

**RISK FACTORS AND MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES
ASSOCIATED WITH ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AMONG
UNDERGRADUATES IN LAGOS STATE**

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ABSTRACT: The high rate of alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State has become a serious concern, demanding urgent attention to safeguard undergraduates' health and well-being. The study, therefore, examined the risk factors and mental health challenges associated with alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was employed in this study. A multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select 403 respondents from three universities in Lagos State. A research instrument, titled "Risk Factors and Mental Health Challenges of Alcohol Consumption Questionnaire (RFMHCACQ)" was used to collect data from the respondents. The content validity of the instrument was established by five experts from the Department of Social Work at the University of Ibadan, and the reliability was established using test re-test reliability method, which yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.88. The data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that academic pressure, emotional stress, and negative peer influence were among the major risk factors contributing to alcohol consumption. Findings further revealed that alcohol consumption has severe mental health consequences, such as cognitive impairment, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and social withdrawal. The findings showed no significant gender differences in either the risk factors for alcohol consumption or the associated mental health challenges. This concluded that both male and female undergraduates are equally vulnerable and require similar prevention and counselling interventions in school. It was therefore recommended that school counsellors should support undergraduates in managing academic pressure and emotional stress through regular exercise, time management workshops, and peer support groups to promote better mental health and reduce reliance on alcohol. Undergraduates should be encouraged by university counsellors and health practitioners to seek psychological interventions from counselling centres when experiencing mental health challenges related to alcohol consumption.

Keywords: Risk factors, Mental health challenges, Alcohol consumption, Undergraduates

INTRODUCTION

Nigerian culture is known for festivals and various celebrations, many of which involve the consumption of alcohol. This cultural practice has contributed to increased alcohol intake across

different age groups in the country. Alcohol, a psychoactive substance, alters brain function and behaviour when consumed, making it one of the most widely used substances and a major concern among undergraduates in Nigeria (Owolabi, Ajayi, & Olajire, 2024; Olabisi & Adebayo, 2025). In Lagos State, undergraduates are vulnerable to alcohol use due to the demands of an urban lifestyle, heavy academic workload, fear of poor academic performance, financial difficulties, relationship challenges, and a lack of coping strategies for managing academic, psychological, and emotional stress.

The rising prevalence of alcohol abuse among undergraduates has emerged as a significant issue within Nigeria's tertiary institutions. Between 2010 and 2024, over 4.7 million undergraduates in Nigeria aged between 18 and 30 reportedly died, with a significant number of these deaths linked to excessive alcohol use (Robertson, 2025). Research by Adegoke (2025) found that about 73% of undergraduates in Lagos State have alcohol-related problems. The types of alcohol undergraduates in Lagos State usually consume include beer (typically low in alcohol content), wine (moderate alcohol content), and spirits or hard liquor such as vodka, gin, and whiskey (high alcohol content). In some cases, undergraduates may misuse locally brewed alcoholic drinks or non-beverage alcohol (like cough syrups or methylated spirits), which are dangerous and not intended for consumption (Bariaara, Okocha & Ekechi, 2024). Despite widespread awareness of the harmful effects of alcohol abuse among undergraduates, the challenges that increase their vulnerability to risky drinking behaviours in Lagos State continue to persist and remain largely unaddressed.

Many factors contribute to the high level of alcohol consumption among undergraduates, including substance availability and ease of access, higher incidences of road accidents, and increased risk of engaging in unsafe sexual behaviours (Agbaje et al., 2021; Okoro & Chikezie, 2024). Other contributing factors include poor mental well-being, low self-confidence, personality traits (e.g. impulsivity, sensation-seeking), dysfunctional family settings, exposure to adult substance use, peer influence, academic frustration, the need to stay awake at night, frequent conflicts with parents, emotional trauma, a weakened sense of social responsibility, alcohol portrayal in local films and media, and low religious commitment (Bariaara, et al., 2024). These factors are widespread and significantly contribute to alcohol abuse among youths, thereby increasing their vulnerability to mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, emotional instability, and poor stress management.

