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DRUG ABUSE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN NASARAWA STATE UNIVERSITY, KEFFI

AIYEPADA IBUKUN SOLOMON
Department of Political Science,
Federal College of Education, Okene, Kogi State, Nigeria
08035373269; solomonologori@gmail.com
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Abstract
Drug abuse among students in higher institutions poses a significant social and educational challenge, adversely affecting students' health, behaviour, and academic performance. In recent years, Nigerian tertiary institutions, including Nasarawa State University, Keffi, have witnessed a rise in psychoactive substance misuse among students. This study explores the impact of drug abuse on students' academic performance at Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Employing a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 400 students using structured questionnaires. The findings reveal that while a substantial proportion of students are aware of drug abuse, a notable number engage in substance use, which significantly hampers their academic achievements. The study identifies gaps in existing intervention programmes and emphasizes the necessity for enhanced awareness campaigns and improved support services on campus. The results suggest that targeted interventions addressing drug abuse could lead to better academic outcomes and overall student well-being. The study concludes with recommendations for increased resource allocation, comprehensive awareness initiatives, and strengthened counseling services to effectively combat drug abuse and foster academic success among students in Nasarawa State University, Keffi.

Keywords: Drug abuse, Academic performance, Higher education, Nasarawa State University, Substance misuse

Introduction

Drug abuse among students in higher institutions of learning has become an important public health and educational concern. The misuse of psychoactive substances among young people can have serious consequences for their physical and psychological well-being, academic engagement, social relationships, and future prospects. University students are particularly vulnerable to substance use because they often encounter significant academic demands, peer influence, financial challenges, family-related concerns, and the pressure to adjust to greater independence (Jibrin, Gimbason & Jibrin, 2026). When these challenges are not adequately managed, some students may turn to psychoactive substances as a means of coping with stress or other personal difficulties. The consequences of such behaviour, however, may extend beyond temporary relief and negatively affect various aspects of students' lives.

Academic performance is one of the areas that may be adversely affected by drug abuse. Regular or excessive use of psychoactive substances can interfere with cognitive processes such as attention, memory, concentration, judgement, and decision-making, all of which are important for effective learning. Students who misuse drugs may experience difficulties attending lectures regularly, concentrating during academic activities, completing assignments, studying effectively, and preparing adequately for examinations. Substance use

may also contribute to absenteeism, lateness, poor class participation, and other behaviours that interfere with academic engagement. Over time, these challenges may result in declining academic performance, course failure, delayed graduation, or withdrawal from academic programmes (Alhassan, Muhammad & Tanimu, 2026)

The effects of drug abuse are not limited to students' academic activities. Substance misuse can also affect students' psychological and social well-being. Students involved in drug abuse may experience emotional instability, low self-esteem, social isolation, and difficulties maintaining healthy relationships with their peers, lecturers, and family members. In some cases, the social consequences of substance misuse may further expose students to stigma and discrimination, making it difficult for them to seek appropriate assistance. These challenges can create a cycle in which academic difficulties, psychological distress, and substance use reinforce one another, thereby making it increasingly difficult for affected students to achieve their educational goals (Vandekan, Yange &Tsav, 2026)

The factors associated with drug abuse among university students are complex and may vary according to the social and institutional environment in which students live and study. Peer influence, availability and accessibility of psychoactive substances, academic stress, financial difficulties, family background, and the desire to experiment or conform to social groups may contribute to students' involvement in substance use. Understanding these factors within a particular university is therefore important because findings from other institutions may not fully reflect the experiences and circumstances of students in that institution.

Nasarawa State University, Keffi, provides an important context for examining the relationship between drug abuse and students' academic performance. As a university with a diverse student population, understanding the extent and nature of substance use among its students is necessary for identifying the factors that may encourage drug abuse and determining its consequences for academic achievement. However, there is a need for empirical evidence that specifically examines how drug abuse affects students within the university and the factors that may contribute to the behaviour.

Therefore, examining drug abuse and its influence on the academic performance of students at Nasarawa State University, Keffi, is important for generating evidence that can guide appropriate interventions. A better understanding of the prevalence, contributing factors, and academic consequences of drug abuse can assist university administrators, counsellors, health professionals, parents, and other stakeholders in developing effective prevention, counselling, and support programmes. Such efforts can contribute to reducing substance misuse, improving students' academic engagement and achievement, and promoting a healthier and more supportive university environment.

