

Factors Influencing Hard Drug Use Amongst Undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated factors influencing hard drug use amongst undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The study objectives examined forms of hard drugs among undergraduate students, factors, consequences, and measures required to curb hard drug use among undergraduate students. Five theories were reviewed namely, social structure theory, Marxian theory, differential association theory, social learning theory and labelling theory. Differential association theory and Marxian theory were adopted as the theoretical framework. The study used mixed methods research design for data collection and analysis. A sample size of 204 respondents was used. The quantitative data collected were processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, simple percentages, and charts, while the qualitative data were analyzed using thematic method of data analysis using Nvivo (Version 2.0) software. Two hypotheses were tested using the Chi-square (χ^2) test statistic. Results found amongst others that codeine and tramadol are the major drugs abused by undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka and peer pressure is found to be the major factor influencing the abuse of these hard drugs. The study therefore recommends among other things, that there is need for a more robust awareness creation on the dangers inherent in hard drug use by the undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Keywords: academic performance, drug, mental health

Introduction

There is no universal agreement on the definition of the term "hard drug". Hard drug is seen to be strong, illegal, and harmful drugs (such as heroin, crack cocaine, cannabis etc) that are likely to cause dependency and addiction (Farea, 2022). The use of hard drug is an emerging global health issue. The recent world drug report- 2023 of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimated that 271 million (5.5 percent) of the global population aged between 15 and 35 years had used hard drugs in the previous year. Hence, it has been projected that 35 million individuals will experience drug related disorders in the nearest future. In 2020, a study by the Global Burden of Diseases estimated that there were 585,000 deaths due to hard drug utilization occurring worldwide (UNODC, 2023).

Records show that in America, Asia and Europe, hard drugs are used as energizers and food supplements (Scott, 2021). In San Francisco, Scott (2021) documented the wide use of cannabis by Chinese labourers for prolonged farming activity in their plantations. For decades now, the United States remains the largest single consumer market for hard drugs on the planet (Scott, 2021). Although there is no definitive estimate, the value of all illicit drugs sold annually in the United States may reach as high as US\$150 billion. Some \$37 billion per year may be spent on cocaine alone (UNODC, 2023). However, hard drug utilization is not peculiar to the U.S.A alone. For example, over the last decade, hard drug use in 27 countries of the European Union increased from 4.3 to 4.7 million users, which represents 30 percent of the worldwide consumption of hard drugs (UNODC, 2023).

In the Sub-Saharan Africa, the use of hard drugs such as cannabis, methamphetamine and nicotine are widespread (Dumbili, 2015). These drugs are usually consumed and cultivated domestically (Dumbili, 2015). In Cameroon, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe, the use of hard drugs such as cannabis are common (Dumbili, 2016). In Zimbabwe specifically, cannabis has long been used as medication by traditional healers, it has important ritual uses among spirit medium and in a variety of cultural ceremonies, most notably among the Tonga speaking people (Mumola, 2020). In Nigeria, the use of cannabis (*Igbo*) is popular among the youths and a common practice among undergraduate students on campus (Ibechi, 2021).

In Nigeria today, hard drugs such as cocaine, methamphetamine chloride (*Mpuru mmiri*) and cannabis are widely grown across some states of the federation (Obafemi, 2019). Obiechina and Isiguzo (2022) noted that the cultivation of cannabis spread more rapidly during the 1960s, thereby making it a public health issue in Nigeria following its abuse by youths. There are consequences associated with the use of hard drugs among young Nigerians. According to Obafemi (2019), hard drug utilization alters the mind, changes the users feeling and behaviour because of their negative impacts on the brain. The most common forms of hard drugs among university students include stimulants and amphetamines such as tobacco and nicotine; hallucinogens such as marijuana; narcotics such as heroine and codeine among others. High rate of hard drug utilization is largely attributed to the belief that they relieve examination stress and anxiety and some of them

induce sleep, ease tension, cause relaxation and help users to forget about their sorrows temporarily (Obafemi, 2019).