Heavy alcohol consumption has destroyed many lives among undergraduates in Lagos State and all of Nigeria. Alcohol consumption poses numerous health risks, ranging from neurological issues such as dementia, stroke, and neuropathy to cardiovascular complications, including myocardial infarction, cardiomyopathy, atrial fibrillation (AFib), and hypertension (Agbaje et al. 2021; Dumbili, 2022). Mental health challenges resulting from alcohol use include emotional instability, poor impulse control, mood disorders, and impaired judgment, all of which can severely impact personal and academic life. Social consequences include unemployment, reduced productivity, strained family relationships, and increased involvement in risky behaviours (Olabisi & Adebayo, 2025). Thus, alcohol use significantly increases the risk of several types of cancer such as those of the mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, colon, and breast, alongside liver diseases like alcoholic hepatitis and cirrhosis. Other gastrointestinal problems, including pancreatitis and gastritis, are also common. The overall impact includes not only physical and social consequences but also

psychological distress, often culminating in dependence, mental illness, and poor quality of life (Bariaara, Okocha, & Ekechi, 2024; Olasupo et al., 2024).

Depression is one of the mental health challenges that is often triggered or intensified by the chemical effects of alcohol on the brain's neurotransmitters (Ogunleye & Adigboluja, 2024). Bullying and aggressive behaviours are also more prevalent among undergraduates who engage in excessive drinking, especially when compounded by academic failure or social isolation (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2024). Bipolar disorders may emerge or worsen as alcohol interferes with mood stability and emotional regulation. Anxiety disorders, including panic attacks and generalised anxiety, are also reported among undergraduates with problematic alcohol use. These mental health issues often remain undiagnosed or untreated, leading to a vicious cycle of alcohol dependence and deteriorating psychological well-being (Asagba, Agberotimi, & Olaseni, 2021). The stigma surrounding both mental illness and alcohol abuse often discourages youths from seeking timely help, resulting in worsening symptoms and increased vulnerability to self-harm and social withdrawal.

Thus, one of the relevant theories that explains the risk factors and mental health challenges of alcohol consumption in Nigerian universities is the Self-Medication Theory, originally proposed by Edward Khantzian in 1985. This theory proposes that individuals may turn to substances such as alcohol to manage psychological or emotional distress (Ogunleye & Adigboluja, 2024). Many undergraduates face intense academic pressure, financial difficulties, examination stress, and fear of failure, which create emotional strain. Alcohol often becomes a tool for easing these negative emotions and providing temporary relief. Some undergraduates also use alcohol to feel confident in social situations or to cope with loneliness (Robertson, 2025). Although it may offer short-term comfort, repeated use can lead to dependence and worsen the emotional issues it was meant to relieve. This pattern makes alcohol a dangerous coping mechanism when healthier outlets are not available (Bariaara, Okocha & Ekechi, 2024).

The Self-Medication Theory also highlights the relationship between alcohol misuse and the onset of mental health issues. Long-term alcohol use alters brain function, particularly in areas responsible for mood regulation, memory, and judgment (Ehimen et al. 2022). As a result, some undergraduates may develop conditions such as anxiety, depression, or even psychotic disorders like schizophrenia. Alcohol use can also impair academic performance and social relationships, increasing feelings of isolation and failure. Emotional problems that remain unresolved are often intensified by alcohol's negative impact on mental functioning (Okoro & Chikezie, 2024). Hallucinations, paranoia, and emotional instability are possible outcomes when alcohol is abused consistently. This theory explains how emotional distress and alcohol use create a harmful cycle. Without early intervention, serious mental health challenges may develop over time (Ogunleye & Adigboluja, 2024).

Essentially, researchers have conducted many studies on the issue of alcohol consumption in and outside Lagos, Nigeria. For instance, Olayiwola-Adedoja, Ayodele, Olosunde, and Akeredolu (2025) examined the perceived causes and consequences of drug abuse among secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria, and found that alcohol was the most commonly abused substance, with peer pressure, societal pressure, lack of support, environmental influence, and self-medication

identified as major causes, while consequences included mental health problems, poor academic performance, family breakdown, financial instability, and social stigma; the study also revealed no significant gender difference in the perceived effects of drug abuse, although age was a significant factor. However, Ogunleye and Adigboluja (2018), in a study of Nigerian undergraduates from Ekiti State University and Olabisi Onabanjo University, reported that alcohol dependence significantly impaired psychological well-being and was more prevalent among male undergraduates, indicating a gender disparity that contrasts with the earlier findings. Despite offering valuable gender-specific insights, the latter study's limited institutional scope restricts the generalisability of its findings.

