IJAAR PUBLISHING®

Scholarly Journal of Social Sciences Research | ISSN: 2955-0785
Vol. 4, Issue 3 (2025) | www.ijaar.org/sjssr

TRENDS AND PATTERNS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS AND SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS' ROLE IN JOS NORTH LGA, PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

Moses Izang Kaze (Corresponding Author)
Dept. of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Jos, Nigeria
ikazemoses@gmail.com

Peter Nungshak Wika
Dept. of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Jos, Nigeria
wikapn@gmail.com

Gimba Hezekiah Dikop
Dept. of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Jos, Nigeria
dikopg@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Substance abuse among adolescents poses a significant global public health concern, with severe implications for academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being. In Nigeria, the senior secondary school students are particularly vulnerable to the pervasive influence of substance abuse, often leading to increased school dropout rates, poor academic achievements, disciplinary issues, and long-term social and economic challenges. This study investigated the trends and patterns of substance abuse among senior secondary school students in Jos, Plateau State. The research also examined the pivotal role of school social workers in mitigating the adverse effects of substance use and promoting resilience among affected students. Employing the mixed-methods approach with a cross-sectional descriptive survey design, the study gathered data from a representative sample of the students, teachers, school administrators, and school social workers. The study made use of nine government day secondary schools with a population of 1,557 students and a sample size of 310 for questionnaire administration. Also, seven focus group discussions with 64 participants were used to collect interview data. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 was used to analyze the data. Findings revealed that alcohol and tobacco, including cigarettes, were mostly abused by students. There were trends and patterns of abusing tobacco, narcotic drugs, stimulants, and cannabis sativa blended with alcohol. The absence of school social work practice in secondary schools has exacerbated substance abuse among the students. The study recommended that parents, teachers, and school administrators should be more vigilant in monitoring students' activities, peer groups, and online behavior. Drug prevention clubs should be established in secondary schools to create awareness that could discourage students from engaging in substance abuse. Government and other school owners should employ trained school social workers. School social work remains the missing link between early diagnosis and effective professional counseling within the secondary school setting.

KEYWORDS: Trends, Patterns, Substance Abuse, Social Workers, Senior Secondary School Students, Jos North LGA

Kaze, M. I., Wika, P. N. & Dikop, G. H. (2025). Trends and Patterns of Substance Abuse among Secondary School Students and School Social Workers' Role in Jos North LGA, Plateau State, Nigeria. *Scholarly Journal of Social Sciences Research. 4*(3), 110-124. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17432030

INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse has become an endemic social problem in most nations in the world, including Africa and Nigeria, and this has become an embarrassing occurrence to parents, schools, the government, and the wider society. The abuse of substances by secondary school students in Nigeria has reached an alarming dimension, resulting in a public health problem (Ochuko, 2021). The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime estimates that 5.5% of the global population, including North America, Europe, and Asia, have used substances at least once in the past year, and by 2030 it will rise by 11% (UNODC, 2021). The social problem has become a cause of concern to Africa and Nigeria as a whole, especially when the UNODC report of 2019 indicated a prevalence rate of substance abuse in Nigeria to be 14.4%, which represents 14.3 million people, and it is more than twice the global rate of 5.6%. In the global trend, it is estimated that over 29 million people suffer from drug/substance use disorder, and of this total, 12 million are people who inject drugs, of whom 14.0% are living with HIV.

These statistics indicate that the problem is associated with a variety of physical and mental health problems, which have to do with the spread of some diseases in some developed and developing countries, including Nigeria's Plateau State and Jos North Local Government Area in particular. What is of utmost concern is that young people who are within the age range of 18-25 years are those mostly involved, especially those in secondary schools, as observed by Ibrahim et al. (2016). This will have severe consequences on the learning process in secondary school without school social work, where Huxtable (2019) noted that social work is marginal in most education settings. School social work plays a pivotal role in ameliorating substance abuse among secondary school students. The pattern where a large number of students abuse multiple substances, as revealed in a narrative review by Ogbonna et al. (2024), constitutes a social problem that requires the attention of school social workers as professionals in curbing the problem. Substance abuse among secondary school students remains the greatest obstacle to their academic performance, and when measures are not taken, it will have far-reaching consequences. Jos, a cosmopolitan city, is also grappling with the problem of substance abuse, especially at the secondary school level, which requires more research attention.