Olatunde (2021) opined that there are several factors influencing hard drug use among undergraduate students. Some of these factors include peer group influence, childhood exposure to drugs, parental failure, neighbourhood gangs, negative childhood experience and campus cultism. Ezeugo (2021) noted that the crucial determinants of hard drug use among undergraduate students can be grouped into the following: social factors, economic and psychological factors. Social factors are more pronounced and include curiosity, parental influence, peer group pressure, quest for fame and environment factors. Many undergraduate students taking hard drugs today started because of curiosity and now they are addicts. In agreement, Edward and Arifs (2020) identified curiosity as one of adolescence characteristics which appears early in life and leads to extensive explorative behaviour. They stressed that out of curiosity, students experiment with certain hard drugs to know whether the effects are pleasurable. Today, many university students find themselves using drugs out of curiosity. They want to know how it feels like to use hard drugs. Some of the drugs that are commonly used out of curiosity include cigarettes, marijuana, heroin and alcohol. Such students are usually curious about having new experiences. Seeing someone using hard drug makes them more curious to know how it will make them feel. According to Abiodun (2019), because of peer group pressure many students have tasted these hard drugs, have continued to take it and are right now frequent users.

According to Farea (2022), the family background of an undergraduate can also expose such a person to all sorts of antisocial behaviour including hard drug utilization. This could be due to family problems like broken homes, polygamous family, culture and having a father who is a drug addict; "like father like son". As the child watches his father there is every tendency that the child will become a drug addict. By implication, when parents fail to carry out their responsibilities on their children, they are exposing such kids to social ills such as hard drug use. Olatawura and Odejide (2021) observed that some of our earliest interactions in life play the biggest roles in our development; from early childhood to the

ongoing development into adulthood, our relationships with family and peers have some of the greatest influence on the development of drug related behaviours.

Statement of the Problem

Globally, the use of hard drugs among undergraduate students has become a major concern (Nwachukwu et al, 2019). Studies have shown that hard drug use is a social problem among undergraduates including students in Nigerian universities like Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka in Anambra State (Okafor & Ekwunife, 2017; Adebayo, 2020). Udoko (2020) observed that in an ideal situation, parents and guardians are supposed to send their children to school, pay their school fees, upkeep, feeding allowances, accommodation and other necessities while in school. In an ideal society, these students while in the university put in their best to make their parents and guardians proud by graduating with their mates in a record time. Unfortunately, many parents are now worried and have expressed concerns about how some of their children tend to easily lose their morals, associate with bad friends and now engage in the use of hard drugs in school. According to Adeyemo, Oyebola and Oluwole (2021), there are undergraduate students today who have lost focus in their studies because of hard drug use, some of them hardly attend lectures or classes and have become bad influence to the younger ones whenever they travel home during holidays. This situation has qualified hard drug utilization as a social problem.

In Nigeria today, the prevalence of hard drug utilization among students is a major cause for concern. The availability of drugs, peer pressure, and the need to cope with stress and academic pressure have been identified as factors associated with hard drug use among undergraduate students (Umeh et al, 2019). Hard drug use is beginning to assume a frightening dimension such that it is now encouraging all kinds of criminal activities among students such as the case of a 300 level Mass Communication female student at the University of Lagos (UNILAG), who was arrested over the murder of the Chief Executive Officer of Super TV. According to reports, she was said to have been under the influence of hard drug during the incident (Adamson, Obi & Mezuo, 2021). Nowadays, very young children get introduced to drugs and live with it as they grow into adulthood thereby, becoming serious addicts and social miscreants on campus (Etukudo, 2021). According to a

report published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2022), there is need for Nigerian leaders to be concerned about hard drug use among her youths. The report termed “The Drug Nexus” gave a detailed account of hard drug production, trafficking and suggested that illicit drug trade and use in Nigeria is not a minor concern as was often assumed. In his view, Ekpenyoung (2022) noted that this singular report has become very necessary in the consideration of the seriousness of drug problem among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Available studies have shown that hard drug use such as cannabis and methamphetamine have been found to promote several physical, psychological and social problems among undergraduate students including unintended and unprotected sexual activity, unwanted pregnancy, infections such as HIV/AIDS and the risk of sexual violence (Okorie, 2021). Physically, hard drug use likely lead to physical health problems such as heart and respiratory diseases (Onwudinjo et al, 2020). Hard drug use can also lead to psychological issues such as depression, anxiety, and poor concentration (Anosike et al, 2019). Hard drug use also led to social problems such as addiction, truancy, absenteeism, decrease in academic performance and carryovers among students due to its negative effects on concentration and motivation (Onwudinjo et al., 2020; Okorie, 2021). According to a survey conducted by the World Health Organisation (WHO), hard drug use is one of the leading causes of death and disability in Nigeria (Adebayo, 2020).