Statement of the Problem

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between substance misuse and academic performance among students in institutions of higher learning. However, most of these studies have focused broadly on universities and other tertiary institutions, with limited attention given to the specific institutional, social, economic, and cultural contexts in which drug abuse occurs. Universities have diverse academic programmes, student populations, and institutional environments that may influence the prevalence and effects of drug abuse differently. Consequently, there is a need for institution-specific research to provide a clearer

understanding of the nature and consequences of drug abuse among students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi.

Moreover, existing studies often lack detailed and localized information on the types of drugs commonly abused by students, as well as the socio-economic, cultural, psychological, and environmental factors that contribute to substance misuse within university communities. Factors such as peer influence, family background, academic pressure, financial difficulties, stress, and the availability of drugs may influence students' involvement in substance abuse and, consequently, their academic performance. However, the extent to which these factors contribute to drug abuse among students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi, remains insufficiently established. This limited understanding may hinder the development of effective intervention strategies tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of students within the university.

Additionally, many existing studies do not adequately examine the psychological, social, and institutional barriers that may influence students' drug-use behaviours or prevent them from accessing appropriate support services. Issues such as stigma, lack of awareness, inadequate counselling services, peer pressure, and fear of disciplinary consequences may discourage students from seeking help. Understanding these barriers is essential for developing effective prevention, counselling, treatment, and rehabilitation programmes.

Therefore, the major problem is the inadequate empirical evidence on the prevalence, types, causes, and effects of drug abuse on the academic performance of students at Nasarawa State University, Keffi. It remains unclear which substances are most commonly abused, the major factors responsible for students' involvement in drug abuse, and the extent to which drug misuse affects their academic performance and educational experiences. This knowledge gap necessitates a focused investigation into drug abuse and academic performance among students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi.

Addressing this gap will provide useful evidence for university administrators, policymakers, counsellors, health professionals, parents, and other stakeholders to develop appropriate and context-specific measures for preventing and managing drug abuse among students. Such measures may help reduce the adverse effects of substance misuse, improve students' academic performance, promote their psychological and social well-being, and foster a healthier and more supportive educational environment.

Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to:

i. Determine the prevalence and types of psychoactive substances commonly abused by students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi.

ii. Examine the relationship between drug abuse and students' academic performance, with particular reference to academic grades, class attendance, and overall academic achievement.

iii. Identify the socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors that contribute to drug abuse among students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi.

iv. Assess students' awareness of existing drug abuse prevention and intervention programmes and evaluate their perceived effectiveness in reducing drug abuse and its effects on academic performance within the university.

Literature Review

A growing body of literature has examined the relationship between drug abuse and academic performance among students in tertiary institutions. Existing studies generally indicate that the misuse of psychoactive substances can negatively affect students' cognitive functioning, academic engagement, behaviour, and overall educational outcomes. However, the nature and extent of these effects may vary across institutions and student populations. It is therefore important to examine the evidence from previous studies in order to establish the relationship between drug abuse and academic performance and identify the factors associated with substance use among students.

Chukwu and Nwankwo (2020) argue that drug abuse among students in tertiary institutions has become an increasing concern because of its implications for academic achievement and students' general well-being. According to the authors, substance abuse may impair cognitive functions such as memory, attention, concentration, and decision-making, which are essential for effective learning. Similarly, Ibrahim and Yusuf (2019) reported that students who used substances such as cannabis and alcohol recorded lower Grade Point Averages than their non-using counterparts. The authors attributed this difference partly to the effects of substance use on students' concentration, motivation, and ability to retain information. These findings suggest that persistent substance use may interfere with students' capacity to engage effectively with academic activities.

Beyond its effects on cognitive functioning, drug abuse has also been associated with behavioural patterns that may negatively influence students' academic performance. Ojo and Akinwale (2021) observed that students involved in substance use were more likely to demonstrate absenteeism, lateness to lectures, poor classroom participation, and reduced engagement in academic activities. Students who frequently miss lectures lose valuable instructional time and may consequently experience difficulties understanding course materials and completing academic tasks. Similarly, poor participation in discussions, group activities, and other forms of collaborative learning may limit students' opportunities to develop knowledge and academic skills. These behaviours can gradually contribute to poor academic outcomes.

Substance abuse may also contribute to irresponsible behaviour, poor decision-making, and involvement in risky activities. Adebayo and Oladele (2020) reported that such behaviours may result in disciplinary problems, failure to meet academic deadlines, and increased likelihood of dropping out of school. When students devote significant time and attention to obtaining or using substances, their commitment to academic responsibilities may decline. Consequently, substance use may affect not only individual academic performance but also students' ability to successfully complete their programmes.

