

Communication as a Catalyst for Preventing Drug Abuse in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

This study examines communication as an essential and inevitable tool for addressing drug abuse among undergraduates in Nigeria. Drug abuse remains one of the major threats to health, carrying serious consequences for young people in particular, often driven by factors such as social pressure and curiosity. Among students, drug abuse poses growing academic, health, and social concerns, underscoring the need for more targeted and effective communication strategies. The study evaluates the use of tools such as educational seminars, peer-led campaigns, campus posters, and social media in raising awareness and reducing drug use among undergraduates at Babcock University. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and data were collected from 400 students across various faculties using structured questionnaires. The research employed the Health Belief Model and Agenda-Setting Theory to frame how students perceive risks and how communication channels influence behavior. Findings reveal that while general awareness of drug abuse is high, many students remain uninformed about available support services. Peer influence and the normalization of drug use within social settings were identified as significant factors encouraging experimentation. Based on these findings, the study concludes that culturally relevant, student-centered communication approaches can strengthen preventive education and promote healthier choices. It recommends that Babcock University implement strategic, youth-friendly communication initiatives, particularly through digital media and peer engagement. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on drug prevention and provides a framework for integrating communication-driven interventions within higher education institutions.

INTRODUCTION

One of the major global health challenges is drug abuse, which has particularly serious consequences for young people. Factors such as social pressures, curiosity, substance misuse, and mental health challenges contribute to this vulnerability. According to the WHO (2014), drug abuse is among the leading causes of premature deaths and disabilities among youth. This issue is especially concerning in academic environments, where students face not only stress and academic pressure but also peer influence and other social dynamics. Consequently, universities and colleges worldwide are seeking preventive strategies to protect their students from the harmful effects of drug misuse. Commonly abused substances include stimulants, depressants, opioids, hallucinogens, cannabis, inhalants, and synthetic drugs.

The trend of drug abuse among university undergraduates in Nigeria is on the rise and requires urgent attention. According to studies by Agbaje and Oke (2017) and Oluremi (2012), many Nigerian undergraduates reported using drugs as a way to cope with academic stress, emotional struggles, or social influences. This behavior can quickly lead to addiction, poor academic performance, and physical or mental health challenges, and in extreme cases, criminal activities or expulsion. Despite the efforts of government agencies and NGOs, the rate of drug abuse among young Nigerians continues to increase, underscoring the urgent need for more specific and effective prevention strategies.

Babcock University the focus of this study, is a private, faith-based institution committed to fostering an academic environment grounded in ethical values, with an emphasis on both educational excellence and personal integrity. However, like many other universities, it faces significant challenges in addressing and preventing drug abuse. Substance misuse at Babcock is not only a health issue but also a breach of its Christian-based code of conduct. As such, the university administration bears a dual responsibility: enforcing disciplinary measures while also implementing preventive programs designed to educate students on the dangers of drug use.

At Babcock University, known for its commitment to high moral and behavioural standards, the persistence of drug abuse presents a complex challenge that extends beyond academic performance and undermines the institution's values. While the university statutes provide for disciplinary action against such behaviour, punitive measures alone are insufficient to address the root causes of substance misuse or to prevent undergraduates from becoming involved in the first place. Many students lack adequate knowledge about the dangers of drugs and are often misled by myths or peer pressure that make drug use appear harmless (Adekeye et al., 2015).

This challenge is further compounded by the absence of strategic, customized communication approaches. Drug abuse not only affects the undergraduates directly involved but also impacts the entire university community. It can lower academic standards, create safety risks on campus, and overburden support services such as counseling. These effects make it clear that punishment alone is not enough. Instead, there is a need for comprehensive solutions that emphasize education, prevention, and support through effective two-way communication. Targeted communication strategies are critical to advancing health education and promoting preventive behaviours among youths, as they shape perceptions, raise awareness, and encourage healthier choices. For instance, the United States' *Just Say No* campaign of the 1980s serves as a classic example of targeted communication that successfully discouraged drug use among adolescents (Windahl & Signitzer,

2008). In the same vein, the NDLEA has launched public enlightenment campaigns on drug abuse in Nigeria; however, most of these efforts are directed at the general public, often overlooking university undergraduates. The problem of drug abuse remains a pressing issue among undergraduates, with significant impacts on health, academics, and social life. One of the most promising tools in combating this challenge is communication, which has proven effective in influencing behaviour, particularly among young people.

Communication, according to McQuail (2010), encompasses various forms of media, including television, radio, social media, and print, all of which reach wide audiences and significantly influence public perceptions. Moreover, digital and social media have transformed the way messages are delivered to undergraduates by creating new channels of engagement. Platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Snapchat are particularly popular among young adults, enabling messages to spread rapidly in interactive and engaging ways. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), note that social media platforms are especially effective in targeting young people, as they foster engagement and create a sense of community around shared interests. Using a case study approach, Nnadi (2017) examined the role of social media in youth health education and found that undergraduates are more receptive to messages on the platforms they use most, as these are perceived to be more relevant and credible.

Given Babcock University's Christian values and commitment to holistic education, the use of mass communication in combating drug abuse must be both balanced and focused. This research seeks to identify the most effective strategies for raising awareness and educating undergraduates on the dangers of drug misuse. It will specifically examine how various communication tools such as campus posters, educational seminars, social media platforms, and peer-led campaigns can be maximized to discourage substance use on campus.