Studies have shown that students who make use of hard drugs are likely to drop out of school, become thugs, cultists; could easily join criminal gangs in school while others are prone to bully fellow students, instigate violence within school campus, engage in murder attempts and could end up in prison (Adekoya, Oyebola, & Oluwole, 2020; Adamson, Ogunlesi, Morakinyo, Akinhanmi, Onifade, 2021; Adeyemo et al., 2021). There is therefore a need to empirically investigate factors influencing hard drug use among students in NAU, Awka with a view to making practical contributions which could stimulate policy measures to ameliorate the negative effects of hard drug use among Nigerian students.

Although previous interventions have been put in place to ameliorate the negative effects of hard drug use including ban on the use of tobacco and marijuana among students;

suspension of students found engaging in parties and hard drug use on campus, ban on retail outlets and stores within the university environment (Ezenwa, 2022). However, the situation has persisted and remained unaddressed. This failure may be because of inadequate supervision and weak enforcement of previous interventions. Currently, there is lack of recent literature on the major factors influencing hard drug use, and no statistics have been compiled to show the percentage of undergraduate students who use hard drugs in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. In view of these stated problems, this study investigates factors influencing hard drug use among undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study.

1. What forms of hard drugs are commonly used among undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?
2. What are the factors influencing hard drug use among undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka?

Literature Review

Forms of Hard Drugs Commonly Used among Undergraduate Students

Obafemi (2019) conducted a study to identify types and prevalence of drug use among youths in Ijebu Ode, Ogun State. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey method, using a sample size of 185 respondents; the study found that most respondents indicated that Ijebu Ode youths both in school and out of school engage in drug use such as tobacco, cannabis, and methamphetamine. The respondents described the prevalence rate of drug use in Ijebu Ode as average. This implies that many youths in the area engage in hard drug use and abuse.

Again, Erekpere (2021) adopted a descriptive survey design to identify forms of drugs commonly used among undergraduates in Ikenne, Ogun State. The study used multi-stage sampling technique to sample 204 adolescents. Data collected were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Findings indicate that majority of the respondents identified marijuana as a common drug abused by undergraduate students in

the area while other respondents identified alcohol, methamphetamine (*mkpuru-mmiri*) and heroin.

Nnadozie (2021) carried out a study to find out the forms of hard drugs easily abused among undergraduate students in Nigeria Universities. The study was conducted in University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), with the help of 204 participants sampled through a multi-stage sampling technique, it was found that majority of the respondents indicated that drugs such as alcohol, cigarettes, Indian hemp and sniffing of glue are common among undergraduates because of the desire to explore the newfound freedom on campus. Others identified the use of hard drugs such as cocaine, codeine, and methamphetamine among university students in UNN; however, the extent of usage varies from one campus to the other.

Another study was conducted by Okorie (2022) to examine forms of drug use and abuse among undergraduates in Federal Capital Territory (F.C.T.) Abuja. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey method and sampled a total of 400 respondents. The findings revealed that many undergraduates in FCT use and abuse stimulants and depressants such as cocaine. It was found that other drugs used by undergraduates include alcohol, tobacco and marijuana. The study clarified that alcohol is a depressant drug and one of the most popular recreational drugs consumed by undergraduates. Other drugs easily consumed among undergraduates include cigarettes, native concoction such as ogogoro, caffeine and heroine.

Factors Influencing Hard Drug Use among Undergraduate Students

Onyeizuigbo (2020) carried out a study to investigate social determinants of hard drugs among undergraduates living in Obeagu, Enugu State. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey method, using a sample size of 210 students. Questionnaire and in-depth interview were used to collect data. Findings revealed that majority of the respondents said that hard drug use is caused by peer pressure. Other respondents indicated that it is caused by poor parental supervision, negative childhood experience and availability of drugs in the neighbourhood. More factors contributing to hard drug use among students include: wanting to belong, influence of social media, cultism and the need to boost sexual performance.