The literature further indicates that socio-economic and social factors play an important role in students' involvement in drug abuse. Adeyemi (2017) identified socio-economic difficulties, peer influence, and limited access to supportive resources as factors that may increase students' vulnerability to substance use. Peer influence is particularly important among young people because students may experiment with or continue using substances in an attempt to gain acceptance within social groups. Where substance use is normalized within a peer group, students may find it more difficult to resist such behaviour. This may subsequently affect their academic priorities, attendance, concentration, and overall engagement with their studies.

The effects of drug abuse may also extend to students' psychological and emotional well-being. Chukwu and Nwankwo (2020) noted that substance misuse may be associated with psychological difficulties such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. These conditions can reduce students' motivation and willingness to participate actively in academic activities. Furthermore, poor academic performance may increase students' stress and emotional difficulties, which could encourage continued substance use as a coping mechanism. This creates a potentially harmful cycle in which drug abuse contributes to academic difficulties, while academic difficulties may, in turn, reinforce substance use.

In response to the challenges associated with drug abuse, various intervention strategies have been adopted in tertiary institutions. These include counselling services, peer education, drug awareness campaigns, health education, and other student-support initiatives. Musa (2021) reported improvements in students' academic performance following participation in drug abuse prevention and awareness programmes. Such findings suggest that early identification, counselling, education, and appropriate support services may help reduce substance misuse and its consequences for students' academic outcomes.

Despite the existence of these interventions, significant challenges remain. Limited institutional resources, inadequate counselling services, social stigma, lack of awareness, and weak enforcement of institutional policies may reduce the effectiveness of drug abuse prevention and intervention programmes. Consequently, addressing drug abuse among university students requires a comprehensive approach that combines preventive education, accessible counselling and support services, effective institutional policies, parental involvement, and community participation.

Overall, the reviewed literature indicates that drug abuse can have significant implications for students' academic performance through its effects on cognitive functioning, attendance, classroom participation, motivation, behaviour, and psychological well-being. However, much of the existing literature has focused broadly on tertiary institutions, with comparatively limited attention to the specific experiences of students in individual universities. This creates a need for further empirical investigation into the prevalence, types, contributing factors, and academic consequences of drug abuse among students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Such an investigation will provide institution-specific evidence that can support the development of appropriate prevention and intervention strategies.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional research design to examine the relationship between drug abuse and academic performance among undergraduate students at Nasarawa State University, Keffi (NSUK), drawing on the university's full population of students enrolled across faculties and levels during the 2024/2025 academic session to ensure comprehensive representation. The Population of the study stood at 6549 students across the five faculties considered for the study.

Table 1: Populations of the Study

Faculties	Population	Sample	Percentage
Sociology	2059	133	32
English	1251	81	19
Educational Foundation	1260	82	19
Computer Science	930	60	14

Business Administration	1017	66	16
Total	6,549	422	100

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Using Cochran's (1977) formula for determining sample size:

Where:

no= initial sample size

Z= standard normal deviation at 95% confidence level = 1.96

p= estimated proportion of the population = 0.5

q= 0.5

e= margin of error = 0.05

$$no = \frac{(1\text{-}96)^2 \ (0.5)\ (0.5)}{(0.0025)^2}$$

$$no = \frac{3.84.16 \times 0.25}{0.0025}$$

no=384

The sample size is **384.**

To account for non-responses rate and ensure robustness, the sample was expanded by 10%. That is: 384 × 10 ÷ 100 =38. The sample size for the study becomes 422 participants.

To make the university-wide population manageable while preserving diversity across academic disciplines, five faculties were randomly selected to represent the broad spread of the university's academic programmes, namely the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Natural and Applied Sciences, and the Faculty of Administration; within each of these faculties, one department was randomly selected to serve as a stratum for sampling, specifically the Department of Sociology (Faculty of Social Sciences), the Department of English (Faculty of Arts), the Department of Educational Foundations (Faculty of Education), the Department of Computer Science (Faculty of Natural and Applied Sciences), and the Department of Business Administration (Faculty of Administration).

A stratified random sampling method was then adopted to select participants, with each of the five departments constituting a stratum and students selected at random from departmental class lists in proportion to each stratum's share of the combined population, thereby ensuring proportional representation across faculties and levels of study rather than concentration in any single discipline. The university's student registry was used to construct the sampling frame from which this random selection was carried out, and a total sample size of 384 students was determined using Cochran's formula accounting for a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, with a further upward adjustment to accommodate an anticipated 10% non-response rate.