Agbaje et al. (2021) examined the impact of adverse childhood experiences on psychological distress and alcohol use among undergraduates in Southeast Nigeria and found that undergraduates with high ACE scores, particularly females, reported higher levels of psychological distress and were more likely to abuse alcohol; however, the study did not clearly indicate how samples were proportioned across institutions. In contrast, Gureje et al. (2013) reported that hazardous alcohol use was more prevalent among older male undergraduates and those with higher paternal education across Nigerian universities, suggesting a gender and age pattern that contradicts the female vulnerability highlighted by Agbaje et al. (2021). Similarly, Bariaara et al. (2024), in a study conducted at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education in Rivers State, found that undergraduates perceived alcohol primarily as a stress reliever, social facilitator, and coping mechanism for academic and emotional challenges; however, this psychosocial framing contrasts with the trauma-based explanation emphasised by Agbaje et al. (2021). Despite offering useful insights, the latter study's lack of standardised instruments and a clear sampling framework weakens its methodological rigour, while Gureje et al.'s (2013) reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias despite the strength of its diverse sample.

Olabisi and Adebayo (2025) examined the relationship between peer pressure, gender, and alcohol-related mental health issues among undergraduates of Lagos State University. The study found that male undergraduates were more susceptible to peer pressure, which significantly contributed to risky alcohol behaviours and anxiety symptoms. Socio-economic status, cultural influences, and broader institutional contexts were underexplored. Also, inconsistencies existed regarding the relative impact of peer pressure and academic stress across regions, and few studies provided longitudinal evidence to clarify causal relationships between risk factors and alcohol-related mental health challenges. Empirical studies in Nigeria have also highlighted the influence of gender on alcohol-related risk factors and mental health challenges among undergraduates. Okefor, Obi, and Ojule (2023) found that male undergraduates in southwestern Nigerian universities were significantly more likely to engage in heavy and binge drinking, largely due to peer influence and the social acceptance of alcohol use among males. Adebayo et al. (2025) reported that male undergraduates perceived alcohol consumption as a symbol of social status and confidence, increasing their vulnerability to substance dependence and behavioural problems. In contrast, other studies such as Ehimen, Ifekanandu, Idoko, Innocent, and Ugwuanyi (2022); Bariaara, Okocha, and Ekechi (2024) found no significant gender differences in alcohol-related risk factors or mental health challenges, suggesting that both male and female undergraduates may experience similar levels of vulnerability. These contrasting findings indicate that the role of gender in shaping alcohol-related risks may vary across contexts, social environments, and institutional settings.

To the best of the researchers' knowledge, none have examined the risk factors and mental health challenges associated with alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State. The existing literature examined studies on peer pressure, prevalence rates, coping mechanisms, attitudes, and the impact of childhood experiences on undergraduates' mental well-being. These studies often differ in terms of participant characteristics, sample sizes, and research locations. Despite these investigations, a clear gap remains regarding alcohol-related mental health issues among undergraduates in Lagos State. This research aims to address that gap by exploring the risk factors and mental health challenges associated with alcohol consumption within this population.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the risk factors and mental health challenges associated with alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study considered the influence of gender on risk factors and mental health challenges associated with alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered in this study:

1. What are the risk factors associated with alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State, Nigeria?
2. What are the mental health challenges associated with alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the risk factors associated with alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State based on gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the mental health challenges associated with alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State based on gender.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers employed a descriptive survey design because the study examined risk factors and mental health challenges associated with alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study included all undergraduates in Lagos State, but the target population comprised undergraduates at three universities (Lagos State University, the University of Lagos, and Lagos State University of Education). According to the Lagos State Ministry of Education (2024), there were 697,348 undergraduates in Lagos State, Nigeria. Based on the Research Advisor Sample Size Determination Table (2006), a sample size of 384 was recommended for the population of this magnitude at 95% confidence level and 5.0% margin of error. In order to cater for attrition, 5% ($5 \times 384/100 = 19.2$, approximately 19) of the sample size was added to make a total of 403

respondents. A multistage sampling procedure was used to select the respondents in the three tertiary institutions.