Onuoha (2021) carried out a similar study to examine social causes of hard drug use among undergraduates in Ebonyi State, University, Nigeria. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey method, 204 respondents constituted the sample size. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Data analysis and interpretation shows that sporting activities are responsible for the use of hard drugs among undergraduates in the school. Further findings indicate that there are external environmental factors that may influence hard drug use among students, and they include availability of hard drugs, pricing, density of distribution outlets (i.e. bars and clubs within and around the school environment), social settings where hard drug sell and use are common and nature of peer group association.

In the same vein, Onwuka (2021) examined social determinants of hard drug utilization among students at Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). The study used multistage sampling procedure to select 300 respondents, the findings showed among others that significant association exists between peer group pressure and the use of hard drugs among university undergraduates. The study also reported that parental use of hard drugs could encourage such antisocial behaviour among their children. Other factors that motivate young people to experiment with hard drugs include family structure (single and troubled family), desire to be seen as a high class, desire to influence the opposite sex, poor academic performance, wrong social orientation, depression, etc. The study also reported that among graduates' hard drug use is associated with fear of the unknown and joblessness.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted two theories namely Differential association theory and Marxian theory as the theoretical framework. Differential association theory highlights the process of social interaction through which people learn deviant behaviours such as hard drug utilization. It is adopted as the theoretical framework because it can measure the variables being interrogated in this study. The theory sees the attitude of undergraduate students towards hard drug use as learned through social interaction. By implication these youths learn how to use hard drugs when they associate with their fellow peers in school and off-campus. This shows a positive correlation between frequency of association and use of hard drugs among students in the university.

On the other hand, Marxian theory is adopted as theoretical framework because it describes the root cause of hard drug use among university students. Marxian theory assumes that unequal distribution of resources in the society is responsible for hard drug utilization among undergraduate students. Marxian theory holds the view that drug use among university students is primarily a problem that results from structural inequality and unequal access to socio-economic resources in the society. The theory rightly argues that large pharmaceutical companies benefit the most from drug sales in the society at the expense of the youths. The theory is very correct in mentioning that the rich controls the poor in every society. This is true because the rich often uses the instrumentality of the law to criminalize and label some drugs such as specific cough syrup, codeine, tramadol etc as illegal and labelling people that consume such drugs as criminals that should be targeted by law enforcement agencies. These positions by differential association theory and Marxian theory appeared very catchy and convincing to the researcher and as such, the two theories although not perfect were adopted as the theoretical framework to drive and guide this study.

Method

The study adopted the mixed methods research design which involved the use of quantitative (structured questionnaire) and qualitative (in-depth interview guide) methods of data collection to gather information from a given population at a particular period of time. Mixed methods research design has several advantages which include the integration and application of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection in the same study for the broad purpose of breadth and depth understanding (Cresswell, 2012). According to Mason (2006), combining two instruments for data collection offers enormous potentials for generating and stimulating new ways of conducting research and offers easy understanding of the complexities, contexts, complementarily, further studies and generalization of findings. The mixed methods research design was adopted for this study because it combined two methods of data collection to investigate factors influencing hard drug use among undergraduate students of NAU, Awka.

This study was carried out in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State. Available records from the Office of the Director Academic Planning Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka show that the population of the undergraduates as at 2022/2023 academic session is 37,182 students. The population is made up of 24,706 regular students and 12,476 part time students. The target population for the study were regular students aged 18 years and above schooling in NAU, Awka. The sample size for this study was 204. The sample size was statistically estimated and generated using Taro Yamane's (1967) population determination for sampling size.