As universities around the world increasingly recognize the importance of preventive education, Babcock University has the opportunity to serve as a model for other institutions in Nigeria. By adopting effective communication strategies, the university can empower its undergraduates to make informed decisions that are vital for academic success and overall well-being. Ultimately, the findings of this study may contribute to broader efforts aimed at creating healthier, drug-free environments in Nigerian universities.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the level of knowledge of Babcock University undergraduates on drug abuse.
2. Examine the undergraduates perception of drug abuse
3. Ascertain the prevalence of drug abuse among undergraduates of Babcock University.
4. Investigate how peer pressure influences undergraduate's use of drugs

Concepts Analysis, Definitions and Explanations

Concept of Drug Abuse

Drug abuse, also referred to as substance abuse, involves the excessive and harmful use of substances such as alcohol, prescription medications, or illegal drugs. Doctors do not approve of

this and it can lead to physical, mental, and relationship issues. Modise (2023) suggests that drug abuse results from a mix of psychological, environmental, and social factors, making it a complex problem with significant consequences. Drug abuse goes beyond occasional use; it indicates a consistent consumption habit that disrupts regular activities. It is classified by the World Health Organization as a persistent condition marked by repeated cravings for a substance despite negative consequences (WHO, 2019). This issue is not limited to illicit substances; the misuse of prescribed drugs and non-prescription medications is a growing worry on a global scale.

According to Fernández-Ángeles (2022), teenagers and young adults, especially university undergraduates, are at the greatest risk of drug abuse. Certainly, the increased risk is attributed to age and is greatly impacted by peer influence, curiosity, and stress. University undergraduates may turn to substances like alcohol, marijuana, or stimulants to either enjoy themselves or handle the challenges of academics and social situations.

The Reasons for Drug Abuse

Peer Influence: Social dynamics also play a very important role in drug abuse. The young often face peer pressure from friends to try drugs in order to be accepted into, or feel a part of a group (Modise, 2023). In settings where the use of drugs is prevalent, peer pressure can easily result in regular use.

Stress and Coping Mechanisms: Problems at school and even personal problems might make people try drugs. University undergraduates may behave poorly with the help of stimulants in order to focus more, or drink alcohol in order to forget their stress according to, (Fernández-Ángeles 2022). Such coping behaviour typically leads to dependency due to the short-term relief of the drug that masks the real problems without resolving them.

Ease of Access and Availability: It is easier to access drugs from illegal drug markets, pharmacies, or household items, increasing the likelihood of abuse. Such factors are intensified by weak enforcement of drug laws in some areas where this makes harmful substances easily available (WHO, 2019).

Myths and Misconceptions: Another major factor is the misconception about after-effects. Many feel that marijuana, for example, enhances creativity, or that stimulants promote learning. Each one of these myths encourages experimentation, which too easily leads to abuse.

Cultural and Environmental Factors: For instance, individuals who easily accept misuse may view alcohol as a normal substance to take during social events. Immediate environmental factors include residence in areas where drugs become readily available or among family members who use drugs, therefore increasing the chances of abuse (Modise, 2023).

Consequences of Drug Abuse

Drug abuse does not affect only the person consuming it but also affects his/her family, community, and society as a whole. The impact includes;

Health Effects: Substance abuse can bring about serious health consequences, physical dependence, damage to organs, and mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression. The long-term misuse may cause chronic diseases, overdose, and even death (Fernández-Ángeles, 2022).

Consequences to School and Work: This may lead to students having less concentration, bad grades, and a greater chance of dropping out of school. For those employed, it decreases job

performance and raises the potential for accidents on the job.

Social and Legal Problems: Drug use strains relationships with friends and family members. It increases the risk of criminal behaviour such as theft or drug dealing, and legal repercussions include arrest and possibly imprisoned sentences in prison. (WHO,2019).

Financial Problems: Economic-wise, drug abuse is a very expensive affair, including health care costs, enforcement costs, and costs related to lost work time. Community-based drug abuse prevention through communication involves much cost by governments and organizations in prevention, rehabilitation, and enforcement of policies that reduce such effects Etc.

Concept of Communication

Touitou (2015) defined communication as “the transfer of information from one place to another in a desired direction, with the expectation of bringing about a desired effect. Communication is the transfer of ideas or knowledge in ways that enable recipients to understand, reacts to, and acts upon the information received.” However, for the receiver of a message to respond appropriately, communication must be planned and orderly to be effective.

Communication is a complex process involving the exchange or sharing of information. For it to occur, certain basic components are required: the source (the originator of the message), the medium (the channel through which the message is conveyed), the receiver, and the feedback (the reaction of the receiver to the message). In addition, noise refers to anything that interferes with or distorts the message. Examples include misspelled words, poor reading or listening skills, and distractions such as laughing or jeering, all of which are considered forms of semantic noise.

Communication, according to McQuail (2010), comprises various forms of media, including television, radio, social media, and print, all of which reach extensive audiences and contribute greatly toward the modification of public perceptions. Communication is the process by which people share information, ideas and feelings. It is one of the basic human activities that enable people to relate, cooperate, and understand each other. Edwards (2024) refers to communication as a dynamic process, constantly readapting to change situations, a valuable tool for the solution of personal and social problems. Communication has changed a lot over time, from face to face conversation to modern digital platforms linking people all over the world. The change has resulted in much faster, wider-scope communication that is at times very complicated. This is why it is especially important to clarify its basic ideas and uses. Good communication involves not only the conveyance of information but also ensuring that the message is understood as intended by the sender. This compels us to be sensitive to the context, cultural considerations, and particular needs of the audience. Touitou,(2015) corroborated this, saying that “...communication research is not just studying how message gets from one point to another, it focuses on how people use message to inform, persuade, manage, relate and influence one another in various contexts and cultures using a variety of channels and media.