Hence, the population of the University of Lagos was 57,836, Lagos State University was 35,925, while Lagos State University of Education was 3,300; the total population of all undergraduates in the selected institutions was 97,061. At the first stage, purposive sampling was used to select three universities in Lagos State based on population indices: University of Lagos (UNILAG), Lagos State University (LASU), and Lagos State University of Education (LASUED). At stage two, the proportional sampling technique was used to select respondents from the University of Lagos ($57,836/97,061 \times 403 = 240$), Lagos State University ($35,925/97,061 \times 403 = 149$), and Lagos State University of Education ($3,300/97,061 \times 403 = 14$). At stage three, a simple random technique was used to select 240 respondents at the University of Lagos, 14 respondents at Lagos State University of Education, and 149 respondents were also selected at Lagos State University during General Studies Classes through ballot methods.

The researchers developed the questionnaire based on the literature review to ensure that the items were informed by existing evidence and relevant to the study context. Grounded in the Self-Medication Theory, the instrument comprehensively captures alcohol consumption and its associated psychological outcomes among undergraduates. This approach strengthens content validity and provides a solid theoretical foundation for collecting reliable data. The instrument, titled: *Risk Factors and Mental Health Challenges of Alcohol Consumption Questionnaire (RFMHCACQ)*, was reviewed for face and content validity by five experts from the Department of Social Work at the University of Ibadan. Reliability was assessed using a test-retest method, where the instrument was administered twice to a group of undergraduates in the Department of Educational Management at the University of Ibadan, with a two-week interval. The correlation between the two sets of scores, measured using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation, yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.88, indicating high consistency.

The questionnaire comprised three sections: Section A dealt with demographic data of the respondents, Section B sought information on risk factors for alcohol consumption, while Section C focused on mental health challenges associated with alcohol consumption. Sections B and C were structured using a four-point Likert-type rating scale: Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points), and Strongly Disagree (1 point). The benchmark for the instrument was established by summing the response points and dividing by 4, resulting in a mean score of 2.5 (i.e., $4+3+2+1=10/4=2.5$). Mean scores equal to or above 2.5 indicated risk factors and mental health challenges, while scores below 2.50 were not considered. The study's null hypotheses were analysed using an independent t-test at a significance level of 0.05.

Ethical Consideration

Guided by ethical considerations, two researchers, supported by three trained research assistants who were fully briefed on the study's purpose, conducted the face-to-face distribution of questionnaires to the respondents. The study's objectives were clearly explained, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their involvement. Those who declined

participation were excluded and did not receive the questionnaire. Participants were also assured that their responses would remain confidential before completing the questionnaires.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis was conducted on a total of 403 correctly completed and accounted-for questionnaire forms, which were then used for this study. The data collected were analysed using inferential statistics (Independent t-test) at a 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question 1: What are the risk factors associated with alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Rank Order of Risk Factors Associated with Alcohol Consumption among Undergraduates in Lagos State, Nigeria

N	Items:	Mean	Rank
11	Academic pressure	3.88	1 st
13	Emotional stress	3.85	2 nd
4	Negative peer pressure	3.80	3 rd
12	Social media influence	3.78	4 th
6	Lack of parental supervision	3.75	5 th
8	Psychological distress	3.75	5 th
5	Lack of extra-curricular activities	3.75	5 th
15	Financial stress	3.73	8 th
7	Emotional instability	3.69	9 th
9	Inability to cope with loneliness	3.65	10 th
2	Lack of coping skills	3.61	11 th
1	Availability of alcohol	2.58	12 th
14	Sensation-seeking	2.56	13 th
10	Experimental curiosity	2.54	14 th
3	Ignorance about dangers of alcohol	2.50	15 th
Grand Mean		3.43	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 revealed responses on risk factors associated with alcohol consumption as expressed by undergraduates in Lagos State, Nigeria. All the items were found above the cut-off point of 2.50 on the Four-Point Likert-Type Rating scale. This indicated that undergraduates in Lagos State agreed that all the items were risk factors for alcohol consumption, showing a shared understanding of the factors influencing alcohol consumption

