

# **Knowledge of Drug Abuse among Students of Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education Owerri, Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

Drug abuse is the indiscriminate use of any substance which is capable of modifying the chemistry of the human body. Its consequences on the physical, social and psychological dispositions of humans cannot be over-emphasized. The study investigated the knowledge of drug abuse among students of Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education Owerri, Nigeria. The survey research design was adopted, and the sample size consisted of 500 students drawn using the multi-stage sampling technique. Data were collected using validated questionnaires, and analyzed using the descriptive statistics of frequencies, means, and percentages. Results showed that 74.8% of the students were not knowledgeable of the intellectual effects of drug abuse; while 54.2% had knowledge of the social effects of drug abuse; 54% recognized cough syrup as the most abused drug, while 79.4% of the students had knowledge of the possible ways of reducing the problems of drug abuse.

**Keywords:** Knowledge, Drug, Abuse, Students, University

## Introduction

Drug is defined as any chemical substance which when ingested, interacts with the body tissues to modify the biochemical processes <sup>1</sup>. When some of these drugs are abused, they exert major effects on the body or brain causing stimulation which results in change of mood, behaviour, and poor learning outcomes among student <sup>2</sup>. Drug abuse, also known as substance abuse has become predominant among students in the tertiary institutions who use drugs like heroin, cocaine, marijuana, amphetamine, methamphetamines and ketamine to relieve boredom and reduce stress <sup>3</sup>.

The consequences of drug abuse include delinquent behaviours, criminal offences, social disorders, promiscuity and so on <sup>4</sup>. The economic burdens of the rehabilitative systems are enormous and affect the national budgets and Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of nations.

A study <sup>4-5</sup> has shown that drug abuse behaviours among students in higher learning institutions is commonly linked to already perceived norm practices among age mates, with alcohol, marijuana, miraa (Khat) and tobacco being the most abused substances. Other study <sup>6-7</sup> conducted in Nigeria showed that alcohol (61.5%), cigarettes (54.5%), tramadol (35.0%), cough syrup (33%), shisha (30%) and cannabis (22.5%) are the most commonly abused drugs, with alcohol and cigarettes topping the rank of substances of abuse because they are socially and legally allowed in Nigeria.

Furthermore, a study <sup>8</sup> identified factors such as peers and media influences, need to release stress, desire to enjoy the drug, accessibility of drugs, desire to experiment, influence from guardians and siblings, poor parenting, and having trouble in school as key factors influencing drug abuse. Experts have described ages 17-28 years as the age of “window of vulnerability” because most youths are influenced into drug abuse by their peers <sup>9</sup>.

It is worrisome that there is no comprehensive data available on the estimated number of illicit substance users in Nigeria <sup>10</sup>. Most of the researches are hospital- based and retrospective, making prediction of trends rather difficult <sup>11</sup>. To curb this problem, there is need to generate empirical data on significant aspects of drug abuse among the youths in tertiary institutions.

## **Methodology**

### Study design

This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design.

### Description of study area

Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education is located in Owerri Municipal Council, the capital territory of Imo State. It was established in the year 1963 as an Advanced Teachers Training college and in 1984, the College became affiliated to the University of Nigeria, Nsukka to award the Bachelor of Education Degree. The university operates the school system, with Deans at the helm of affairs. It has a medical centre that caters to the health of students and staff. It has nine student hostels that accommodate the students on campus.

### Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of the 16,500 registered students of the institution.

### Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 500 students was derived using the Taro Yamane's formula. The multi-stage sampling technique was adopted for the study.

### Instrument for Data Collection

Structured questionnaires were used for data collection. The questionnaires were made up of sections A -- E. Section A dealt with the demographic data of the respondents, while Sections B - E elicited responses on the core variables of the study.

### Reliability of the Instrument

The validated instruments were subjected to the test re-test technique to ensure reliability. Ten (10) copies of the self-structured questionnaire were administered by the investigator on face-to-face basis to ten (10) students of the Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences, Imo State University who were not part of the sample size of the study. After 14 days (2 weeks), the same respondents were revisited and given new copies of the same questionnaire to get their responses. The two results obtained were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at 0.05 level of significance. The instrument showed a strong reliability of 0.85.