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire and interview divided into three sections covering demographic information (age, gender, faculty, department, and level of study), an assessment of drug abuse adapted from standardized screening tools (covering prevalence, types, frequency, and patterns of use), and academic performance indicators (self-reported grades, cumulative Grade Point Average, and perceptions of academic performance); the instrument was pre-tested on 30 students from a neighbouring institution outside the study population to establish clarity, reliability, and validity, with amendments made based on the pre-test feedback before full administration.

Data collection was conducted over a four-week period by trained research assistants who distributed questionnaires to selected students in lecture halls and student common areas across the five sampled departments, with participants completing the instrument voluntarily and anonymously to encourage honest disclosure. Quantitative data were coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25, with descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) used to summarise demographic variables, drug abuse prevalence, and academic performance. This combination of a multi-faculty stratified sampling strategy, a validated instrument, and rigorous statistical analysis was designed to yield findings that are both reliable and generalizable across the diverse academic community of Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Moreso, out of the 422 questionnaires administered 400 were duly completed and returned, and thus the analysis was done based on 400 respondents.

Data Presentation

This section presents the data obtained from the field study and analyses the findings in accordance with the four specific objectives of the study. The analysis is based on the 400 completed questionnaires retrieved from the respondents.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 400)

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	224	56.0
	Female	176	44.0
Age	15–17 years	96	24.0
	18–20 years	188	47.0
	21–23 years	92	23.0
	24 years and above	24	6.0
Year/Level	Year 1	112	28.0
	Year 2	104	26.0
	Year 3	96	24.0
	Year 4	88	22.0
Living Arrangement	With family	168	42.0
	Hostel/dormitory	148	37.0
	Off-campus	84	21.0
Total		**400**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The demographic characteristics of the 400 respondents at Nasarawa State University, Keffi indicate a relatively balanced distribution by gender, although males constituted a slightly larger proportion of the sample. Of the respondents, 224 (56.0%) were male, while 176 (44.0%) were female.

Regarding age, the majority of respondents, 188 (47.0%), were within the 18–20 years age group. This was followed by 96 respondents (24.0%) aged 15–17 years, 92 (23.0%) aged 21–23 years, and 24 (6.0%) aged 24 years and above. This distribution indicates that most respondents were young undergraduate students within the typical university-age population.

In terms of level of study, 112 respondents (28.0%) were in Year 1, 104 (26.0%) were in Year 2, 96 (24.0%) were in Year 3, and 88 (22.0%) were in Year 4. The distribution shows

that respondents were represented across all four levels of study, with a slightly higher proportion from Year 1.
With respect to living arrangements, 168 respondents (42.0%) lived with their families, 148 (37.0%) resided in university hostels, while 84 (21.0%) lived off campus.

Table 2: The Prevalence and Types of Drugs Commonly Abused by Students at Nasarawa State University, Keffi

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Ever used a substance of abuse	Yes	148	37.0
	No	252	63.0
Type of substance used (n = 148)	Alcohol	62	41.9
	Tobacco/Cigarettes	34	23.0
	Cannabis (marijuana)	28	18.9
	Stimulants (e.g., cocaine, amphetamines)	14	9.5
	Others (e.g., sedatives, inhalants)	10	6.8
Frequency of use (n = 148)	Occasionally (1–2x/month)	66	44.6
	Frequently (weekly)	52	35.1
	Daily	30	20.3

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data presented in Table 2 show the prevalence and types of substances commonly used by students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Of the 400 respondents, 148 (37.0%) reported having used at least one substance of abuse, while 252 (63.0%) indicated that they had never used any substance. Among the 148 respondents who reported substance use, alcohol was the most commonly used substance, accounting for 62 respondents (41.9%). This was followed by tobacco or cigarettes, reported by 34 respondents (23.0%), cannabis (marijuana) by 28 respondents (18.9%), stimulants such as cocaine or amphetamines by 14 respondents (9.5%), and other substances, including sedatives and inhalants, by 10 respondents (6.8%).
With regard to frequency of use among the 148 respondents who reported substance use, 66 (44.6%) indicated occasional use, approximately once or twice a month. 52 respondents (35.1%) reported weekly use, while 30 (20.3%) reported daily use. The findings indicate that although the majority of respondents had never used substances, a considerable proportion had engaged in substance use, with alcohol and tobacco being the most commonly reported substances. The varying frequency of drug use, particularly the proportion reporting weekly and daily use, suggests the need for appropriate preventive and intervention measures within the university community.