Edwards, (2024), also gives a note of warning to some communicators who depend singly on mass media to achieve real impact on the publics, reiterating what research has said in this regard that: “Important though the media because of their potential for area coverage and their impact on attitude change and behavior, they are usually not able to succeed in changing people’s attitude,

let alone cause them to behave according to the demands of message. Therefore, mass media efforts must be supplemented with interpersonal communication in order to assure success. Moemeka opines that in view of lapse, proposes an integrated communication strategy that” ... combines interpersonal and mass media strategies, carefully eliminating their limitations and maximizing their potentials and strengths; the strategy, using the media, feeds the interpersonal and traditional networks within the audience relevant information that would generate positive discussions which would lead to intelligent understanding of the danger of drug abuse

In view of the following, communication theory admits that for effective targeting of the audiences and achieving the desired impact, the message must be compatible with the vehicle’ that conveys it to the audiences. According to Macluhan, the medium is message; that is, the medium certainly influences the effects of message on – target audiences. So, careful selection of medium is of utmost importance achieving the desired effects. This simply means that not all messages fit into the mass media. Communication theory also makes one believes that interpersonal communication is the best in most cases, most especially in grassroots mobilization and the effective understanding of the messages.

It is only in the interpersonal communication context that Communicant could achieve instantaneous feedback which eventually reveals the effects of the process. However, communicators should be careful not to confine the concept of interpersonal communication to verbal communication which is only an integral part of its constituents. In reality, interpersonal communication incorporates other methods of communication at all level of communication. This is because in our everyday lives, our attention tends to be focused upon words andsentences rather than upon gestures, mannerism, or the way in which we space ourselves. At this juncture, one can see that effective communication is an imperative and inevitable in the achievement of the said objective.

Relevance of communication

In today's world, communication lies at the heart of everything. It will help individuals interact in various ways, from personal relationships to international diplomacy. Technology, especially social media and video calls, has made communication easy and enabled people to connect with different places and cultures quickly (Kristiyanti & Umam, 2019). While the tools make communication faster and easier, they require more skills to be used well since the chance of miscommunication has increased. Good communication is very important in dealing with social problems such as drug abuse, health issues, and changes in education. According to Edwards (2024), in such cases, communication methods that take into account the differences in cultures and the particular audience are crucial for the intended results to be met. For example, drug abuse among collegians can be battled by campaigns that do not use simple warnings but rather messages that resonate with their lives and handle problems unique to their situation.

The Changing Landscape of Communication

Communication has changed a lot in the last couple of years because of new technologies. Digital tools have made it faster, easier to use, and much more interactive in nature. Social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp allow individuals and organizations to reach audiences around the globe almost in real time. It has altered the dissemination and usage of information, hence making knowledge sharing easier and interactions with other individuals worldwide easily

possible (Kristiyanti & Umam, 2019). This change also brought problems like false information and lack of personal touch. Digital platforms, while making communication faster and wider, sometimes may alter the messages or ignore the feelings and cultural details of talking face-to-face.

Message Framing Techniques

Framing refers to the way information is presented to shape audience perceptions, which can significantly influence behaviour. Anti-drug campaigns either run with gain-framed or loss-framed, depending on the response they seek. Gain-framed messages are those that emphasize the positive consequences of healthy behaviours, such as by staying drug-free, you maintain focus and health tend to especially resonate with goal-oriented undergraduates. Loss-framed messages are those that highlight the negative consequences, like Drug use can destroy your academic future'' which are probably more compelling for the risks at hand. By selecting appropriate framing based on audience characteristics, campaigns can better attract attention and increase the perceived importance of refraining from substance abuse.

Embracing Digital Media and Social Media Projects

The target audience is university undergraduates who are active digital users, using social media and digital platforms provide a strategic pathway for anti-drug campaigns. Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter allow the anti-drug campaign to use various multimedia videos, graphics, and info graphics to appeal to undergraduates' consumption habits on these platforms. Campaigns can increase the activity rate drastically by integrating interactive components such as polls, Q&A sessions, and testimonials into their activities while fostering a sense of community around the anti-drug message. Moreover, social media allows campaigns to reach a large audience with little cost, enabling the message to be constantly reinforced in students' daily lives.

Two-way Communication and Feedback Mechanisms

Two-way communication is crucial in fostering trust and engagement rather than using a one-way approach that simply passes on information, two-way communication invites people to discuss their experiences, concerns, and questions about drug abuse. This may be done through anonymous surveys, focus groups, or interactive workshops, where it provides insight into real undergraduate perceptions, and campaigns can change their approach in real time. Two-way communication fosters a sense of belonging and importance, where undergraduates can feel like their voices are heard and matter in the shaping of anti-drug campaigns. This collective strategy enhances the perceived credibility and efficacy of the campaign.

Use of Testimonials and Personal Narratives

Personal stories and testimonials are very important elements in communication, bringing alive the realities of drug abuse. Undergraduates generally are more receptive to personal accounts from their peers, or those who have overcome substance abuse, because such stories make the risks feel both real and relatable. Those stories carry an emotional weight that can change behaviour far more than any statistical information. Through the weaving of testimony in anti-drug campaigns, universities could create empathy, reduce stigma, and provide real-life context, which will enhance the deterrence effect.

Theoretical Frameworks

These theories provide theoretical support to this study:

Health Belief Model (HBM)

The Health Belief Model (HBM) provides insight into health behaviours, particularly in relation to the perception of threats and the decision-making process to minimize risks, this model was formulated in the 1950s by the social psychologists Hochbaum, Rosenstock, and Kegels. It stresses that people's decisions about adopting preventive behaviors are influenced by their perceptions of the risks and consequences of a certain health issue, in addition to their self-efficacy in acting. The Health Belief Model provides a systematic framework for understanding the reasons for undergraduates engaging in or avoiding drug use and how communication may change their attitudes and behaviours.