### Ethical Considerations

A written approval was obtained from Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, through the Ethics Committee. The objectives and methodology of the study, as well as the right of withdrawal from the study were communicated to the respondents. The respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

### Procedure for Data Collection

Data were collected using structured self-administered questionnaires on face-to-face basis. The investigator provided clarity on issues raised by the respondents during the procedure. After completion, the questionnaires were collected immediately to reduce the risk of loss and ensure a high response rate. Data were collated and stored electronically.

### Data Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequencies, mean and percentages..

**Results****Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=500)**

S/N	Variable	Frequency	%
<b>1</b>	<b>Age</b>		
	16 – 20 years	118	23.6
	21 – 25 years	127	25.4
	26 – 30 years	114	22.8
	31—35 years	101	20.2
	36 years and above	40	8.0
<b>2</b>	<b>Gender</b>		
	Male	239	47.8
	Female	261	52.2
<b>3</b>	<b>Year of study</b>		
	First year	124	24.8
	Second year	149	29.8
	Third year	117	23.4
	Fourth year	110	22.0

Table 1 shows that 118 (23.6%) of respondents were 16-20 years, 127(25.4%) were within 21-25 years, 114 (22.8%) were 26-30 years, 101 (20.02%) were 31-35 years, while 40 (8.0%) were >36

years There were 239 (47.8%) males and 261 (52.2%) females. 124 (24.8%), 149(29.8%), 117(23.4%), and 110(22.0%) were in 100—400 levels respectively.

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents’ knowledge of intellectual effects of drug abuse (n=500)**

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
<b>1</b>	<b>Memory problem</b>		
	Yes	3	0.6
	No	497	99.4
<b>2</b>	<b>Inattentiveness</b>		
	Yes	114	22.8
	No	386	77.2
<b>3</b>	<b>Impairment of understanding</b>		
	Yes	51	10.2
	No	494	89.8
<b>4</b>	<b>Inability to study</b>		
	Yes	20	4.0
	No	480	96.0
<b>5</b>	<b>Inhibition of successful development of academic</b>		
	Yes	387	77.4
	No	113	22.6
<b>6</b>	<b>High level of retentiveness</b>		
	Yes	179	35.8
	No	321	64.2
	Average (%)	126	25.1

Table 2 shows that 25.2% of the respondents had knowledge of the intellectual effects of drug abuse.

**Table 3: Distribution of respondent's knowledge of social effects of drug abuse (n=500)**

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentages
1	<b>Non participation in school activities</b>		
	Yes	305	61.0
	No	195	39.0
2	<b>Truancy</b>		
	Yes	316	63.2
	No	184	36.8
3	<b>Promiscuity</b>		
	Yes	256	51.2
	No	244	48.8
4	<b>Obedience</b>		
	Yes	88	17.6
	No	412	82.4
5	<b>Armed robbery</b>		
	Yes	462	92.4
	No	38	7.6
6	<b>Cultism</b>		
	Yes	387	79.4
	No	103	20.6
7	<b>Low purpose in life scores</b>		
	Yes	253	50.6
	No	247	49.4
8	<b>Situational hostility</b>		
	Yes	314	62.8
	No	186	37.2
9	<b>Passive lifestyles</b>		
	Yes	326	65.2
	No	174	34.8
10	<b>Progress/success</b>		
	Yes	3	0.6
	No	487	97.4
	Average (%)	271	54.2

Table 3 shows that 54.2% of the respondents had knowledge of the

social effects of drug abuse, while 45.8% were not knowledgeable.