Results

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Socio-demographic data of respondents

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
Gender		
Male	90	45.0
Female	110	55.0
Total	200	100.0
Age		
18 – 22 years	154	77.0
23 – 27 years	35	17.5
28 years and above	11	5.5
Total	200	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	157	78.5
Married	30	15.0

Divorced	2	1.0
Separated	10	5.0
Widowed	1	0.5
Total	200	100.0
Religious Affiliation		
Christianity	162	81.0
Islam	32	16.0
African Traditional Religion	4	2.0
Atheist/Agnostic	2	1.0
Total	200	100.0
Place of Residence		
School hostel	74	37.0
Off campus	126	63.0
Total	200	100.0
Faculty		
Arts	49	24.5
Environmental Sciences	50	25.0
Social Sciences	50	25.0
Education	51	25.5
Total	200	100.0
Department		
Music Department	49	24.5

Estate Management	50	25.0
Sociology/Anthropology	50	25.0
English Education	51	25.5
Total	200	100.0
Level of Study		
100 level	50	25.0
200 level	50	25.0
300 level	49	24.5
400 level	51	25.5
Total	200	100.0
Socio-economic Status		
High	55	27.5
Average	77	38.5
Low	68	34.0
Total	200	100.0

Field Survey, 2024

Data in Table 1 shows that 55.0% of the respondents are females and 45.0% are males. With regards to age, data show that 77.0% of the respondents are within the ages of 18–22 years while 5.5% of the respondents are 28 and above. This implies that majority of the respondents are young students. Marital status and religious affiliation of the respondents revealed that majority (78.5%) are single while a greater number of the respondents, representing 81.0% of the respondents are Christians. This implies that Christianity is the predominant religion among students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

The column for place of residence shows that 63.0% of the respondents live outside the university campus (i.e., off-campus) while the remaining respondents (37.0%) live inside school hostels. This implies that majority of the respondents prefer to live outside the university environment where they can enjoy maximum freedom. Results from the faculty and departments of the respondents indicate that 25.5% are from the Faculty of Education and Department of English Education respectively. A similar result was observed amongst the level of study of the respondents and the takeaway is that more number (25.5%) of final year students participated in this study. Furthermore, Table 1 indicates 38.5% of the respondents are from families of average socio-economic status while 27.5% are from high income families. This means that majority of the students are from average income families.

4.2 Analysis of Research Questions

Four research questions were designed to guide this study. They are analyzed as follows:

Research Question One

What forms of hard drugs are commonly used among undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka? Questionnaire items 9, 10 11 and 12 were used to answer research question one. The findings are presented in Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Table 2: Respondents' views whether they have ever taken/used hard drug before

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
Yes	67	33.5
No	133	66.5
Total	200	100.0

Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 shows that 66.5% of the respondents have never used hard drugs prior to this study whereas 33.5% of the respondents are regular hard drug users. This implies that more than half of the respondents have never taken hard drugs. Mild as it seems, this result is worrisome and disturbing at the same time. Therefore, parents and university authority have every reason to feel perturbed because a situation whereby young and vibrant people who are supposed to be future leaders of this country are riding on the path of hard drug use is self-destruct and does not speak well for the image of the Nigerian youths as a whole.

Table 3: Respondents' views on the kind of hard drugs they have taken

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Codeine	12	6.0
Tramadol	12	6.0
Marijuana	14	7.0
Shisha	4	2.0
Cocaine	6	3.0
Swinol	3	1.5
Canadian loud	2	1.0
Tobacco	3	1.5
Cannabis	3	1.5
No response	141	70.5
Total	200	100.0

Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 shows that majority 7.0% of the respondents identified marijuana as the kind of hard drug that they have taken. Similarly, 1.0% of the respondents have consumed Canadian loud before. This implies that intake of marijuana is common among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Table 4: Respondents' views on the kind of hard drugs they have taken commonly used among undergraduates

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
Marijuana	77	38.5
Cocaine	23	11.5

Tobacco	14	7.0
Methamphetamine (<i>Mkpuru Mmiri</i>)	41	20.5
Codeine/tramadol	45	22.5
Total	200	100.0

Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 shows that 38.5% of the respondents identified marijuana (*Igbo*) as one of the major types of hard drugs commonly used among undergraduates. Also, 7.0% of the respondents indicated tobacco as another hard drug that is common among students. This implies that intake or smoking of marijuana is very common among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. This aligned with the qualitative data. One of the interviewees stated:

Many drugs are commonly abused by these end-time children, ranging from tramadol to cocaine, marijuana, codeine and *mpurum-mmiri* also known as methamphetamine and so on. Marijuana, however, seems to be more prevalent (Male, Single, 21 years, 300 Level, Department of Cooperative Economics and Management).