At the heart of the model is the assumption that behaviour change is driven by an individual's perception of risk. A majority of undergraduates often underestimate their personal receptiveness to drug abuse, usually attributing it to other specific groups or people who lack willpower. This false sense of security can easily make them reject preventive efforts. In countering this, communication strategies must concentrate on making the risk more personal. Sharing the real-life experiences of undergraduates coming from all walks of life who have struggled with drug addiction can help eliminate these myths, enabling others to realize that they too could find themselves vulnerable.

It is equally necessary to share with them the serious consequences associated with drug use. Some at the undergraduate level may feel that occasional use is harmless or easily reversible, not realizing the long-term effects on their health both physical and psychological. The most successful campaigns can make use of statistics and first-hand experiences to highlight the devastating consequences of drug abuse, including addiction, deteriorating mental health, poor academic outcomes, and damaged relationships. These messages help reinstate the seriousness of the situation, making students take preventive measures seriously. Awareness alone, however, is not enough to trigger a behaviour change. Undergraduates must truly believe in the benefits of leading a drug-free life. In emphasizing the benefits that undergraduates derive from avoiding drugs, better academic performance, better health, and better social bonding, we can motivate undergraduates to make healthier choices. Even though they comprehend the risks and benefits, some undergraduates encounter hurdles that hinder their ability to make healthy choices. These obstacles may manifest as peer pressure, a fear of social exclusion, or restricted access to support services. Tackling these issues is essential for promoting behavioural change. Moreover, communication can play a vital role in confronting the stigma linked to seeking help, reframing it as an indication of strength rather than a sign of weakness. Another important factor in preventive behaviour is the presence of triggers that will spur one into action. For undergraduate university students, these cues could take many forms, social media campaigns, awareness events, and even campus wide activities aimed at keeping the anti-drug message visible. Students at undergraduate levels should be confident enough to resist drug use and peer influences. Building confidence, therefore, includes empowering them with the necessary life skills and strategies. This is made possible through workshops that focus on assertive communication, time and stress management, and decision-making.

Agenda Setting Theory

The Agenda-Setting Theory, introduced by McCombs and Shaw in 1972, posits that the media significantly influence the public's perception of what issues are important. Rather than dictating opinions, the media shape the topics that audiences consider noteworthy by emphasizing certain issues over others. This concept was empirically validated during their study of the 1968 U.S. presidential election, where a strong correlation was found between media coverage and the public's issue priorities (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

In today's digital age, the theory extends beyond traditional media to encompass digital and social platforms. Users now actively participate in the dissemination and amplification of information, thereby influencing public discourse. Research indicates that agenda-setting power is now shared among traditional media, influencers, and everyday users, all contributing to shaping public priorities (Valenzuela et al., 2019). Applying this theory to health communication, particularly in drug abuse prevention among undergraduates, reveals its practical utility. When anti-drug messages are prominently featured on university-managed social media accounts, they become more visible and repetitive. These lead students to perceive drug abuse prevention as a significant issue and to act on the message. This aligns with the theory's assertion that increased media emphasis on a topic that elevates its perceived importance among the public. Furthermore, agenda-setting is instrumental in reframing perceptions. Consistent exposure to messages portraying drug abuse as detrimental and socially unacceptable can lead students to internalize these views, especially when such messages are endorsed by trusted figures like university officials and counselors. This process underscores the media's role in not only highlighting issues but also shaping the context in which they are understood.

The Incorporation of peer influencers and student leaders in disseminating anti-drug messages enhances the campaign's effectiveness. Peer influence is particularly potent among undergraduates, and leveraging it can create a ripple effect, encouraging wider acceptance and engagement with the campaign. Studies have shown that in the digital era, agenda-setting increasingly relies on influential individuals within target audiences to sway their peers (Cho & Brossard, 2020). Moreover, the use of visual and emotional content on platforms like Instagram and TikTok can significantly boost engagement. Campaigns that incorporate compelling imagery or personal stories related to drug abuse can evoke empathy and concern, making the issue more relatable and urgent for students. Emotional content has been found to have a stronger agenda-setting effect, enhancing memory retention and emotional engagement (Vargo et al., 2019).

Based on the above assertions the study sought to come up with these specific objectives

Empirical Review

Akoja, Adefarasin (2019) conducted a study on Effect of Communication Intervention Strategies on Awareness, Knowledge, and Perception of Teachers on Substance Abuse among Adolescents in Yaba/Shomolu Local Government. The study employed different communication strategies (seminars, posters, fliers) were tested on teachers to see their impact on substance abuse awareness, knowledge, and perception. Purposive sampling was used to select four schools in Yaba/Shomolu, Lagos State, with a total of 62 teachers (35 in the experimental group and 27 in the control group). There was a significant improvement in the experimental group after the intervention: awareness (mean increase from 71.48 to 92.54), knowledge (from 51.14 to 59.4), and perception (from 23.48

to 27.02). The control group showed no significant changes. The authors recommended that teachers adopt preventive strategies to tackle adolescent substance abuse, given the positive impact of communication interventions. Communication intervention strategies positively affect teachers' awareness, knowledge, and perception of substance abuse among adolescents.

