total of 95 responses were received, while 90 were validated for analysis.

Table 4.1: Distribution of Questionnaire

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage
Sample size	100	100
Received	95	95
Validated	90	90

Table 4.2: Demographic data of respondents

Demographic information	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	45	50%
Female	45	50%
Age		
20-25	21	23%
25-30	28	31%
31-35	42	46%
36+	9	10%
Marital Status		
Single	50	56%
Married	40	44%
Education Level		
Level 200	42	47%
Level 300	48	53%

Table 4.3: Respondent on question 1

Options	Frequency	Percentage
High	66	73%
Low	21	23%
Undecided	3	4%
Total	90	100

From the responses obtained as expressed in the table above, 73% of the respondents said high, 23% said low, while the remaining 4% were undecided.

Table 4.4: Mean responses on which substances are most commonly abused by the students?

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	X	S. D	DECISION
1	Marijuana	45	36	12	2	3.7	2.63	Accepted
2	Alcohol	31	34	13	12	4.0	2.82	Accepted
3	Cocaine	40	20	16	14	3.8	2.76	Accepted
4	Prescription Drugs	42	21	9	18	3.2	2.50	Accepted
5	Synthetic Drugs	39	47	10	9	3.8	2.65	Accepted

In table 4.4 above, on which of the substances are most commonly abused by the students, the table shows that all the items (item1-item5) are accepted. This is proven as the respective items (item1-item5) have mean scores above 2.50.

Table 4.5: Mean responses on the factors that contribute to substance abuse among students at Poly Nekede?

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	X	S. D	DECISION
1	Association with delinquent or substance using peers	52	10	19	9	3.7	2.63	Accepted
2	Poor parental monitoring	35	34	13	8	4.0	2.82	Accepted
3	Parental substance use.	36	20	22	12	3.8	2.76	Accepted
4	Family rejection of sexual orientation or gender identity	40	18	16	16	3.2	2.50	Accepted

In table 4.5 above, on the factors that contribute to substance abuse among students at Poly Nekede, the table shows that all the items (item1-item4) are accepted. This is proven as the respective items (item1-item4) have mean scores above 2.50.

Table 4.6: Mean responses on how substance abuse affects the academic performance and health of the students.

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	X	S. D	DECISION
1	It makes students stay away from lessons and classes,	45	36	12	2	3.7	2.63	Accepted
2	It makes students become less serious in their academic work	31	34	13	12	4.0	2.82	Accepted
3	It makes students unable to keep up with their studies	40	20	16	14	3.8	2.76	Accepted
4	It divert time and energy away from studying/reading	42	21	9	18	3.2	2.50	Accepted
5	It causes test anxiety that leads to poor academic performance	39	47	10	9	3.8	2.65	Accepted

In table 4.6 above, on how substance abuse affects the academic performance and health of the students, the table shows that all the items (item1-item5) are accepted. This is proven as the respective items (item1-item5) have mean scores above 2.50.

Table 4.7: Mean responses on the intervention and prevention strategies can be effective in curbing substance abuse at Poly Nekede.

S/N	ITEM STATEMENT	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	X	S. D	DECISION
1	Resisting peer pressure	52	10	19	9	3.7	2.63	Accepted
2	Seeking professional help	35	34	13	8	4.0	2.82	Accepted
3	Getting frequent sensitization on the dangers of drug abuse	36	20	22	12	3.8	2.76	Accepted
4	Living a healthy, balanced lifestyle	40	18	16	16	3.2	2.50	Accepted

In table 4.7 above, on the intervention and prevention strategies can be effective in curbing substance abuse at Poly Nekede, the table shows that all the items (item1-item4) are accepted. This is proven as the respective items (item1-item4) have mean scores above 2.50.

Table 4.8: The prevalence level of substance abuse among students at Poly Nekede

Options	Fo	Fe	Fo - Fe	(Fo - Fe)2	(Fo-Fe)2/Fe
High Extent	66	45	21	441	9.8
Low Extent	21	45	-24	576	12.8
Undecided	3	10	-7	49	4.9
Total	90	100		1066	

At 0.05 significant level and at a calculated degree of freedom, the critical table value is 5.991.