Research Question 2: What are the mental health challenges associated with alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Rank Order of Mental Health Challenges Associated with Alcohol Consumption among Undergraduates in Lagos State, Nigeria

N	Items:	Mean	Rank
12	Cognitive impairment	3.86	1 st
3	Obsessive-compulsive disorder	3.84	2 nd
14	Social withdrawal	3.81	3 rd
7	Bullying behaviours	3.79	4 th
6	Suicidal thoughts	3.77	5 th
8	Bipolar disorder	3.73	6 th
9	Sleep disturbances	3.71	7 th
15	Feelings of guilt	3.69	8 th
11	Feelings of depression	3.66	9 th
5	Chronic health problems	3.64	10 th
2	Post-traumatic stress disorder	3.61	11 th
10	Relationship problems	2.58	12 th
4	Feelings of hopelessness	2.55	13 th
1	Aggressive behaviours	2.53	14 th
13	Psychotic disorders	2.51	15 th
Grand Mean		3.42	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 revealed responses on mental health challenges associated with alcohol consumption as expressed by undergraduates in Lagos State, Nigeria. All the items were found above the cut-off point of 2.50 on the Four-Point Likert-Type Rating scale. This indicated that undergraduates in Lagos State agreed that all the items were mental health challenges associated with alcohol consumption, **suggesting that alcohol use is widely perceived as having serious mental health consequences.**

Hypothesis Testing

Having answered the research questions, the researchers proceeded to test the null hypotheses postulated for the study.

Hypothesis One: *There is no significant difference in the risk factors associated with alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State based on gender*

Table 3: Independent t-test result showing the Risk Factors Associated with Alcohol Consumption among Undergraduates in Lagos State based on Gender.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
Male	203	62.38	10.34	401	1.01	1.96	0.14
Female	200	60.35	9.59				

Table 3 showed that the calculated F. ratio of 1.01 was less than the critical F. ratio of 1.96 at 0.05 alpha level. This implied that there was no significant difference in the risk factors associated with alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State based on gender, **showing that these factors affect undergraduates regardless of gender.**

Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant difference in the mental health challenges associated with alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State based on gender.*

Table 4: Independent t-test result showing the Mental Health Challenges associated with Alcohol Consumption among Undergraduates in Lagos State based on Gender.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
Male	203	65.36	12.026	401	1.46	1.96	0.21
Female	200	64.69	11.153				

Table 4 indicates that the calculated F. ratio of 1.46 was less than the critical F. ratio of 1.96 at the 0.05 alpha level. This implied that there was no significant difference in the mental health challenges associated with alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State based on gender, showing that alcohol-related mental health problems cut across both genders.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings revealed that risk factors contributing to alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State include academic pressure, emotional stress, negative peer influence, social media influence, and lack of parental supervision. This aligns with Bariaara, Okocha, and Ekechi (2024) and Ogunleye and Adigboluja (2024), who reported that insecure attachment, poor coping mechanisms, easy access to alcohol, a culture of drinking among undergraduates, anxiety, and

problematic home relationships influenced alcohol consumption. Similarly, Buakate, Thirarattanasunthon, and Wongrith (2022) found that negative media influence, low parental support, low self-esteem, family conflict, emotional instability, and environmental conditions were linked to alcohol abuse among undergraduates in Thailand. While these studies converge on the influence of psychosocial and environmental factors, they differ in context: Nigerian studies emphasise academic and familial pressures, whereas the Thai study highlights media and environmental factors. These contrasts suggested that some risk factors were universal, while their impact varies across cultural and institutional settings. The findings of this study indicated that undergraduates in Lagos State may engage in alcohol abuse due to an increase in academic demands and emotional stress, as they often seek ways to cope with pressure, social expectations, and the challenges of university life. Peer influence and exposure to social media that normalise drinking further contribute to this vulnerability, while limited supervision and support from family or institutional structures may exacerbate the risk. Consequently, alcohol abuse becomes not just a social behaviour but a strategy that some undergraduates adopt to relieve tension, manage academic pressures, and temporarily escape emotional strain. These findings imply the need for targeted interventions, awareness programmes, and counselling strategies that address both academic pressure and social influences to reduce alcohol abuse among undergraduates.