The secondary schools, which number as the first large-scale socializing organization, are a product of the society and are also faced with some social problems, constituting the major concerns of school social workers. Some of these social problems include behavior disorder, social maladjustment, poverty, substance abuse, and a host of others. Substance abuse among secondary school students is one of the social problems that has been identified to have negatively impacted their education, health, and human capital development in the larger society. The situation is compounded as school social work was observed to be marginal in most of the education systems, and what was of utmost concern is its absence at the secondary school level, where most of them are vulnerable. The situation in Jos North is exacerbated by the economic struggles of the populace, often residing in slum areas where the substance abuse rate is high, as identified by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA). Secondary school students, influenced by their peers and exposed to substance abuse through social media, become increasingly vulnerable comparatively. Countries like Canada, Sweden, Poland, Denmark, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Ghana, where school social work is established, experience minimal issues related to substance abuse (Kucukoba, 2025).

Research Questions

1. What are the substances that are mostly abused by senior secondary school students in the Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State?
2. What are the trends and patterns of substance abuse among senior secondary school students in the Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State?
3. What is the role of school social workers in curbing substance abuse among secondary school students in the Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Substance Abuse and the Role of Social Workers

There are different views on substance abuse, and a good number of the concepts have been advanced by scholars. Adewale (2022) described it as the wrong use of drugs other than for medical reasons, thus affecting the individual in negative ways socially, cognitively, or physically. This conception did not include illicit substances; it emphasized mostly prescription drugs or substances that are harmfully used by secondary school students. On the other hand, the substance is a chemical other than those required for the maintenance of normal health, which, on administration, alters the biological functions. In other words, it can be a substance that affects the physical, mental, and emotional functioning of the user because of its chemical composition or nature. There is a sharp contrast with the conception of the study, which included alcohol and other illicit substances. Ochuko (2021) described substance abuse as a non-adaptive model of drug or substance use with concomitant adverse health consequences that usually produce cognitive, behavioral, and psychological dysfunction problems among abusers. It negatively affects all the dimensions of health by distorting the proper functioning of the body and mind. This definition focused on the harm it does to health, which is part of the concern of this study, especially the negative impact it has on their health. The World Health Organization (WHO) characterized substance abuse as a pattern of substance use that heightens the risk of harmful consequences for the user, including adverse effects on secondary education.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse in 2018 opined that substances can be broadly conceptualized as chemicals that change the way the brain and body function. In other words, it is a chemical element used in the treatment, cure, prevention, or diagnosis of a disease or used to otherwise ensure the physical or mental well-being of the user. This covered a broad spectrum of what a substance is. The substance conceptualized above can be used appropriately or abused by the user. When these substances are not used in the right way, they are said to be abused. Furthermore, Ejikeme & Ejikeme (as cited in Ejikeme, 2017) defined substance abuse as the consumption of any chemical substance capable of altering the user's physical and mental conditions. They underscored that improper consumption of these substances can result in a loss of emotional self-regulation and an inability to manage emotional involvement in interpersonal and social relationships. These effects can profoundly impact the academic performance of secondary school students. This definition is comprehensive, addressing key concerns regarding the impact of substance abuse on secondary education, and is therefore deemed pertinent to this study.

In contrast, Attah et al. (2016) viewed substance abuse as the taking of a substance or deliberate use of a substance for purposes other than its intended purpose without the supervision of a physician or a medical practitioner. Ashbah & Zainal (2016) vary in their

conceptualization, as they described substance as psychoactive chemical material that affects the central nervous system until a user is in a condition of intoxication, addiction, and behavioral problems. This conception partly fits into the study, as it focused only on psychoactive chemicals. When this happens to the vulnerable secondary school students, it will have a negative impact on their academic advancement. In another vein, Udama (2013) conceptualized substance abuse as the repetitive and excessive consumption of chemical substances capable of altering the body's chemical makeup and influencing behavior. He emphasized that it encompasses the self-administration of substances, misuse of prescription drugs contrary to medical guidelines, consumption of illicit drugs, or excessive intake of socially acceptable substances like alcohol, all of which contravene social norms and are deemed harmful to users. This has significant implications for abusers, particularly within the context of secondary education, where this study is focused on. These perspectives offer comprehensive insights into the subject, highlighting the broad range of effects substance abuse can have, including dysfunctional behavior, hallucinations, and memory loss, all of which can significantly disrupt secondary education and warrant school social work intervention.

Additionally, Oladele & Olufunmilayo (2013) opined that substance abuse is a maladaptive pattern of substance use resulting in clinically significant impairment or distress, evidenced by various criteria occurring within a twelve-month period. These criteria include recurrent substance use leading to failure in fulfilling obligations at work, school, or home; substance use in hazardous situations such as driving under the influence; substance-related legal issues; and continued substance use despite social and interpersonal problems. At this point, the individual substance abuser has become so addicted and overwhelmed by the lack of a control mechanism in terms of behavioral formation.