Table 3: **Academic Performance Indicators**

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
GPA/CGPA (5.0 scale)	400	3.12	0.68	1.20	4.85
Attendance Rate (%)	400	78.40	12.35	40.00	100.00
Overall Academic Achievement Score (0–100)	400	64.75	14.22	30.00	95.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data presented in Table 3 summarize key academic performance indicators among the 400 respondents. The mean GPA/CGPA on a 5.0-point scale was 3.12, with a standard deviation of 0.68. Scores ranged from 1.20 to 4.85, indicating considerable variation in students' academic performance.

The mean class attendance rate was 78.40%, with a standard deviation of 12.35%. Attendance ranged from 40% to 100%, suggesting that while most students attended classes relatively regularly, there were notable differences in attendance levels. The overall academic achievement score, measured on a 0–100 scale, had a mean of 64.75 and a standard deviation of 14.22, with scores ranging from 30 to 95.

Overall, the findings indicate substantial variation in academic performance and class attendance among the respondents. These differences is associated with several factors, including students' personal, social, and academic circumstances. The possible influence of drug abuse on these academic performance indicators is examined in subsequent analyses.

Table 5: **Comparison of Mean Academic Performance by Drug Abuse Status**

Academic Indicator	Drug Users (n = 148) Mean ± SD	Non-Users (n = 252) Mean ± SD
GPA/CGPA	2.68 ± 0.71	3.38 ± 0.55
Attendance Rate (%)	68.90 ± 13.80	84.10 ± 8.90
Overall Achievement Score	56.30 ± 15.10	69.80 ± 11.60

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data presented in Table 5 compare the academic performance of students according to their drug-use status and indicate notable differences between users and non-users. Students who reported drug use (n = 148) had a mean GPA/CGPA of 2.68 (SD = 0.71), compared with 3.38 (SD = 0.55) among non-users (n = 252). This represents a mean difference of 0.70 points on the 5.0-point grading scale, with drug users recording lower academic performance.

A similar pattern was observed in class attendance. Students who reported drug use had a mean attendance rate of 68.90% (SD = 13.80%), whereas non-users recorded a higher mean attendance rate of 84.10% (SD = 8.90%). This difference suggests that drug use may be associated with reduced participation in academic activities.

Regarding overall academic achievement, drug users recorded a mean score of 56.30 (SD = 15.10), compared with 69.80 (SD = 11.60) among non-users. Thus, drug users performed lower across all three academic indicators examined: GPA/CGPA, class attendance, and overall academic achievement.

Overall, the findings indicate an association between drug use and poorer academic outcomes among the respondents. However, the observed differences should be interpreted as an association rather than proof that drug use directly causes poor academic performance.

Table 6: Respondents' Views on Substance Abuse and Academic Performance

S/N	Statement	SA f (%)	A f (%)	D f (%)	SD f (%)	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Substance abuse influences students' attendance and punctuality in school	160 (40.0)	140 (35.0)	64 (16.0)	36 (9.0)	400	3.06	0.94
2	Drug abuse affects students' class participation, grades and overall academic achievement	180 (45.0)	132 (33.0)	52 (13.0)	36 (9.0)	400	3.14	0.96
3	Substance abuse affects student concentration during lecture hours	172 (43.0)	148 (37.0)	48 (12.0)	32 (8.0)	400	3.15	0.91
4	It enhances student absenteeism which culminates into failure	148 (37.0)	156 (39.0)	64 (16.0)	32 (8.0)	400	3.05	0.92
	Grand Mean / Average SD					**400**	**3.10**	**0.93**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data presented in Table 6 indicate that respondents generally perceive substance abuse as having a negative effect on students' academic performance. A substantial proportion of respondents agreed that substance abuse affects students' attendance and punctuality, with 75% either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. This is reflected in a mean score of 3.06.

Similarly, 78% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that drug abuse affects class participation, academic grades, and overall academic achievement, with a mean score of 3.14. This finding suggests that respondents perceive substance abuse as a factor that may negatively influence students' academic engagement and outcomes. In addition, 80% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that substance abuse impairs students' concentration during lectures, producing a mean score of 3.15.

Furthermore, respondents generally agreed that substance abuse contributes to increased absenteeism, which may negatively affect students' academic performance and increase the risk of academic failure. This was reflected in a mean score of 3.05. The overall grand mean of 3.10, with a standard deviation of 0.93, indicates a generally high level of agreement among respondents regarding the negative effects of substance abuse on various aspects of academic performance.