The findings showed that mental health challenges associated with alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State include cognitive impairment, obsessive-compulsive disorder, social withdrawal, anxiety disorders, and suicidal thoughts. However, Olabisi and Adebayo (2025) reported broader social and behavioural consequences, such as depression, risky sexual behaviour, violence, and juvenile delinquency, while Okoro and Chikezie (2024) emphasised clinical manifestations like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and panic attacks. Okefor, Obi, and Ojule (2023) further highlighted co-morbid depression and alcohol use disorder among Nigerian undergraduates, and Tembo, Burns, and Kalembo (2017) found hazardous drinking linked to psychological distress and academic problems. These contrasts suggest that alcohol's impact on mental health varies depending on individual vulnerability, cultural context, and measurement approaches. Undergraduates in Lagos State may recognise these challenges because alcohol affects brain chemistry, impairing cognitive function and emotional regulation, and many have personally experienced or observed these symptoms in peers. High academic and social pressures, peer influence, and exposure to campus awareness campaigns may further heighten vulnerability. The depressant effects of alcohol can also deepen anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal. These findings highlight the need for school interventions addressing both alcohol abuse and its psychological consequences among undergraduates in Lagos State.

Findings revealed that there was no significant difference in the risk factors associated with alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State based on gender, implying that both male and female respondents were equally affected. This finding is consistent with the study by Bariaara, Okocha, and Ekechi (2024), which found no significant gender differences in the psychosocial and environmental factors influencing alcohol use among Nigerian undergraduates. Similarly, Buakate, Thirarattanasunthon, and Wongrith (2022) found that male and female undergraduates in Thailand were equally exposed to risk factors such as media influence, low parental support, and emotional instability, which contributed to alcohol abuse. In contrast, Ogunleye and Adigboluja (2024) reported a significant gender difference among undergraduates at Ekiti State University, suggesting

that male undergraduates were more likely to engage in alcohol use due to cultural norms and social expectations. The reason no significant difference was observed in Lagos State may be that both male and female undergraduates share similar social environments, academic pressures, peer influences, and access to social media, which expose them equally to alcohol-related risks. Also, the university setting in Lagos may promote more gender-neutral interactions and equal exposure to stressful academic and social demands, reducing differences in alcohol consumption risk between males and females.

Findings also indicated that there was no significant difference in the mental health challenges associated with alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State based on gender, showing that male and female undergraduates experienced similar psychological impacts. This finding is in line with the study of Bariaara, Okocha, and Ekechi (2024), who reported that male and female undergraduates experienced similar levels of anxiety, depression, and emotional strain related to alcohol use. Similarly, Buakate, Thirarattanasunthon, and Wongrith (2022) found no significant gender differences in mental health challenges linked to alcohol abuse among university students in Thailand, including social withdrawal, low self-esteem, and emotional instability. In contrast, Okoro and Chikezie (2024) reported a relationship between depression, anxiety, severe stress, and alcohol consumption, suggesting that male and female undergraduates may experience different mental health outcomes due to alcohol use. Likewise, Okefor, Obi, and Ojule (2023) found that male undergraduates were more likely to report depressive symptoms associated with alcohol abuse compared to female undergraduates in Nigerian universities. The reason there was no significant gender difference in Lagos State may be that both male and female undergraduates are exposed to similar academic, social, and emotional pressures within the university environment. Common stressors such as performance expectations, financial strain, relationship issues, and uncertain futures affect all undergraduates regardless of gender. Additionally, the increasing integration of male and female undergraduates in shared academic and social spaces, equal access to media, and peer influences may contribute to the similarity in mental health challenges observed between genders. These findings suggest that interventions addressing alcohol-related mental health problems need to target all undergraduates equally, rather than focusing on a particular gender.