Another interviewee opined:

It is difficult to say which drugs are often consumed by undergraduates, but one can assume that alcohol consumption rate and marijuana could be higher. My guess is that alcohol is a social drug, it is common in wedding ceremonies, student parties etc. In terms of hard drugs, marijuana and tramadol are taking the lead (Female, Married, 23 years, 400 Level, Department of Library and Information Science).

Another interviewee stated:

My observation for over year now shows that marijuana, codeine and tramadol are the major hard drugs consumed by students. Hard

drugs for some students are consumed to stay awake during exam period. The problem is that these intakes sooner than later become a habit that the student can hardly moderate or stop its use (Female, Single, 20 years, 100 Level, Department of Cooperative Economics and Management).

Another participant expressed his reservation this way:

Seriously, I doubt if there is anybody or agency effectively moderating or regulating intake of drugs among university students in Nigeria. Even the NDLEA and National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) that regulate standard and also ensures that quality is maintained during production has failed Nigerians in this regard. As such drug use and abuse is common among students (Male, Single, 22 years, 200 Level, Department of Library and Information Science).

Table 5: Respondents' views on the rate of hard drug use among undergraduates

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
High	62	31.0
Moderate	98	49.0
Low	40	20.0
Total	200	100.0

Field Survey, 2024

Table 5 shows that 49.0% of the respondents described the rate of hard drug use among undergraduates as moderate whereas 20.0% said it is low. The implication of this result is that there is moderate use of hard drugs among undergraduates. It is safe to describe the situation as mild but hard drug utilization is not good for the youths particularly when one considers the fact that these drugs are addictive and can lead to various negative and antisocial behaviours. This agreed with the qualitative data. One of the interviewees stated:

The rate at which students of Unizik attend parties and get together around Ifite community is worrisome and disturbing. It is obvious that many of these orgy parties are avenues to take drugs and engage in group sex at the expense of their studies. I am sure you heard about the Hotel that was shut down last year because of such illicit activity among Unizik students (Male, Single, 21 years, 300 Level, Department of Cooperative Economics and Management).

According to another participant:

There is moderate use of hard drugs among Unizik students. It is not just among students; many youths nowadays are quick to explore drugs. My understanding is that some of them engage in drug use to forget their sorrows while many others are unfortunate and lack proper upbringing. As such, very little care from friends could make them get carried away until they start abusing addictive substances (Female, Married, 23 years, 400 Level, Department of Library and Information Science).

Another interviewee said:

It is obvious that many undergraduates take drugs for pleasure and to belong. This is a serious problem. In the past, intake of drugs such as tramadol, cough syrup, codeine etc are used for body pains and other conditions but today our youths have started abusing these drugs with careless abandon. Sometimes in the past, I heard about students who take hard drugs to prove to their peers that they are adults now (Male, Single, 22 years, 200 Level, Department of Library and Information Science).

Research Question Two

What are the factors influencing hard drug use among undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka? Questionnaire items 13 and 14 were used to answer research question two. Findings are presented in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6: Respondents' views on the factors influencing hard drug use among undergraduates

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
Peer pressure	70	35.0
Negative family experience	43	21.5
Family instability	22	11.0
Availability of drugs in the neighbourhood	48	24.0
Cultism	17	8.5
Total	200	100.0

Field Survey, 2024

In table 6, peer pressure (35.0%) is one of the factors influencing hard drug use among undergraduates. Similarly, a lesser percentage of the respondents identified cultism as another social determinant of hard drug utilization among undergraduates. By implication, this means that peer group pressure (also known as negative peer influence) is the major factor that lures many undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka into hard drug utilization. This aligned with the qualitative data. One of the interviewees said.

Pressure from friends and age mates is a serious factor encouraging young adolescents and, in this case, young students to engage in intake of drugs. If a male adolescent for a example has a football friend or team he admires and observes overtime that before or after training these teammates engage in binge drinking, such a person is likely to join them in drug use in order not to be called a *Jew guy* (Male, Single, 21 years, 300 Level, Department of Cooperative Economics and Management).