The conceptualizations provided by various authors above underscore the significant impact of substance abuse on education, health, human capital development, and crime, all of which necessitate intervention from the school social work profession. Addressing substance abuse through school social work intervention within secondary schools is crucial for achieving a sustainable solution to this pervasive issue. Owoyomi (2018) framed intervention as a multifaceted and coordinated effort aimed at maximizing personal and social satisfaction for individuals, groups, and communities, including vulnerable populations such as secondary school students susceptible to substance abuse. While this concept highlighted the importance of addressing the problem comprehensively, it did not emphasize the specific application of social work methods and techniques in tackling substance abuse within the secondary school setting.

Empirical Studies on Types, Trends, and Patterns of Substance Abuse

The abuse of substances by the students in secondary has become much more worrisome. The drugs being abused are classified as stimulants, hallucinogens, narcotics, and depressants (sedatives and tranquilizers). Morris (2016) carried out a study on Assessing Substance Abuse among Secondary School Students in Kendu, Homabay County, Kenya, and found that male students were more affected by substance abuse at 69% and females at 31%. The respondents reported that substances of abuse were mostly accessed from the shops around the school and from the school’s support staff.The study also found out that students from urban settings were more likely to abuse substances than those from rural areas.

Similarly, Unaogu et al. (2017) carried out a study on the pattern of substance abuse at the drug de-addiction unit of a Nigerian psychiatric hospital, with the main aim of identifying drug abuse, demographic features, and clinical characteristics of individuals who abuse substances in a drug de-addiction unit of a Nigerian psychiatric hospital. The study discovered that the most abused substances were cannabis (4%), alcohol (16.5%), and cocaine and other stimulants (2.4%). Also,the secondary substances of abuse were opiates (tramadol and codeine in cough syrups) and sedative hypnotics, and the study averred that the pattern was similar to the result in Sokoto, which showed that cannabis was the most abused drug among their inpatients.

In another study, Anyanwu et al. (2018) conducted a study on the pattern of substance abuse among adolescent secondary school students in Abakaliki. The study revealed that 6.9% of the respondents were ages between 10 and 14 years, while the majority (93.9%) fell within the age range of 16 to 19 years. Among these, 51.5% were in SS2, while 48.5% were in SS3.Thus, the prevalence rate of substance abuse obtained from the study was 32.9%, and alcohol was the most abused at 29.0%, with cocaine being the least at 2.1%. The researchers revealed that there was significant abuse of alcohol, cigarettes, and kola nuts in those aged 16-19 years. Males were more abusers of alcohol, cigarettes, and cocaine, while females were more abusers of coffee, and there was a significant gender difference in the abusers of alcohol. The study showed that those that abused cigarettes and cannabis were mostly orphans, while the frequency of cigarettes, alcohol, cannabis, and kola nuts was higher among those who belong to divorced families. Cannabis and cocaine were not found among those who participated in regular religious activities, while alcohol, cigarettes, and kola nuts were significantly lower among them. 47% of the substance abusers abused more than one substance. Cigarette and kola-nut abuse was more common among adolescents of lower socioeconomic class. The study concluded that substance abuse among secondary school students was high, and they advocated early engagement in meaningful activities to deter them from being exposed to substance abuse.

Likewise, Odesanmi et al. (2024) investigated commonly abused substances among undergraduate university students in Kwara State. Findings of the study showed that most of the students were aware of one form of substance, and most of them had used a substance. Alcohol, tobacco, and nicotine were the most well-known substances. Alcohol, as one of the social substances, was the most abused; cigarettes and tramadol also followed. Other substances abused were marijuana, codeine and cough syrup, and sedatives, e.g., sleeping pills. The study concluded that alcohol, marijuana, and lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) were the most commonly abused. Reasons for the abuse were individual factors (peer or friend engagement), family factors (poor parental supervision and faulty socialization problem), and situations in which they are approved to be used (social media and mass media).

Equally, Keme et al. (2023) conducted a study with the aim of determining the different types of substances abused and the reasons for abusing pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical substances among tertiary and secondary school students in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The most patronized non-pharmaceutical substance was kolanut, followed by local gin (ogogoro), beer, and hot drinks. More respondents smoked cigarettes than marijuana. Sildenafil was more patronized than Chlorpheniramine (Peryton), Codeine, and Rohypnol, which were the most requested drugs. Most of the abuse was because these substances were available and affordable. The study concluded by identifying different types of substances mostly abused by students and adduced for abusing these substances, which are a source of concern to

school authorities, family members, and society in general because these substances have a definite negative impact on these students.

In other research, Uju et al. (2023) attempt to determine the commonly harmful substances used by undergraduates, signs of those taking harmful substances, the effect on students' lives, and solutions for those taking the substances. The study, which was more of a narrative review, indicated that the estimated global burden of alcohol and illicit drug use was 5.4%, while tobacco was 3.7%. The study noted that a national survey was conducted among 10,609 Nigerians aged 15-64 years in the six geopolitical zones of the country and recorded a lifetime prevalence of 39% for alcohol, 6.6% for cannabis, and 12.2% for cigarettes. Stimulants and amphetamines such as caffeine, tobacco, nicotine, and ephedrine; hallucinogens such as marijuana; and narcotics such as heroin and codeine. Others included alcohol and sedatives. All these were cited by other studies as the most common types of substances used in Nigeria.