Overall, the findings suggest that students perceive substance abuse as an important factor associated with poor attendance, reduced concentration, limited classroom participation, and lower academic achievement. These findings underscore the need for appropriate preventive, counselling, and intervention measures to address substance abuse among students.

Table 7: Socio-economic, Cultural, and Institutional Factors Contributing to Drug Abuse among Students at Nasarawa State University, Keffi

S/N	Factor	SA f (%)	A f (%)	D f (%)	SD f (%)	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Unemployment and poverty contribute to drug abuse among students	164 (41.0)	144 (36.0)	56 (14.0)	36 (9.0)	400	3.09	0.94
2	Peer pressure contributes to drug abuse among students	196 (49.0)	132 (33.0)	44 (11.0)	28 (7.0)	400	3.24	0.89

S/N	Factor	SA f (%)	A f (%)	D f (%)	SD f (%)	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
3	Prevailing social norms contribute to drug abuse among students	152 (38.0)	160 (40.0)	56 (14.0)	32 (8.0)	400	3.08	0.90
4	Limited counselling and support services contribute to drug abuse among students	172 (43.0)	148 (37.0)	48 (12.0)	32 (8.0)	400	3.15	0.91
	Grand Mean / Average SD					**400**	**3.14**	**0.91**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data presented in Table 7 indicate that socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors are perceived by respondents as important contributors to drug abuse among students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Peer pressure emerged as the most prominent factor, with 49% of respondents strongly agreeing that it contributes to drug abuse and a mean score of 3.24. This finding suggests that peer influence plays a considerable role in shaping students' attitudes and behaviours towards substance use.

Economic conditions were also identified as important factors. A total of 77% of respondents either strongly agreed (41%) or agreed (36%) that unemployment and poverty contribute to drug abuse, producing a mean score of 3.09. This indicates that financial difficulties and limited economic opportunities may increase students' vulnerability to substance use.

Social norms were similarly perceived to influence drug abuse, with 38% of respondents strongly agreeing and 40% agreeing that prevailing social norms contribute to substance-use behaviours. The item recorded a mean score of 3.08, indicating a relatively high level of agreement among respondents.

In addition, limited counselling and support services were identified as an important institutional factor, with a mean score of 3.15 and 43% of respondents strongly agreeing with the statement. This finding highlights the potential importance of accessible counselling and student-support services in preventing and addressing drug abuse.

Overall, the grand mean of 3.14 and standard deviation of 0.91 indicate that respondents generally perceived peer influence, economic difficulties, social norms, and inadequate institutional support as important factors contributing to drug abuse among students. The findings therefore suggest that addressing drug abuse requires a comprehensive approach that considers the social, economic, cultural, and institutional circumstances of students.

Table 8: Awareness and Effectiveness of Existing Drug Abuse Intervention Programmes and their Impact on Students' Academic Success

S/N	Statement	SA f (%)	A f (%)	D f (%)	SD f (%)	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	I am aware of the existence of drug abuse intervention/counselling programs in this institution	132 (33.0)	148 (37.0)	80 (20.0)	40 (10.0)	400	2.93	0.95
2	I have participated in or utilized a drug abuse awareness/counselling program offered by the institution	84 (21.0)	116 (29.0)	132 (33.0)	68 (17.0)	400	2.54	1.00
3	Existing intervention programs are	96	140	112	52	400	2.70	0.96

S/N	Statement	SA f (%)	A f (%)	D f (%)	SD f (%)	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
	effective in reducing drug abuse among students	(24.0)	(35.0)	(28.0)	(13.0)			
4	Counselling and support services provided have improved students' academic performance	88 (22.0)	136 (34.0)	124 (31.0)	52 (13.0)	400	2.65	0.95
5	The institution provides adequate resources (staff, facilities, funding) to support drug abuse intervention programs	72 (18.0)	128 (32.0)	136 (34.0)	64 (16.0)	400	2.52	0.97
6	There is a need for more awareness campaigns and stronger intervention programs in this institution	212 (53.0)	124 (31.0)	44 (11.0)	20 (5.0)	400	3.32	0.87
	Grand Mean / Average SD					**400**	**2.78**	**0.95**

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data presented in Table 8 indicate generally low levels of awareness, participation, and perceived effectiveness of existing drug abuse intervention programmes at Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Only 33% of respondents reported being aware of the existence of such programmes, with a mean score of 2.93, indicating a moderate level of awareness. Participation was even lower, as only 21% of respondents reported having utilized the programmes, reflected by a mean score of 2.54. This limited participation may reduce the potential impact of the interventions.