Tijani, Ovigie, Adeshina (2022) made an evaluation on Application of Social Media Campaign Strategy for Prevention of Drug Abuse among Undergraduate Students in Igbinedion University, Okada. Data was collected using questionnaires distributed to undergraduate students. The study aimed to assess the effectiveness of social media campaigns in preventing drug abuse among undergraduate students. The use of social media (computers, the Internet, email, and telephone) was identified as a campaign strategy to prevent drug abuse. However, there was a lack of adequate media facilities, and training on using these resources was needed. The university should provide adequate media facilities and continue reinforcing social media campaigns through orientation programs, posters, and awareness campaigns.

Guanah, Osafire, Olimma, Nkala (2023) conducted a study on Mass Media and the Discourse on Illicit Drug Use by Nigerian University Students. The authors used a quantitative survey-based study. A sample size of 450 students and 9 lecturers was selected. The study aimed to identify sources of drug exposure, types of drugs abused, and evaluate the media's role in combating illicit drug use among Nigerian university students. Social media, friends, and drug joints are major sources of drug exposure. Media efforts in combating drug abuse are seen as insufficient. A collaborative approach involving the media, educational institutions, and policymakers is essential. The authors emphasize that a more proactive media role is crucial to tackling drug abuse among Nigerian students

Okafor (2020) conducted a study on the Causes and Consequences of Drug Abuse among Youth in Kwara State, Nigeria. Data was collected using a questionnaire. Simple random sampling was used to select respondents from undergraduate students at the University of Ilorin. The authors stated that the primary cause of drug abuse was the need to cope with academic challenges. The author recommended that government should regulate drug sales and monitor high-risk areas. The Ministry of Education and NACADA should collaborate to provide support services for students with social and behavioural issues linked to drug abuse. Addressing drug abuse among students requires both government intervention and educational initiatives to mitigate the causes and support those affected.

Okoye, Agbim, Ohaji, Etumnu, Okodogbe, and Odionyenma (2022) The study is about how Effectiveness of Mass Media in the fight against Drug Abuse among Undergraduates of Tertiary Institutions in Imo state. They used a survey to gather data from students. The authors wanted to find out if media campaigns are really helping to reduce drug abuse among these students. While students are somewhat aware of the media campaigns, the campaigns have not been very successful in reducing drug abuse. Drug use still remains a problem despite these efforts. The authors suggest that media campaigns should do more, using better, more creative strategies to get the message across and really make a difference in the way students view drug use. The main takeaway is that current media campaigns aren't working well enough. They need to be stronger and more impactful to actually influence students' behaviors regarding drug abuse.

Nawi, Ismail, Ibrahim, Hassan, Manaf, Amit, Ibrahim, and Shafuridin (2021) conducted a review to understand the Risk and Protective Factors of Drug Abuse among Adolescents: A Systematic Review. This review included 22 quantitative and 1 qualitative studies. The authors aimed to identify and categorize both risk and protective factors influencing adolescent drug abuse worldwide. The review identified risk factors across three main domains: individual (e.g., impulsivity, rebelliousness, psychiatric disorders), family (e.g., poor maternal supervision, parental drug use), and community (e.g., drug-using peers). The study recommends comprehensive prevention programs addressing all three domains and involving community, family+, and individual interventions. The authors conclude that successful drug abuse prevention among adolescents requires a multi-level approach, as various individual, familial, and community factors interact in complex ways to influence drug use behavior.

Rafique, Huma, Iqbal (2024) conducted a study on The Impact of Social Media on Raising Drug Awareness among Students in simple random sampling. A total of 450 respondents were selected from various educational institutions in Lahore. The study aimed to examine the effectiveness of social media in raising awareness about drug misuse among students in educational institutions. Specifically, it sought to explore the impact of social media campaigns on students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours concerning drug abuse. Social media platforms were shown to play a crucial role in educating students about the risks associated with drug use. The study concluded that social media effectively raises drug awareness among students. The authors recommended that educational institutions should leverage social media platforms more effectively in their drug awareness campaign. The authors concluded that social media has a significant influence on raising drug awareness among students and that social media should be a key component in the efforts to eradicate and prevent drug use among young people.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, in capturing undergraduate's current level of knowledge, perception and attitude towards drug abuse. The total population of 12,374 undergraduates of Babcock University using a margin of error of 5%, the sample size of 400 was obtained using Taro Yamane formula. The cluster random sampling technique was used to get the actual respondents of undergraduates from various faculties out of the whole population of Twelve Thousand Four Hundred and Ninety Three (12,493), according to Babcock University registry (2024). The reliability testing was performed using Cronbach's alpha to measure internal consistency. The coefficient of the Cronbach alpha reliability test ranges from 0.00 to 1.00, with any value above 0.7 indicating that the research instrument was reliable. The data obtained through questionnaire were analyzed with descriptive statistics of frequency count and percentage, and the data obtained were subjected to content analysis with the close references to the study's research questions and objectives.

Analysis of Data/Discussion of findings:

The interpretation and discussion of data gotten from responses to the questionnaires were administered to undergraduates that give intended audience and future researcher the modus operandi of arriving at results and making generalizations. A total of 400 copies of questionnaires

were administered, and (100%) of the questionnaires were retrieved.