The used substances were adduced to the belief that they relieve stress and anxiety, and some of them induce sleep, ease tension, cause relaxation, or help users to forget their problems. According to the study, 9.9% of undergraduate students aged 18 to 22 drank alcohol for the first time in the past. Binge drinking, which was said to be dangerous and can lead to alcohol poisoning, was a popular habit in the university. Fifty percent of the undergraduate students tried marijuana at least once; over 60% of the students with valid prescription drugs were diverting it to other students without prescriptions. Ecstasy became the "club drug" of choice at all-night raves. Some of the studies showed that 69% of cocaine users started using it after university entry.

The study also presented signs of harmful substance use as follows:Physical signs include changes in physical appearance, bloodshot or glazed eyes, dilated or constricted pupils, and changes in hygiene, dental issues, skin changes, and insomnia or sleeping too much. Behavioral signs also include increased aggression or irritability, changes in attitude/personality, lethargy, depression, sudden changes in social network, dramatic changes in habits and/or priorities, involvement in criminal activities, and consequences of youth substance abuse. Consequences of harmful substance use on academics, physical health, mental health, peers, families, social and economic consequences, and delinquency. The study recommended proper orientation of students and parents to ensure a peaceful home, provision of counseling services, involvement of parents in supervision of students' academic work, and parents should be counseled on the negative impacts of broken homes. The study is quite relevant to this study, as it deals with the types of substances mostly abused by students. The study outlined ways of curbing the problem but did not recognize the crucial role that school social workers play in mitigating the problem of substance abuse among students.

Correspondingly, Ibeneme et al. (2021) undertook a study on the pattern of adolescent substance abuse among secondary school students in Umuahia, southeastern Nigeria, to determine the pattern of substance abuse in the area. Participants in the study reported that the most abused substances were coffee and kola nut, while alcohol and nicotine were reported to be the most licit drugs abused and gateway drugs to substance abuse among adolescents. The study of the pattern of adolescent substance abuse reported that the use of different substances increased with age, and the male gender was significantly more associated with substance abuse than the female gender. Students in rural areas were reported to abuse coffee, kola nut, and cannabis more compared to those in urban areas. The study concluded that

coffee and kola nut were the common self-reported licit substances of abuse, while cannabis, lactatomtom, tramadol, and methamphetamine were the most abused illicit substances among adolescents of secondary school students in Umuahia. Oxycodone, cannabis, methamphetamine, and opioids were the most obtained substances by UDT, suggesting that there is the need for an objective urine drug screen to accompany the self-reportedly obtained pattern of substance abuse. The study quite addressed an aspect of the types of substances most abused by secondary school students; however, there was no recognition of the significance or crucial role of school social workers in addressing the problem in secondary schools.

Furthermore, Ochuko (2021) conducted an online and desktop literature review of published articles about the types of substances abused by secondary school students during the period of 2010 to 2020 in Nigeria. The study was to reveal the trends with regard to the types of substances abused by secondary school students in Nigeria. The study identified 17 research reports as having data on the types of substances abused by secondary school students in Nigeria. 18 different substances were empirically identified as being abused by secondary school students in 9 different states in Nigeria. Alcohol, cannabis, tobacco, and cigarettes were mostly abused, while cocaine, caffeine, glue, heroin, energy drinks, miraa, rohypnol, and tramadol were the least abused. The study concluded that drug abuse among secondary school students in Nigeria was a public health problem that was not being well researched. The study was in line with an aspect of the current study but did not point out if, among the reviewed articles, there was any that stressed the need for the inclusion of school social workers in order to mitigate the problem.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Cognitive-Affective-Pharmacogenic Control Theory of substance abuse propounded by Gold and Coghland in 1976 (Gold, 1980). The theory explains the reasons why people, especially young, vulnerable people, abuse substances. The theory is based on the major tenets of cognitive behavior therapy: The first tenet is that human behavior is mediated by un-observables that intervene between a stimulus and the response to that stimulus, where substance abusers may not foresee the future of their current behavior. The second tenet states that the way an individual labels or evaluates a situation determines his or her emotional and behavioral response to it. The third is that thoughts, feelings, and behavior are causally interactive. The theory assumes that effective and lasting change is based on learning that behavior has consequences and that one can have an effect on the individual's life. The misconception by the students that substance abuse can relieve them of anxiety is a fallacy of their ideas about the problem. The cognitive-affective style of the abuser is viewed as the pivotal factor in an individual moving from substance experimentation to substance abuse, resulting in depressive disorder (Zhou et al., 2022). This suggests that most students start abusing substances by experimenting and later become addicted to them, thereby seeing themselves powerless to withdraw. The theory is also of the view that a sense of powerlessness or helplessness becomes the characteristic of substance abusers since they could not overcome it.

METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the descriptive survey design was employed based on a mixed-methods research approach. This is supported by Manjunatha (2019), who described it as a statement of affairs as they are at present, with the researcher having no

control over variables. Within the study area in Jos North, there are 485,622 people based on the National Population Commission of 2021 and 111 secondary schools, both government and private, according to the Plateau State Ministry of Education report of 2021. Furthermore, the Jos North Local Area has 22 government secondary schools (1 boarding and 21 day secondary schools) with a population of 3,422 senior students. Out of this, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) identified seven flash points, which are areas known for substance abuse. Nine government day secondary schools with a population of 1,557 senior students that are within these flashpoints were selected.

Nine principals and eighteen teachers were selected through purposive technique, while 310 respondents were selected through stratified sampling technique. Seven Focus Group Discussions The sample of the study were students from nine government day secondary schools that were within the seven substance abuse flashpoints as obtained from the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency in, 2022. These nine government day secondary schools have a population of 1,557 senior students, as presented in table 2. The sample for the study was 310 as determined by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The respondents, or students, from these secondary schools were selected through the stratified sampling technique, where they were numbered. SS1, SS2, and SS3 students were selected based on the numbers assigned to them. This enabled them to have an equal chance of inclusion and participation in the research. The study adopted the stratified sampling technique because it gives better accuracy in results and it deals with heterogeneous groups. It is appropriate for accurate results and analysis to arrive at a valid conclusion to curb the problem.

For thequalitative method, the key informant interviews were conducted on six out of the nine principals selected based on age, gender, marital status, qualification, and religion. The general informant interview was conducted on ten out of the eighteen teachers whose age, gender, marital status, qualification, and religion were considered. Some selected principals and teachers were contacted and interviewed one-on-one after their informed consent. In the quantitative method, structured and semi-structured interviewer-administered questionnaires were used on the respondents. The completed questionnaires were collected and cross-checked by the researcher to ensure that the responses and information provided were adequate and complete. In the course of the study, various methods were used for the qualitative and quantitative data that were obtained from the field. The data were used to answer the six research questions of the study and were entered into SPSS version 27. Percentages and cross-tabulation were used in quantitative research. The information was recorded and transcribed in thematic test analysis, and the analysis was done manually. The results were presented in tables, percentages, charts, histograms, and graphs.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Questionnaire Response Rate and Interview Saturation Point

In the quantitative survey, participants were provided with 310 questionnaires as part of a quantitative survey. It was important to note that 3.3% of the surveys were either misplaced or rejected due to errors, while 96.7% were eventually collected and used in the subsequent data analysis. This led to a final response rate of 96.7%, which exceeded the prescribed minimal number, as respondents' data was collected for research purposes (Pielsticker & Hiebl, 2020). The representativeness of the population, credibility of responses, and increased accuracy of the findings are all crucial factors in this study, which is why the response rate that was achieved is so important. From the qualitative survey, interviews were conducted on

three different categories of respondents, namely the key informants made up of the principals of selected schools, as well as the general respondents (the teachers), and the focused group comprising groups of students. Out of the targeted numbers of interviews, saturation of opinions was noticed at 66.7% for KIIs, 55.6% for GIIs, and 57.1% for FGDs. This means that the issue of substance abuse is common among students. However, 100% of the interviews were eventually reached for all categories of respondents.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The results of the quantitative survey revealed that the majority (70%) of participants in the study were within the age range of 16 to 17 years, which reflected the true composition of senior secondary students. Similarly, the gender of students indicated more males (55%) participated in the survey than females. This implies that the responses provided with regard to the subject matter were strongly gender sensitive. Additionally, the classes of the students showed that Senior Secondary Two (SS2) responded more (43.3%) in the survey, followed by SS1 (30%) and SS3 (26.7%). Also, the majority (70%) of the students were Christians, and this was because most of the schools that fell under this survey were situated in Christian-dominated areas.

On the other hand, the qualitative demography showed that 5 (55.6%) of the key informant interviews, principals of selected secondary schools who participated in this study, were within the age bracket of 31-43 years. Moreover, there were slightly more females (53.1%) than males (44.4%). Furthermore, the principals who participated in this study were all married, indicated by 100%. In terms of their qualifications, they are mostly M.Sc./Ed degree holders (55.6%), followed by B.Sc./Ed (33.3%). In addition, the religion of the respondents was 69.7% Christian and 33.3% Islam faithful. From the Focused-Group Discussion (FGD), the age bracket of the students indicates a range of 15-20 years considering FGD1 to FGD7. In their gender composition, 57% male made up FGD1 and FGD3, slightly more than female; FGD2 had equal gender; and 71%, 83%, 67%, and 100% of FGD4, FGD5, FGD6, and FGD7 were male, respectively. Similarly, the religious affiliation of the students includes 71% Christians and 29% Islam in FGD1, equal religious affiliation in FGD2, 57% Islam and 43% Christians in FGD3, 100% Christians in FGD4, FGD5, and FGD6, and 100% Islam in FGD7.