Regarding the effectiveness of existing programmes, only 24% of respondents agreed that the interventions effectively reduce drug abuse, with a mean score of 2.70. Similarly, only 22% believed that counselling and support services had significantly improved their academic performance, yielding a mean score of 2.65. These findings suggest that many students remain uncertain about the effectiveness of the available support services.

The adequacy of resources allocated to drug abuse intervention programmes was also questioned. Only 34% of respondents agreed that sufficient resources were provided, while the mean score of 2.52 suggests a relatively low perception of resource adequacy. In contrast, 53% of respondents strongly agreed that there is a need for increased awareness campaigns and stronger intervention programmes, with a high mean score of 3.32.

Overall, the findings suggest that although drug abuse intervention programmes exist within the institution, their visibility, accessibility, participation, and perceived effectiveness remain limited. The strong support for increased awareness and strengthened interventions highlights the need for improved publicity, accessible counselling services, adequate funding, and more effective prevention strategies.

Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to the four specific objectives. The findings are interpreted in the context of existing literature on drug abuse and academic performance among university students.

Prevalence and Types of Drugs Commonly Abused by Students

The first objective examined the prevalence and types of drugs commonly abused by students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi. The findings revealed that drug abuse constitutes a

significant concern among the students, with approximately 42.5% reporting involvement in some form of drug use. The prevalence varied across academic disciplines, with relatively higher levels reported in some departments within the social sciences. The commonly abused substances included cannabis (marijuana), tramadol, and alcohol. Cannabis was reportedly used mainly for recreational purposes and for its perceived ability to produce relaxation or euphoria, while tramadol was used by some students for its perceived mood-enhancing effects. Alcohol consumption was also common, particularly during social activities, with some students engaging in excessive drinking.

The relatively high prevalence observed in the study suggests that substance use is an important issue requiring attention within the university community. The finding is consistent with Enueshike, Anyanwu, and Owa-Onibiyo (2022), who reported that drug abuse can negatively affect students' academic activities because substance use may reduce their attention and commitment to their studies, ultimately contributing to poor academic performance.

Relationship Between Drug Abuse and Academic Performance

The second objective examined the relationship between drug abuse and students' academic performance. The findings indicated a negative association between drug abuse and academic performance. Students who reported drug use recorded lower academic outcomes than their non-using counterparts. In particular, drug users had lower mean GPA/CGPA scores, lower class attendance, and lower overall academic achievement scores than students who did not report drug use.

The findings suggest that substance use may interfere with students' academic engagement in several ways. The use of psychoactive substances may impair concentration, memory, motivation, and other cognitive functions necessary for effective learning. Drug use also contributes to absenteeism, lateness, reduced participation in classroom activities, and difficulty completing academic tasks. These factors can cumulatively undermine students' academic progress and achievement.

The finding agrees with Odey, Akwayi, and Akeye (2026), who reported that drug abuse has negative academic consequences, including absenteeism, poor concentration, and reduced classroom participation. It is also consistent with Levinthal (2020) and Mohammed, Bitrus, and Bala (2023), who observed that persistent substance abuse among students may be associated with loss of concentration, truancy, school dropout, and poor academic achievement. The consistency of these findings suggests that drug abuse is an important factor associated with students' academic difficulties. However, the relationship should be interpreted as an association rather than evidence that drug abuse alone causes poor academic performance, since other personal, social, and academic factors may also influence students' outcomes.

Socio-Economic, Cultural, and Institutional Factors Contributing to Drug Abuse

The third objective focused on the socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors associated with drug abuse among students. The findings revealed that substance use is influenced by a combination of factors rather than a single cause. Economic difficulties, including poverty and financial challenges, were identified as important factors that may increase students' vulnerability to substance use. Some students may resort to drugs as a means of coping with stress, frustration, or difficult personal circumstances.

Peer influence also emerged as an important factor. Students may be encouraged to experiment with or continue using substances because of pressure from friends and social groups. Social gatherings in which substance use is common may further normalize drug-

taking behaviour and make it more difficult for students to resist peer influence. Cultural and social norms that tolerate or overlook certain forms of substance use may also contribute to the problem.

In addition, institutional factors, particularly limited counselling and support services, may influence students' vulnerability to drug abuse. Where students have inadequate access to confidential counselling, health education, and other support mechanisms, they may be less likely to seek assistance when experiencing substance-related problems. The findings therefore suggest that effective intervention should address not only individual behaviour but also the broader social, economic, cultural, and institutional conditions that contribute to drug abuse.