Table 1

Research Objective One: The Level of Knowledge of Drug Abuse among Babcock University Undergraduates

Variable	VH Freq. (%)	H Freq. (%)	VL Freq. (%)	L Freq. (%)	Mean $\bar{x}$	Standard Deviation (SD)
I know what drug abuse is	197 (49.3%)	143 (35.8%)	43 (10.8)	17 (4.3%)	3.30	0.82
I am aware of the health risks associated with drug abuse	173 (43.3%)	152 (38.0%)	53 (13.3%)	22 (5.5%)	3.19	0.87
I know types of drugs commonly abused by undergraduates	139 (34.8%)	167 (41.8%)	64 (16.0%)	30 (7.5%)	3.04	0.90
I understand the long-term effects that drug abuse might cause in academic and personal life	151 (37.8%)	159 (39.8%)	62 (15.5%)	28 (7.0%)	3.08	0.90
I know what services are available at Babcock university to address drug abuse	101 (25.3%)	133 (33.3%)	89 (22.3%)	77 (19.3%)	2.65	1.06
Average Overall Mean					3.05	0.91

The data presented in Table 1 explores the level of knowledge regarding drug abuse among undergraduates at Babcock University. In item 1 above. The majority of students demonstrated a strong understanding, with 197 respondents (49.3%) selecting Very High and 143 (35.8%) selecting High. Only a small portion, 43 (10.8%) and 17 (4.3%), chose Very Low and Low respectively. The mean score of 3.30, which falls within the Very High knowledge range, suggests that students generally have a solid grasp of what constitutes drug abuse. The standard deviation of 0.82 indicates a moderate level of agreement among students. In item2, a substantial number of students 173 (43.3%) and 152 (38.0%) rated their awareness as Very High and High, respectively. Only a minority of 53 (13.3%) and 22 (5.5%) rated themselves lower. The mean score of 3.19 falls in the High knowledge category, pointing to a generally strong awareness of the health implications of drug abuse, with a standard deviation of 0.87 reflecting a fair level of consistency in responses. In item3, the responses were slightly more varied, while 167 students (41.8%) indicated High

knowledge and 139 (34.8%) selected Very High, a combined 94 students (23.5%) chose either Very Low or Low. The resulting mean score of 3.04 still places this statement within the High knowledge range, though the slightly higher standard deviation of 0.90 suggests more variation in awareness regarding specific drugs. While in item4 shows a high level of agreement. A total of 151 students (37.8%) selected Very High, and 159 (39.8%) selected High. Fewer students 62 (15.5%) and 28 (7.0%) rated their understanding as Very Low or Low. The mean score of 3.08 indicates that most students believe they understand the long-term consequences of drug abuse, both academically and personally. Again, a standard deviation of 0.90 reveals a moderate spread in perceptions. However, in item5 concerning the services available at Babcock University to address drug abuse, responses showed less confidence. Only 101 students (25.3%) selected Very High, and 133 (33.3%) selected High. A notable portion 89 (22.3%) and 77 (19.3%) reported Very Low or Low knowledge. This resulted in a lower mean score of 2.65, indicating a general lack of awareness about campus-based drug abuse support services. The standard deviation of 1.06, the highest among all items, reflects a greater inconsistency in responses and suggests that this is an area needing more targeted attention and communication. Overall, the average mean score of 3.05 and a standard deviation of 0.91 indicate that students at Babcock University possess a generally high level of knowledge about drug abuse, its risks, and consequences. . Orji et al. (2021), for example, reported that while Nigerian undergraduates demonstrated significant awareness of the dangers and types of drug abuse, they were often unaware of school-based prevention or treatment programs. In a similar study, Amadi and Okechukwu (2023) found that most students relied on peers or online content for drug-related knowledge and rarely knew where to seek help within their university environment. Eze and Obasi (2022) argued that while drug education initiatives improve theoretical understanding, they frequently fail to communicate available support structures effectively.

Table 2**Research Objective Two: Students Perception of Drug Abuse**

Variable	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	Mean $\bar{x}$	Stand ard Devia tion (SD)
Drug abuse is a serious issue among undergraduates	213 (53.3%)	129 (32.3%)	35 (8.8%)	23 (5.8%)	3.33	0.86
Using drugs occasionally is not harmful	48 (12.0%)	67 (16.8%)	142 (35.5%)	143 (35.8%)	2.05	1.00
Drug abuse negatively impacts academic performance	190 (47.5%)	136 (34.0%)	51 (12.8%)	23 (5.8%)	3.23	0.88
A drug abuser can stop anytime without seeking assistance	33 (8.3%)	72 (18.0%)	150 (37.5%)	145 (36.3%)	1.98	0.93
Awareness campaigns on drug abuse help in changing attitudes among undergraduates	169 (42.3%)	141 (35.3%)	55 (13.8%)	35 (8.8%)	3.11	0.95
Average Overall Mean					2.74	0.93

Table2:1 above presents findings on how students perceive drug abuse at Babcock University. In item 2:2, the majority of students with 213 (53.3%) selecting Strongly Agree and 129 (32.3%) selecting Agree. A smaller group 35 (8.8%) and 23 (5.8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.33 falls within the Strongly Agree category (3.25–4.00), suggesting that students overwhelmingly recognize drug abuse as a significant problem on campus. The standard deviation of 0.86 indicates moderate consistency in responses.

In contrast, in item 2:2. Only 48 (12.0%) and 67 (16.8%) agreed or strongly agreed, while a greater number 142 (35.5%) and 143 (35.8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The resulting mean score of 2.05 places this response in the Disagree category (1.75–2.49), showing that most students do not support the notion that occasional drug use is safe. The standard deviation of 1.00, slightly higher than the others, reflects some divergence in opinion, though the majority stance is clear. Similarly, in item 2:3. 190 respondents (47.5%) strongly agreed, and 136 (34.0%) agreed. Only a small number of students 51 (12.8%) and 23 (5.8%) disagreed. The mean score of 3.23 places this in the Agree category, close to Strongly Agree, reinforcing the perception that drug abuse has harmful academic consequences, while the standard deviation of 0.88 points to relatively consistent agreement.