Substances Commonly Abused by Senior Secondary School Students in Jos North LGA

Based on the opinions of the interviewees (principals, teachers, and students), alcohol ranks the highest. Pocket-sized alcohols were identified as most abused by the secondary school students. Some names gathered include Stricker, Big Ben, Night Workers, and certain types of gins such as Chelsea, Calypso, and Night Train. Menthol sweets mixed with carbonated drinks like Fearless, Coca-Cola, Monster, and Bullet were regarded as the second most taken to alcohol. Cigarettes were regarded as the third most abused, considering the consumption of different brands and flavors.

Likewise, drugs in the form of cough syrups were mostly abused by secondary school students, especially the female students. Some interviewees, particularly the students, revealed that they first tasted cough syrup from friends when it was mixed with coke, but unknown to them. Another type of drug mostly abused is the pain relief medications, which they purchase from over-the-counter prescriptions. Conversely, the least abused substance by senior secondary school students was cannabis sativa, popularly called ‘Indian hemp.’ Some of the students, particularly the males, agreed to have tasted it first in yam porridges during

the usual Igbo pre-wedding gathering, usually pronounced as 'Geigbo.' Some respondents claimed they equally took it from a food and drink mixture unknown to them. Another group of students revealed that they got to know and came in contact with some of the substances, as they were always sent by persons in their neighborhood to go buy them for them.

Looking at the quantitative responses on similar subject matter, it is necessary to assess how they corroborated or differed with the qualitative responses. The table revealed that alcohol and tobacco, including cigarettes, are regarded as the most abused substances by secondary school students, which was rated at 229 (76.3%) (strongly agree 23.3/18.0 and agree 53.0/58.3) as the total agreed responses. This is followed by Menthol Sweet with carbonated drinks, which 223 (74.4%) of the students agreed to. Furthermore, a majority of 223 (74.3%) of the students agreed that Cannabis sativa blended with alcohol was the third most abused substance by secondary school students. Followed by the abuse of stimulants at 215 (71.7%) and lastly, Cannabis sativa at 205 (68.3%).

Overall, the substances commonly abused by secondary school students are alcohol and tobacco, including cigarettes. This finding was supported by Ochuko (2021), who reported that alcohol, tobacco, and cigarettes were mostly abused by students. Menthol Sweet mixed with carbonated drinks and Cannabis sativa blended with alcohol and stimulants were some of the substances mostly abused by the students, and this was silent in most of the literature reviewed. The consistency of these findings showed that these were substances that require prompt attention and intervention, especially by school social workers.

The Trends and Patterns of Substance Abuse among Senior Secondary School Students in Jos North LGA

Figure 1: Trends and Patterns of Substance Abuse by Students



Table 1: **Trends and Patterns of Substance Abuse among Students in Jos North**

Code	Item	Strongly Agree F(%)	Agree F(%)	Neutral F(%)	Disagree F(%)	Strongly Disagree F(%)	Total
PDA1	Alcohol	97(32.3)	75(25.0)	86(28.7)	32(10.7)	10(3.3)	300
PDA2	Tobacco including cigarettes	130(43.3)	96(32.0)	63(21.0)	6(2.0)	5(1.7)	300
PDA3	Narcotic drug (Opium Heroin)	119(39.7)	95(31.7)	63(21.0)	14(4.7)	9(3.0)	300
PDA4	Cannabis sativa (Bhang. Hashish)	111(37.0)	95(31.7)	67(22.3)	14(4.7)	13(4.3)	300
PDA5	Stimulants (Cocaine Miraa)	106(35.3)	96(32.0)	67(22.3)	16(5.3)	15(5.0)	300
PDA6	Menthol sweet and carbonated drinks	130(43.3)	98(32.7)	58(19.3)	5(1.7)	17(5.2)	300
PDA7	Cannabis sativa blended with alcohol	115(38.3)	107(35.7)	59(19.7)	8(2.7)	11(3.7)	300
	Mean Percentage	***38.5***	***31.5***	***21.2***	***18.9***	***3.7***	

According to the quantitative results, the combination of Menthol Sweet with carbonated drinks is the most trending abused substance. The excerpts regarding the trends and patterns of substance abuse are shown below as summarized in figure 1.