Conclusion

The study concluded that alcohol consumption among undergraduates in Lagos State is influenced by academic pressure, emotional stress, negative peer influence, social media exposure, and inadequate parental supervision, creating a setting in which alcohol use is normalised and poorly controlled. It also identified serious mental health consequences, including cognitive impairment, obsessive-compulsive disorder, social withdrawal, anxiety disorders, and suicidal thoughts, showing that abuse of alcohol among undergraduates involves major psychological risks beyond social behaviour. The study advances existing knowledge through context-specific evidence that links risk factors to mental health outcomes, shows no significant gender differences, and supports the Self-Medication Theory by explaining alcohol use as a coping response to psychological distress. In addition, the findings strengthen stress-coping explanations of alcohol abuse and provide useful guidance for inclusive campus health policies and student welfare programmes aimed at reducing alcohol-related harm among undergraduates.

Implications of Findings for Counselling Interventions

The findings of the study highlight the urgent need for proactive counselling interventions within tertiary institutions in Lagos State. Since academic pressure and emotional stress were identified as major risk factors, school counsellors should implement academic support programmes such as time management workshops, study skills training, and stress reduction strategies. These interventions can help undergraduates develop healthier coping mechanisms and reduce reliance on alcohol. Counsellors should also collaborate with academic staff to identify undergraduates who are struggling and offer targeted psychological and academic support. The influence of peer pressure and social media calls for peer-led awareness programmes that emphasise the dangers of alcohol consumption and promote healthy lifestyle choices. Media literacy education can empower undergraduates to critically evaluate content they consume online and resist harmful trends. Overall, preventive strategies must be embedded into the school's counselling framework to reduce the appeal and accessibility of alcohol.

The mental health challenges associated with alcohol consumption, including cognitive impairment, anxiety disorders, and social withdrawal, underscore the importance of mental health screening in universities. Counsellors should be trained to recognise early warning signs of alcohol-induced psychological problems and offer appropriate therapeutic interventions such as cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) and motivational interviewing. Establishing safe and confidential counselling centers within campuses can encourage undergraduates to seek help without fear of stigma. Support groups and psycho-educational sessions should also be organised to assist undergraduates dealing with anxiety, depression, or substance-related mental health issues. Integration of mental health education into the general curriculum can further foster awareness and resilience among undergraduates. Parents and guardians should also be engaged through community outreach programmes to strengthen family support systems. Effective counselling must address both the emotional and behavioural aspects of alcohol use among undergraduates.

The lack of significant gender differences in both risk factors and mental health effects suggests that counselling programmes should be inclusive and cater equally to male and female undergraduates. Gender-neutral interventions help ensure that no subgroup is neglected and that all undergraduates have equal access to support and resources. This underscores the importance of campus-wide policies that promote mental well-being and discourage alcohol abuse. Counsellors should also advocate for institutional policies that regulate the sale and distribution of alcohol near campuses, particularly in bars and nightclubs. Collaboration with external stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations and public health agencies can help extend the reach of these counselling efforts. Regular monitoring and follow-up studies are necessary to assess the effectiveness of implemented strategies and identify emerging needs. Ultimately, the role of counsellors is pivotal in both prevention and recovery, offering undergraduates the tools needed to thrive academically and emotionally.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that;

1. School counsellors should support undergraduates in managing academic pressure and emotional stress through regular exercise, time management workshops, and peer support groups to promote better mental health and reduce reliance on alcohol.
2. Mental health practitioners and school counsellors should help undergraduates build decision-making skills to resist peer pressure and support these efforts by organising seminars on stress management and alcohol-related risks.
3. Undergraduates should be encouraged by educators to seek psychological interventions from university counselling centres when experiencing mental health challenges that linked to alcohol consumption such as cognitive impairment, obsessive-compulsive disorder, social withdrawal, anxiety disorders, or suicidal thoughts.
4. University counselling units should implement awareness campaigns that address academic stress, peer influence, social media exposure, and parental involvement as risk factors for alcohol consumption, applicable to all undergraduates regardless of gender.
5. Mental health programmes designed by campus wellness teams, including counsellors, psychologists, health educators, and student affairs officers, should address alcohol-related challenges among male and female undergraduates in Lagos State.

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