In item2:4. A total of 150 (37.5%) disagreed and 145 (36.3%) strongly disagreed, while only a minority of 33 (8.3%) and 72 (18.0%) agreed. This resulted in a mean score of 1.98, firmly within the Disagree range. This suggests that students recognize the difficulty of overcoming drug addiction without help, demonstrating a mature understanding of the complexities involved in substance abuse recovery. The standard deviation of 0.93 again indicates a moderate spread of responses.

Finally, In items 2:5. The 169 students (42.3%) strongly agreed, and 141 (35.3%) agreed. While 55 (13.8%) disagreed and 35 (8.8%) strongly disagreed, the overall mean of 3.11 falls into the Agree category. This shows that students generally believe that educational and sensitization campaigns can be effective in reshaping attitudes toward drug use. The standard deviation of 0.95 reflects some variation in the perceived effectiveness of such programs.

In summary, the overall mean score of 2.74 and a standard deviation of 0.93 suggest that students have a generally negative perception of drug abuse and recognize its dangers, particularly in relation to academic performance and addiction.

These perceptions are consistent with recent research studies such as: Omotosho & Akinboye (2021) observed similar patterns in their study of Nigerian university students, noting that most students were aware of the dangers of drug abuse and held negative attitudes toward casual use. Mbonu et al. (2020) further emphasized that students who understand the long-term risks of drug abuse are more likely to develop resistant attitudes and avoid experimentation. Onyeka et al. (2022) found that negative perceptions of drug use often correlated with higher participation in drug education and a stronger inclination toward preventive behavior. Similarly, Osborne et al. (2019) confirmed that when students perceive drug abuse as academically and socially detrimental, they are more likely to support regulatory policies and awareness initiatives.

Table 3
Research Objective Three: The Prevalence of Drug Abuse among Babcock University Students

Variable	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	Mean $\bar{x}$	Standard Deviation (SD)
Some undergraduates use drugs out of curiosity	123 (30.75%)	145 (36.25%)	82 (20.5%)	50 (12.5%)	2.85	1.00
Undergraduates share or discuss information about drug use among peers	135 (33.75%)	150 (37.5%)	72 (18%)	43 (10.75%)	2.94	0.97
Some undergraduates take drugs due to academic pressure	115 (28.75%)	133 (33.25%)	118 (29.5%)	34 (8.5%)	2.82	0.94
Drug use is normalized among certain social groups	142 (35.5%)	120 (30%)	90 (22.5%)	48 (12%)	2.89	1.02
Undergraduates often use drug at social events or parties	148 (37%)	112 (28%)	88 (22%)	52 (13%)	2.89	1.05
Average Overall Mean					2.88	1.00

Table 3.1 addresses the prevalence of drug abuse among Babcock University undergraduates by exploring students' perceptions of how common drug-related behaviors are within their community. In 3:1. A total of 123 students (30.75%) strongly agreed, while 145 (36.25%) agreed. Fewer respondents 82 (20.5%) and 50 (12.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. With a mean score of 2.85, this item falls within the Agree range, suggesting that curiosity is widely seen as a significant motivator for drug experimentation among students. The standard deviation of 1.00 reflects some spread in perceptions, but the consensus leans clearly toward agreement.

In item 3:2, the pattern is similar. 135 students (33.75%) strongly agreed and 150 (37.5%) agreed, while a smaller group 72 (18%) and 43 (10.75%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 2.94 again places this response in the Agree category, indicating that peer-to-peer discussions about drugs are relatively common. The standard deviation of 0.97 shows moderate variation, but the dominant perception supports the prevalence of such interactions.

While, in item 3:3. 115 (28.75%) strongly agreed and 133 (33.25%) agreed, a considerable number

118 (29.5%) disagreed, and 34 (8.5%) strongly disagreed. The mean score of 2.82 still falls within the Agree category, suggesting that academic stress is recognized as a contributing factor to drug use. However, the closer distribution between agreement and disagreement highlights a more divided perception compared to other items.

While, in item 3:4. A combined 262 students (65.5%) either strongly agreed or agreed, while 90 (22.5%) disagreed and 48 (12%) strongly disagreed. The mean score of 2.89 supports the view that within specific social circles, drug use may be seen as acceptable or typical behavior, suggesting pockets of normalization within the student community, with which the standard deviation of 1.02 shows slightly higher variability in responses, likely reflecting differing personal experiences across social groups. In final item 3:5. A total of 148 students (37%) strongly agreed, and 112 (28%) agreed. Meanwhile, 88 (22%) and 52 (13%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 2.89, once again within the Agree range, suggests that drug use during social gatherings is perceived to be relatively common. The standard deviation of 1.05, the highest among all items, points to greater diversity in opinion, likely influenced by students' different social circles or first-hand exposure.

Overall, the average mean score across all items is 2.88, indicating a general perception that drug abuse is present and somewhat prevalent among undergraduates, though not to the point of being considered a strongly agreed-upon norm. The standard deviation of 1.00 across the table shows with moderate variation in responses, which is expected, may be influenced by personal experiences, group affiliations, or exposure.

In support of the above narratives, Babalola and Umeh (2021) noted that peer group influence and curiosity are among the top drivers of drug initiation among undergraduates in private Nigerian universities. Chinyere et al. (2020) found that students exposed to recreational drug use during social events or through peer discussions were significantly more likely to engage in drug use themselves, reinforcing the role of environmental and social factors. In a broader study of West African universities, Adekeye et al. (2019) emphasized the role of stress and academic performance pressure as predictors of substance abuse, especially during examination periods. Okonkwo and Eze (2022) observed that normalization of drug use within social cliques leads to increased experimentation and lowered resistance among less-inclined students, which supports the current study's finding of drug culture existing in specific social groups.