Another participant said:

The same thing happens when a lady falls in love with a guy who abuses drugs. If your boyfriend is a hard drug user, then the tendency of the girlfriend becoming one is very high. The situation may even become worse for students raised by single parents who are hard drug users (Female, Married, 23 years, 400 Level, Department of Library and Information Science).

The agreed with another interviewee who stated thus:

Peer group pressure can be of great influence on students, because when their friends are taking drugs, they may be pressured to take drugs too. Don't forget that family upbringing is another major factor that pushes some students to drugs; when students are not properly brought up or when one of their parents or family members are into drugs, such exposure can make them to take drugs as they grow (Female, Single, 20 years, 100 Level, Department of Cooperative Economics and Management).

Another participant summarized it this way:

Poor parental upbringing and peer influence are responsible for hard drug use among students. If the parents are the type that are too busy and do not look after their children then these children will start keeping bad friends and acquaintances without the parents knowing it and this could lead to cross fertilization of ideas. In this case, if the peers or friends are the type that indulge in hard drug utilization then the student in question will be part of it and before long, addiction may set in (Male, Single, 22 years, 200 Level, Department of Library and Information Science).

Table 7: Respondents' views on the likelihood that peer group pressure can lead to hard drug utilization among undergraduates

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
Yes	159	79.5
No	4	2.0
Sometimes	37	18.5
Total	200	100.0

Field Survey, 2024

Table 7 shows that 79.5% of the respondents opined that there is the likelihood that peer group pressure can lead to hard drug use among undergraduates. This statement did not go down well with a few other (2.0%) respondents who promptly countered the claim. One major take away from this result is that, to a large extent peer group pressure influences the use of hard drugs among undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Hypothesis One: There is a significant relationship between gender and hard drug use among undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Hypothesis one was tested through the cross tabulation of study variables in the table below.

Table 11: Cross-tabulation between gender and hard drug use among undergraduates in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

		Have you ever taken/used hard drug before?		
		Yes	No	Total
What is your gender?	Male	34 (17.0%)	56 (28.0%)	90 (45.0%)
	Female	33 (16.5%)	77 (38.5%)	110 (55.0%)
	Total	67 (33.5%)	133 (66.5%)	200 (100.0%)

$$\chi^2 = 32.167, df = 1, N = 200, p \text{ value} = 0.000$$

Table 11 shows that the computed value of chi-square is 32.167 while the table value of chi-square at 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom (df) of 1 is 3.841. Since the computed chi-square value is greater than the table value, the alternative hypothesis was accepted and the null hypothesis rejected. More specifically, the p value (0.000) shows a

very high level of significance. This implies that there is a significant association between gender and hard drug use among undergraduates in Nnamdi Azikiwe University. In other words, gender influences hard drug use among students in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

4.3.2 Hypothesis Two: There is a significant relationship between peer group pressure and hard drug use among undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Hypothesis two was tested through the cross tabulation of study variables in the table below.

Cross-tabulation between peer group pressure and hard drug use among undergraduates in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

		Have you ever taken/used hard drug before?		
		Yes	No	Total
Is it likely that peer group pressure can lead to hard drug utilization among undergraduates?	Yes	50 (25.0%)	109 (54.5%)	159 (79.5%)
	No	2 (1.0%)	2 (1.0%)	4 (2.0%)
	Sometimes	15 (7.5%)	22 (11.0%)	37 (18.5%)
Total		67 (33.5%)	133 (66.5%)	200 (100.0%)

$$\chi^2 = 23.322, df = 2, N = 200, p \text{ value} = 0.000$$

Table 12 shows that the computed value of chi-square is 23.322, while the table value of chi-square at 0.05 level of significance with a degree of freedom (df) of 2 is 5.991. Since the computed chi-square value is greater than the table value, the alternative hypothesis was accepted while the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between peer group pressure and hard drug use among undergraduates in

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. It can therefore be inferred that peer group pressure encourages the use of hard drug among undergraduates of Nigerian universities.