**Table 4: Distribution of drugs abused by the students (n=500)**

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentages
<b>1</b>	<b>Drug mostly abused</b>		
<b>A</b>	Codeine	40	8.0
<b>B</b>	Cough syrups	225	54.0
<b>C</b>	Tramadol	26	5.2
<b>D</b>	Marijuana	41	8.2
<b>E</b>	Roofies	11	2.2
<b>F</b>	Qurantanshi	22	4.4
<b>G</b>	Indian hemp	31	6.2
<b>H</b>	Tobacco	13	2.6
<b>I</b>	Cocaine	16	3.2
<b>J</b>	Alcohol	75	15.0

Table 4 shows the distribution of the drugs abused by the students. Among them, 8.0% used codeine, 54.0% used cough syrups, 5.2% used tramadol, 8.2% used marijuana, 2.2% used roofies, 4.4% used Qurantanshi, 6.2% used Indian

hemp, 2.6% used tobacco, and 3.2% used cocaine, while 15.0% used alcohol. Majority (54.0%) of the respondents identified cough syrup as the most abused drug among the students

**Table 5: Distribution of respondents' opinions on possible ways of reducing drug abuse (n=500)**

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentages
1	Stricter substance control measures should be enforced	379	75.8
2	There should be extended parental involvement in students' lives	287	57.4
3	Ensure social leisure activities are done without substance use	428	85.6
4	There should confidential ways to seek help especially from professionals and other adults	274	54.8
5	Intensify awareness campaigns on effects of drug abuse and to sensitize students against drugs using posters and video shows	471	94.2
6	Counseling programs should be regularly conducted	439	87.8
7	Government should curb the supply so the demand would automatically go down	500	100
	<b>Average (%)</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>79.4</b>

Table 5 shows that 94.2% of the respondents were of the opinion that intensifying awareness campaigns on effects of drug abuse and

### **Discussions**

The students demonstrated a poor knowledge of the effects of drug abuse on intellectual productivity.

sensitizing students against drugs using posters and videos will reduce drug abuse among students.

74.5% of the students were not knowledgeable of the intellectual impact of drug abuse. This could be

because indulgence in drug abuse among the youths is mostly based on peer pressure rather than intentionality. This outcome agrees with previous studies<sup>1,7</sup> which reported that very few students had the knowledge of the effects of drug abuse, and that drug dependence led to lifelong trauma and low cognition to school subjects. This is worrisome because most of the students were not aware of the cognitive impairment associated with drug abuse. For instance, 99.4% of the students were not aware that drug abuse could result in memory dysfunction, 77.2% were not aware that substance abuse can lead to inattentiveness, while 96% were not aware that drug abuse can impair the ability to study. The high level of ignorance of the impact of drug abuse on cognitive abilities may, partly, account for the increasing level of drug abuse among the youths, especially undergraduates.

The level of ignorance of the social effects of drug abuse among the students is concerning. 97.4% of the

students were not aware that drug abuse could affect progress or success in school, while 82.4% did not know that drug abuse could affect level of obedience to constituted authorities. In furtherance to the findings of the present study, another study<sup>8</sup> also identified school dropout, poor academic performance, sexual assaults and emotional breakdown as additional social effects of drug abuse.

Evidence on the most abused drugs showed that 54.0% of the students reported that cough syrup was the most abused drug, followed by alcohol (15%). Cough syrup is a drug recommended for the treatment of productive and non-productive cough which is mostly prevalent in over-crowded populations where disease transmission is exacerbated. Students are very susceptible to cough due to over-crowded hostel accommodations. The recurrent use of cough syrups in the treatment of cough usually results in abuse. Furthermore, the ranking of alcohol in the list of abused drugs is not far-

fetches. Many youths indulge in the consumption of alcohol for various reasons, such as peer influence, social status, stage performance and so on.

Data on possible ways of reducing drug abuse showed that 94.2% were of the opinion that intensifying awareness campaigns on effects of drug abuse and sensitizing students against drugs using posters and videos could go a long way in curbing the abuse of drugs. In addition, 87.8% agreed that regular counselling programs could reduce the abuse of drugs among students, while 85.6% opined that the exclusion of substances from leisure activities will mitigate drug abuse.

These findings agree with a study<sup>12</sup>

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which showed that majority of the students had adequate knowledge of drug abuse and its prevention practices. However, the findings of the present study do not agree with those of other studies<sup>5, 7</sup> which highlighted the limited knowledge of students on drug abuse and its preventive strategies.

## Conclusion

The level of ignorance of the consequences of drug abuse demonstrated by the students is worrisome. This underscores the need to emphasize health education among undergraduates to forestall the morbidities associated with drug abuse.

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