Table 4
Research Objective Four: Peer Pressure Influences Undergraduates' Use of Drugs

Variable	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	Mean $\bar{x}$	Standard Deviation (SD)
Undergraduates whose friends encourage them are likely to use drugs	131 (32.75%)	150 (37.5%)	90 (22.5%)	29 (7.25%)	2.96	0.92

Peer pressure is one of the major reasons undergraduates experiment with drugs	147 (36.75%)	142 (35.5%)	93 (23.25%)	18 (4.5%)	3.05	0.88
It's hard to resist drugs when they are offered by friends	158 (39.5%)	132 (33%)	108 (27%)	26 (6.5%)	3.00	0.93
Drug use is often introduced through close friends	143 (35.75%)	156 (39%)	95 (23.75%)	6 (1.5%)	3.09	0.80
Undergraduates who socialize less are less likely to abuse drugs	119 (29.75%)	138 (34.5%)	105 (26.25%)	38 (9.5%)	2.85	0.96
Average Overall Mean					2.99	0.90

In item 5:1 above, 131 respondents (32.75%) strongly agreed, and 150 (37.5%) agreed, while only 90 (22.5%) and 29 (7.25%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 2.96, which falls into the Agree category (2.50–3.49), suggests that students generally believe that peer encouragement plays a key role in influencing drug use. The standard deviation of 0.92 indicates a moderate spread in responses. In item 5:2. A combined 289 students (72.25%) either strongly agreed or agreed, while only 93 (23.25%) and 18 (4.5%) expressed disagreement. The mean of 3.05, comfortably within the Agree range, reflects a widely held view that peer pressure is a driving factor behind drug experimentation, and the standard deviation of 0.88 points to consistent responses among participants. While, in item 5:3, 158 respondents (39.5%) strongly agreed and 132 (33%) agreed, while 108 (27%) and 26 (6.5%) disagreed. With a mean of 3.00, the statement again falls in the Agree category, indicating that many students acknowledge the difficulty of refusing drugs in peer settings. The standard deviation of 0.93 suggests some variation in student experiences, but overall recognition of the social pressure involved. Similarly, In item 5:4. 143 students (35.75%) strongly agreed and 156 (39%) agreed. Only a minority 95 (23.75%) and 6 (1.5%) disagreed. This produced a mean of 3.09, reinforcing the perception that close social connections often serve as the entry point to drug exposure. The standard deviation of 0.80, the lowest in the table, indicates relatively strong consensus on this issue. In similar vein, in item 5:5. 119 (29.75%) and 138 (34.5%) agreed or strongly agreed, 105 (26.25%) disagreed and 38 (9.5%) strongly disagreed. The mean score of 2.85 remains in the Agree category, but it is the lowest among all the statements, implying that students are somewhat less certain about the protective effect of lower social interaction. The higher standard deviation of 0.96 also suggests more diverse viewpoints on this issue. In conclusion, the overall average mean of 2.99 indicates that students generally agree that peer relationships and social environments are strongly linked to drug use among undergraduates. With a consistent level of agreement across the items and an average standard deviation of 0.90, the findings underscore the perceived influence of social circles and peer pressure as major factors in drug abuse behavior.

These findings above align closely with recent scholarly literature: Adebowale et al. (2020) emphasized the strong correlation between peer association and substance use in Nigerian universities, identifying that drug behaviors are often learned through observation and imitation among friend groups. In a broader study across West Africa, Oluwaseun and Olatunde (2023) revealed that students who reported high peer interaction were significantly more likely to experiment with drugs, particularly when faced with stress or social pressure. Ibrahim and Salami (2021) also confirmed that drug initiation often stems from close friends who normalize substance use, making it harder for peers to refuse in group settings.

Conclusion

The findings of this survey shown, that most of the participants had a good degree of awareness about drug usage. Many of them are aware of the health risks, usually used drugs, and long-term effects on their personal and academic life. The decision-making process is found to be mostly influenced by social elements; peer pressure is a major determinant of drug use start among undergraduate students. Though there is great awareness of substance addiction and its effects, the research also shows that Babcock University has a notable knowledge vacuum about the support options that are accessible.

Though they view drug misuse as a major problem, the respondents still have misunderstandings including the notion that occasional drug use is benign or that drug users may stop without consulting help. Though more participatory and interesting methods are needed, social media, campus posters, and peer-led projects are seen to be successful in raising knowledge of communication strategies. Many of the respondents expressed a wish to participate in drug prevention initiatives, implying that easily available and well-organised educational efforts could inspire better practices. Generally, the findings show that awareness campaigns have had a significant impact; still, more targeted and student-centered communication techniques are needed at Babcock University to solve the underlying reasons of drug usage and promote long-term behavioural change

Recommendations:

1. Universities should create targeted, relatable content on drug education by leveraging platforms that students use frequently, such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp, to help disseminate drug education in a format that resonates with them.
2. Peer leaders who are influential in their social circles should be equipped with accurate information and strategies to communicate anti-drug messages and by so doing, the perception of drug abuse can be reframed as undesirable or out of line with positive social norms.
3. Rather than solely relying on one-way communication, like lectures alone, creating interactive events, such as forums, debates, and games, will engage students in active discussion and critical thinking. These events can provide students with tools to resist peer pressure and make informed choices.

4. Students should be trained on how to confidently refuse drugs when offered by friends to help counteract peer pressure. If saying no becomes a sign of strength, rather than weakness, students will feel more empowered to make independent decisions, despite peer pressures.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors have disclosed no conflicts of interest.

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