Discussion of Findings

Hard drug use is a serious problem in many universities around the world and it is of particular concern in Nigerian Universities due to a number of issues around drug use and abuse among undergraduates. This study looked at factors influencing hard drug use among undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Two research questions were formulated to guide this study and the following findings were made. To address the first study objective, data show that marijuana is the major type of hard drug commonly abused by undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Other hard drugs often utilized by students include cocaine, tobacco, methamphetamine (*mkpuru mmiri*), shisha, tobacco, codeine and tramadol. This study found moderate use of hard drugs among undergraduates of NAU, Awka. This aligns with a similar study by Obafemi (2019) which found that intake of hard drugs such marijuana, methamphetamine, codeine and tramadol are common among students of Ijebu Ode, Ogun State. Another study by Nnadozie (2021) affirmed that there is moderate use of hard drugs among undergraduates in University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN).

In the first objective, it was observed that peer pressure was the major factor influencing hard drug use among undergraduates. Other determinants of hard drug use include negative family experience, broken home, availability of drugs in the neighbourhood and cultism. This agrees with previous study by Onyeizuigbo (2020) which found that social determinants of hard drug use among university students in Nigeria include peer group pressure, having many carryovers, cultism and negative family experience. In a related development, Onuoha (2021) conducted a study in Ebonyi State University and reported that factors influencing hard drug use and abuse among students in that school are peer group pressure, availability of drugs in the neighbourhood, poor supervision, depression, cultism and family instability.

In the second objective it was established that there are consequences associated with hard drug utilization among undergraduates. These consequences include poor academic performance, increase in crime rate, drug addiction, school dropout and health related problems including mental health challenges. This corresponds with the study by Olatawura

and Odejide (2021) which investigated the consequences of hard drug use among Nigerian undergraduates in University of Ibadan (UI). The study reported that hard drug use is a significant public health problem that usually affects the intellect and social lives of students. It also lead to consequences such as poor academic performance, school dropout, unwanted pregnancy and poor health condition such as liver problems. In agreement, another study by Olatunde (2021) found that utilization of hard drugs such as marijuana and methamphetamine have reached epidemic level in Nigeria and could have negative impacts on the academic performance of students, increases crime rate in the society and leads to school dropout.

Furthermore, two hypotheses were tested in this study. The first hypothesis found that there is a significant association between gender and hard drug use among undergraduates in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. In other words, gender influences the use of hard drugs among undergraduates in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The second hypothesis established that there is a significant relationship between peer group pressure and hard drug use among undergraduates in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. It can therefore be inferred that peer group pressure promotes the use of hard drug among undergraduates in Nigerian universities.

Conclusion

There are many health consequences associated with hard drug use among undergraduates in Nigerian universities. Also, the student that is so much addicted to hard drugs tends to spend more money on the purchase of these drugs, this can make the taker to become bankrupt or start searching for money by all means to buy more drugs thereby leading to criminal tendencies and actions. To address the perennial problem of hard drug intake among students, this study investigated factors influencing hard drug use among undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

First, it was established that major forms of hard drugs consumed by students include methamphetamine, codeine, marijuana, codeine, tramadol, and tobacco. Possible effects of hard drug use are poor academic performance due to loss of interest in academic activities, school dropout, drug addiction, high rate of crime and health problems. To resolve these

drug related concerns, there is need for stakeholders in the education sector to step up their advocacies against the utilization of hard drugs among undergraduates and the society at large. Some of these advocacies and recommendations are captured in the next subsection.

Recommendations

In the light of the above findings, the following recommendations were made: -

1. Parents should develop close attachment or relationship with their children and should avoid exposing these innocent minds (children) to hard drugs.
2. Civil society organizations should create awareness on the dangers of hard drug use and abuse among university students and its ripple effects on the society at large.
3. Government should provide free education for children from poor families.
4. Law enforcement agencies should go after dealers of illicit drugs to reduce its availability and abuse among students on campus.
5. The management of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka should ban the use of hard drugs on campus and undergraduates found abusing hard drugs should be punished to serve as deterrent to others.
6. Nigerians are very religious people; therefore, churches and religious leaders should join the campaign against hard drug use and abuse among undergraduates in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
7. Undergraduates should decide to stop the use of hard drugs. Personal decision to quit is the best and surest way to stop the use of hard drugs among students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State.
8. Government agencies such as the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency in conjunction with the management of NAU, Awka should make provisions for counselling and rehabilitation of students that are addicted to hard drugs.

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