> The pattern and trend of substance abuse I observed that the students usually mix menthol sweets and carbonated drinks like La Casera, Coke, and energy drinks…. (**Teacher 1**). Yes, alcohol and cigarettes seem to be a trend and pattern, I can say I know…. (**Teacher 2**). What I see fellow students take most often is Coca-Cola but mixed with painkiller or cough syrup …. (**FGD 2; Participants 3, 4, and 6**). My experience of taking Indian hemp was in yam porridge when our neighbor (Igbo by tribe) wanted to wed the next day. I was confused after eating the yam, but I didn't know what ingredient was used until after some days… (**FGD 5; participant 4**). I also experienced nervousness when I drank coke from a friend, but after I realized it was mixed with gin… (**FGD 5; participant 1**). I was a victim of similar circumstances when my friend gave me an energy drink she was drinking, only to realize later it was mixed with menthol… (**FGD 6; participant 1**).

Considering the results of figure 1 (qualitative survey) and table 1 (quantitative survey), the combination of Menthol Sweet with carbonated drinks was the most trending abused substance by senior secondary school students, and this finding was at variance with the other previous ones. There was a trend and pattern of abuse of tobacco, narcotic drugs, stimulants, and cannabis sativa blended with alcohol. There was a sharp contrast in the findings of Ogbonna et al. (2024), which discovered that multiple substances were abused by a large number of students. Anyanwu et al. (2018) tallied with the findings as they pointed out that there was a significant abuse of alcohol, cigarettes, and kola nuts. The trends and patterns were as a result of availability and peer influence. This implied that attention will be on these substances and their sources.

The Role of School Social Workers in Curbing the Menace of Substance Abuse among Senior Secondary School Students in Jos North LGA

It was noted that secondary schools do not receive the services of school social workers, which was the sole part of the responses that was explored in this section about the qualitative component. The principals and instructors, on the other hand, have provided some suggestions regarding how the phenomenon of substance misuse might be controlled. The interview excerpts are as follows:

> (**Principal 1**) Continuous enlightenment of the students on the dangers of substance abuse; parents need to increase their control over the students; the disciplinary committee of the school needs to intensify their activities, while students should be checked regularly during assemblies. The government can equally make laws to discourage the sales of substances around the school environments. Social media influence must be curtailed because a lot of students copy what they see over there. (**Principal 2**) By constantly creating awareness on the consequences of substance abuse and also creating stringent check measures. Also, students should be trained in a more responsible environment. Sales of illicit drugs should be discouraged, especially around school environments. (**Teacher 1**) Parental responsibility should pay more attention towards the students' activities at home, especially who they relate with. Schools should also endeavor to check what students bring to school, especially the content of their bags. (**Teacher 2**) Though there are no school social workers except the disciplinary committee or initial counselors, the students should frequently be told about the negative effects of substance abuse with practical examples. Parental responsibility should be prioritized in preventing substance abuse by students. Moreover, schools need to involve the services of school social workers because they are experts in this area/field.

Research question six indicated that secondary schools do not receive the services of school social workers, and that is why Diraditsile & Mabote (2019) observed that it was important for social workers to contribute their involvement and be aware of the dynamics and modalities of related treatment. This was crucial, especially in secondary schools, as Owoyomi (2018) observed that social workers have a lot to do in order to combat the negative impact or effects of substance use and abuse in Sub-Saharan Africa. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2010) stated that school social workers provide services to students to enhance their emotional well-being and improve their academic performance; they also play vital roles in addressing the various needs of students in an educational setting.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study also provided insights into the trends and patterns of substance abuse and how it has impacted on academic performance, mental health status and human capital development at that crucial educational level. Significantly, the study advocates the importance and necessity of involving school social workers within the secondary school system with a view to curbing the increasing spate of substance abuse among students. This can be achieved through a collaborative approach with other teachers and stakeholders within the secondary school system. The study underscores the need for parents, teachers, school social workers, and school administrators to adequately monitor students, and proper legislation should be put in place and practical implementation strategies put in place to restrict the availability

and/or affordability of most of the commonly abused substances in and around the school setting. The study was strictly limited to the senior secondary school students (SS1-3) with a sample size of 310 respondents. The use of a small sample size and minimal number of day secondary schools could have influenced the conclusions drawn from the study.

Drug prevention clubs should be established in secondary schools to ensure that students do not engage in substance abuse. Funding should be provided for research activities to better understand the trends, patterns, and drivers of substance abuse among secondary school students and other adolescents in Nigeria so as to inform evidence-based policies and intervention. Government and other school owners should employ trained social work counselors and school social workers to provide support, guidance, and early intervention for students at risk or struggling with substance use. Implement strict disciplinary measures and sanctions for students caught using, processing, or distributing illicit substances on school premises and in communities to create a clear deterrent.