Table 4.9: Substance abuse do affect the academic performance and health of the students in Poly Nekede

Options	Fo	Fe	Fo - Fe	(Fo - Fe)2	(Fo-Fe)2/Fe
Yes	66	45	21	441	9.8
No	21	45	-24	576	12.8
Undecided	3	10	-7	49	4.9
Total	90	100		1066	

At 0.05 significant level and at a calculated degree of freedom, the critical table value is 5.991.

DISCUSSIONS

This study examined the frequency, trends, and determinants of substance usage among tertiary students at Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri West, Imo State. The investigation was directed by four research questions and two hypotheses. Students were asked questions and given oral interviews to get the data. There were about fifteen thousand (15,000) students in the study population, and the sample size was made up of ninety (90) questionnaires sent to chosen respondents.

The results showed that a lot of students at Federal Polytechnic Nekede utilise drugs, which is in line with what other research have shown [14]. An examination of frequently misused substances revealed that students primarily consumed marijuana, alcohol, cocaine, prescription medications, and synthetic drugs, aligning with previous findings about substance misuse among youth in higher education institutions [15].

Several factors were identified as significant contributors to substance usage among the pupils. These encompass affiliation with criminal or substance-abusing peers [16], inadequate parental supervision, and parental substance consumption. Furthermore, familial rejection based on sexual orientation or gender identity was identified as a significant psychosocial factor contributing to substance use among certain students [17].

The study also looked at how students thought drug addiction affected their health and schoolwork. Respondents said that drug addiction makes pupils skip courses and classes and also It makes them less serious about schoolwork, makes it harder for them to keep up with their studies, and takes time and energy away from reading and schoolwork. It also causes test anxiety, which can lead to bad grades. These findings highlight the adverse academic and psychological effects of substance addiction on students in higher education, consistent with earlier research [18, 19].

The study found numerous intervention and preventative techniques to address these difficulties and mitigate substance misuse among Poly Nekede students. These include learning how to say no to peer pressure, getting professional treatment when you need it, and taking part in regular efforts to raise awareness of the hazards of drug usage. It's crucial to keep a healthy and balanced lifestyle. [20]

Consequently, the incidence of substance usage among students at Federal Polytechnic Nekede continues to be elevated, supporting conclusions from other academic research [22]. These findings underscore the necessity for reinforced institutional rules, focused preventative initiatives, and improved student counselling services to address the escalating issue of substance addiction on campus.

CONCLUSION

Substance abuse is a disorder defined by a chronic pattern of self-destructive substance consumption that leads to considerable issues and discomfort. As many researchers have pointed out, substance misuse doesn't happen because of just one thing. Instead, it happens because of the interaction of many different things that come together to create hazardous behaviour patterns. Many people see it as a social problem, especially young people who often use strong drugs and too many psychoactive chemicals that might change normal biological functions or cause major health problems. Undergraduates are particularly recognised for their engagement in substance abuse. Many people use drugs to get "high," feel more important, or fit in with the people around them. Peer pressure is still a big factor, as some students use drugs because their friends or people in their close social circles tell them to. Evidence indicates that male undergraduates are more likely to engage in drug addiction compared to their female peers. Substance misuse has become a global issue that governments, institutions, and people all around the world are worried about. Teenagers are especially at risk since they don't always know how dangerous drug abuse may be. Many young people use drugs and alcohol for a variety of reasons, including wanting to have fun, feeling frustrated, not having enough parental supervision, being poor, and feeling pressure from friends. Even if the problem is complicated, good counselling programs could help with these problems. Substance abuse is a global social and psychological issue that has led to major changes in how people act. During political elections, the open selling and abuse of drugs like marijuana, valium, codeine-containing syrups, and tramadol have grown

common in states, local governments, and rural areas. A lot of the time, politicians either buy these drugs for themselves or give young people a lot of money to get them. The indiscriminate use of these narcotics encourages violence, crime, and other types of antisocial behaviour, which are all big dangers to the stability of society. In Imo State, substance addiction continues to have very bad impacts on users' health and is linked to many social and mental health problems. To protect the health of young people and society as a whole, we need to work together to solve these problems. This includes public health measures, community involvement, strict enforcement of policies, and easy access to counselling and rehabilitation programs.

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