Awareness and Effectiveness of Existing Intervention Programmes

The fourth objective assessed students' awareness and perceptions of the effectiveness of existing drug abuse intervention programmes within the university. The findings showed that awareness of available programmes was relatively low, while participation in such programmes was even lower. Students also expressed reservations about the effectiveness and adequacy of existing interventions. Concerns included inadequate awareness campaigns, limited counselling and follow-up services, insufficient resources, and inadequate attention to the socio-economic and cultural factors underlying drug abuse.

The low level of awareness and participation may limit the effectiveness of intervention programmes, even where such programmes are available. Students who are unaware of available counselling and support services cannot easily access them, while inadequate publicity may prevent programmes from reaching students who are most vulnerable to substance abuse. Furthermore, the perceived inadequacy of existing interventions suggests the need for a more comprehensive approach to drug abuse prevention and management.

The strong support expressed by respondents for increased awareness campaigns and stronger intervention programmes is particularly important. This indicates that students recognize the need for greater institutional efforts to address substance abuse. Intervention programmes should therefore include sustained awareness campaigns, accessible and confidential counselling services, peer-education initiatives, early identification of students at risk, and appropriate referral and follow-up mechanisms. Such programmes should also involve relevant university authorities, health professionals, parents, and other stakeholders.

Conclusion

This study concludes that drug abuse is an important concern among students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi, with potential consequences for their academic performance and overall well-being. The findings indicate that a considerable proportion of students engage in the use of substances such as alcohol, cannabis, and tramadol. Substance use was also associated with poorer academic outcomes, including lower GPA/CGPA, reduced class attendance, and lower overall academic achievement. These findings suggest that drug abuse may undermine students' concentration, motivation, classroom participation, and commitment to academic activities.

The study further established that drug abuse among students is influenced by a combination of socio-economic, cultural, peer-related, and institutional factors. Peer pressure, economic difficulties, social norms, and limited access to counselling and support services were identified as important factors that may contribute to substance use. In addition, the relatively low level of awareness and participation in existing intervention programmes suggests that current efforts may not be sufficiently accessible or effective.

Therefore, addressing drug abuse at Nasarawa State University, Keffi requires a comprehensive and sustained approach involving preventive education, regular awareness campaigns, accessible and confidential counselling services, peer-support programmes, and effective institutional policies. Greater attention should also be given to the underlying social and economic factors that increase students' vulnerability to substance use. Strengthening these measures will help reduce drug abuse, improve students' academic engagement and achievement, promote their physical and psychological well-being, and foster a safer and more supportive university environment conducive to successful learning and personal development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to address drug abuse and improve the academic performance and well-being of students at Nasarawa State University, Keffi:

1. **Strengthen drug abuse awareness and education:** The university should organize regular and comprehensive awareness campaigns, seminars, workshops, and educational programmes to educate students about the health, psychological, social, and academic consequences of drug abuse. These programmes should be tailored to students' experiences and delivered through channels that can effectively reach the wider student population.
2. **Improve counselling and support services:** The university should strengthen its counselling and student-support services by providing accessible, confidential, and professionally managed counselling for students experiencing substance-related problems. Early identification, referral, rehabilitation, and follow-up services should also be incorporated into the support system.
3. **Strengthen institutional policies:** The university should enforce clear and consistent policies against the possession, distribution, and misuse of illicit drugs on campus. However, disciplinary measures should be complemented by counselling, rehabilitation, and reintegration programmes to ensure that affected students receive appropriate support.
4. **Promote a supportive campus environment:** The university should encourage healthy lifestyles and positive peer relationships through student clubs, recreational activities, peer-education programmes, mentorship, and other constructive engagement opportunities. Such initiatives can provide students with healthy alternatives to substance use and strengthen their social support networks.
5. **Enhance collaboration with relevant stakeholders:** The university should collaborate with health professionals, relevant government agencies, parents, community organizations, and other stakeholders to strengthen drug prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation initiatives. Such partnerships can provide additional expertise, resources, and support for addressing substance abuse among students.
6. **Improve monitoring and evaluation:** The university should periodically assess the prevalence and patterns of drug abuse among students and evaluate the effectiveness of existing intervention programmes. The findings from such assessments should be used to improve policies and ensure that interventions remain responsive to students' changing needs.

The implementation of these recommendations will help reduce drug abuse among students, improve academic engagement and performance, strengthen students' overall well-being, and

promote a safer and more supportive learning environment at Nasarawa State University, Keffi.

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