REFERENCES

Adewale, O. A. (2022). Effects of drug abuse on academic performance of secondary school students in Nigeria. *European Journal of Biology and Medical Sciences,10*(3), 72-79.

Anyanwu, O. U., Ibekwe, R. C., & Ojinnaka, N. C. (2015). Pattern of substance abuse among adolescent secondary school students in Abakaliki. *Cogent Medicine Journal, 3*(1), 1-7.

Asbah, R., & Zainal, M. (2016). Issues and challenges of drug addiction among students in Malaysia. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal, 3*(8), 77-89.

Attah, A. P., Baba, E., & Audu, J. S. (2016). The effects of drug abuse and addiction on academic performance of students in Federal Polytechnic Idah, Kogi state Nigeria. *International Journal of Democratic and Development Studies (IJDDS),2*(2), 13-22.

Creswell, C. W.,& Creswell, J. D. (2018). Research design: Quantitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Los Angeles: Sage.

Diraditsile, K., & Mabote, O. (2019). Children, substance abuse and the role of social work. *South African Journal of Social Work and Social Development, 36*(1), 1-17.

Ejikeme, G. G. (2017). Effectiveness and appropriateness of response to drug abuse, drug trafficking and cases of mentally disordered offenders in Nigeria. *Jos Journal of Social Issues, 10*(1), 272-312.

Gold, S. R. (1980). The CAP control theory of drug abuse. *NIDA Res Monogr*. 30, 8-11. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/6779200/

Huxtable, M. (2019). A global picture of school social work in 2013. *International Journal for School Social Work,62*(6), 1274-1289.

Ibrahim, H. A., Mahmud, A., Abubakar, S., Harazimi, C., &Abdulkadir, S. (2016). Effect of drug abuse among youth and its impact on learning. *Journal of Pharmacy and Biological Sciences, 11*(1), 14-17.

Keme, K. Y., Joshua, F. S.,& Peter, A. O. (2023). Reported substance abuse among tertiary and secondary school students in Bayelsa State: Types of substance and reasons for substance abuse. *International Journal of Pharmacognosy and Pharmaceutical Research, 5*(1), 22-29.

Kucukoba, E. (2025). Case study analysis of substance abuse in schools within critical social work practice. Indonesian Journal of Social Science Research, 6(1), 67-77.

Manjunatha, N. (2019). Descriptive research. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research,6*(6), 863-867.

Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. Educational and Psychological Measurement, 30 (3), 607–610.

Morris, R. M. (2016). Assessing substance abuse among secondary school students in Kendu zone, Momabay County, Kenya. *An International Peer Review Journal, 4*(2), 15-23.

Ochuko, E.N. (2021). New trend of substance abuse by secondary school students in Nigeria. National Library of Medicine. *National Centre for Biotechnology Information,21*(3), 1460-1466.

Odesanmi, A., Asamu, F., Arisukwu, O., Rasak, B., Olusegun, I., Mkperedem, A. A., Oyeyipo, I., & Akufenwa, O. (2024). Commonly substances abused among selected university students in Kwara State. *Journal of Data Acquisition and Processing, 39*(1), 223-241.

Ogbonna, B. O., Aneton, M., Samuel, O., & Chigozie, V. U. (2024). Drug abuse among secondary school students in Nigeria from 1980-2023: A narrative review of literature. *Journal of Pharmaceutics and Pharmacology Research,7*(8), 1-9.

Oladele, A. A., & Olufunmilayo, E. A. (2013). Pattern of substance abuse among senior secondary school students in a Southwestern Nigerian city. *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities,4*(2), 54-65.

Owoyomi, V. A. (2018). Substance abuse among street children: Implication for social workers in Nigeria. *Sociology International Journal, 2*(3), 271-274.

Pielsticker, D. I., & Hiebl, M. R. W. (2020). Survey response rates in family research business. *European Management Review,17*(1), 327-346.

Udama R. A. (2013). Drug abuse and its effects in Nigeria. *International Journal of Innovation Research and Development, 2*(9),102-109.

Uju, P. E., Okeke, U. J., & Mbachi, N. (2023). The use of harmful substance and implication to undergraduate students in university. Unizik *Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies,15*(2), 59-69.

Unaogu, N. N., Onu, J. U., Iteke, O., Tukur, K., & Oka, I. Q. (2017). Pattern of substance abuse at the drug de-addiction unit of a Nigerian psychiatric hospital. *African Journal of Drug and Alcohol Studies, 16*(1), 24-31.

Zhou, P., Ma, H., Zhou, B., Zhang, X., Zhao, S., Lin, Y., Wang, Y., Feng, L., & Wang, G. (2022). A Conceptual framework of Cognitive-Affective Theory of Mind: Towards a Precision Identification of Mental Disorders. *Research Square*, 1-23. DOI: https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-2287269/v1