

## Substance Abuse and Depression Among Some University Students in Delta State

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**Abstract:** *The study examines the prevalence of depression and substance abuse among University students from the Delta state University, Abraka and Novena University Ogume, both in Delta State. Five specific objectives alongside with research questions were raised to guide the study. Descriptive survey design and questionnaires was used to obtain information from two hundred and forty six (246) students and the derived data was analyzed using simple percentage and frequency table. It was discovered that the substances abused majorly among University students are cocaine, codeine, Marijuana, heroine, tobacco and alcohol. Furthermore, it was observed that most of the students in Delta state taking substances are aware of the consequences and effects thereafter and yet were unable to stop it. The findings of the study also showed that majority of the respondents affirmed a strong correlation between substance abuse and depression, therefore, revealing a high occurrence of depression among students. However, it was observed that substance abuse can lead to or exacerbate existing depressive symptoms, while depression can increase the likelihood of engaging in substance abuse as a means of self-medication.*

**Keywords:** *Prevalence, Depression, Substance abuse.*

### INTRODUCTION

The search for pleasure motivates substance abusers to alter their state of consciousness (Stigler *et al.*, 2020). People abuse drugs and substances for the enhancement of good feelings and use it as a means of coping with stress of life, intra-individual reasons, sex, physical or mental illness, personality make up and extra individual reasons (Danjuma *et al.*, 2015).

Intra-individual reasons pertain to the individuals and these include age, sex, physical and mental illness. Wang *et al.*, 2022, have shown that young people especially adolescents and young adults are most prone to substance abuse. A survey carried out by National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) revealed that they abuse substances as early as age eleven (for prescribed drugs) and age 16 (for narcotic drugs). The reasons advanced by these young people are; to feel like adults, to feel good, to get excited, to be like friends and to be like stars. However, Bakhtyari *et al.*, 2020 stated that there are as many males as there are females who abuse substances. Individuals with physical or mental illness are more likely to use substances than those without such illnesses. These individuals are more pre-disposed to over use of substances to control and treat such

ailments. The use of these substances outside medical prescription constitutes the abuse (NDLEA, 2018).

This study seeks to investigate the prevalence of substance abuse and depression among undergraduates in some selected Universities in Delta State and therefore find solutions to reduce its prevalence which will enhance a crime free society.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This descriptive cross sectional study was conducted among undergraduates of a private and a public University in Delta State. We used questionnaire to obtain information on the variables under study from the sample that was drawn from the population. The design enabled the researchers to collect detailed information describing existing phenomena in their natural settings, make comparisons and evaluation. The study population comprised of students of Novena University, Ogume and Delta State University, Abraka, both in Delta State. Novena University has a total student population of about six thousand while Delta state University has a student population of about twenty two thousand. The two Universities have a combined population of twenty eight thousand students. We worked with a representative sample of two hundred and forty six students, generated using an appropriate sample size calculation method.

Random sampling method was employed in this study. The first stage involved the selection of a public and a private University out of the eleven Universities in Delta state. This was done by randomly selecting a private university out of the five private universities in the state and one public university out of the six public universities in the state. The second stage involved the selection of the departments from which respondents were systematically selected from the departmental register for the study. This was done by randomly selecting two departments out of each faculty from each Institution. With this method, a total of eight Departments were selected for the study. The third stage involved systematically selecting the samples from the departmental register and a total of 246 students were enrolled for the study.

Data was collected by the principal investigator (PI) and two research assistants. Before the commencement of data collection, the PI and the research assistants went through the contents of the instrument to enable them understand the kind of data to collect and thus guide the respondents properly. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the participants and the entire copies of the questionnaire were collected on the spot from the participants after they have filled the questionnaire. The filled copies of the questionnaire were collected, data was extracted from them, cleaned and analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 29.0. The analyzed data was presented in simple percentages and frequency table.

## **RESULTS**

The result shows that there is a high prevalence of substance abuse in Delta State University, Abraka and Novena University, Ogume, of 88% and 77%, respectively. While there is a prevalence of depression of 83% and 54%, in Delta State University, Abraka and Novena University, Ogume,

respectively. This suggests that the prevalence of depression and substance abuse among university students in Delta State is above average.

The results further suggest that the students of Delta State University, Abraka take substances due to the following reasons; they lack the knowledge of complications related to the substance abused (23%), due to teenage curiosity (21%), for boosting their sexual performances (26%), to eliminate shyness (13%), to reduce depression (12%) and others (5%). Whereas, students of Novena University, Ogume, take substances due to lack of the knowledge of complications related to the substance abused (38%), due to teenage curiosity (13%), for boosting their sexual performances (13%), to eliminate shyness (13%) and to reduce depression (16%), others (7%).

The results also suggest that 108 out of 123 (88%) students of Delta State University and 101 out of 123 (82%) students of Novena University, Ogume, that abuse substances, have unsuccessfully tried to stop. The most common substances abused in Delta State University Abraka were codeine (17%), marijuana (33%), cocaine (4%), heroin (0%), alcohol (32%) and tobacco (14%). While codeine (25%), marijuana (23%), cocaine (4%), heroin (0%), alcohol (25%) and tobacco (23%) are the most common substances abused in Novena University. Also 58% of the substance abusers in Delta state University, Abraka had depression, while 67% of substance abusers in Novena University, Ogume experience depression.

Table 1: Showing the prevalence of substance abuse

Name of University	Frequency (%)		Total (%)
	Yes	No	
Delta State University, Abraka	108(88%)	15(12%)	123(100%)
Novena University	95(77%)	28(23%)	123(100%)

**TABLE 2: Showing the prevalence of Depression**

<b>NAME OF THE UNIVERSITY</b>	<b>Frequency (%) YES</b>	<b>Frequency (%) NO</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Delta State University, Abraka	103(83%)	20(17%)	123(100%)
Novena University	67(54%)	56(46%)	123(100%)

**TABLE 3: Showing the role of depression on Substance abuse**

<b>NAME OF THE UNIVERSITY</b>	<b>Frequency (%) YES</b>	<b>Frequency (%) NO</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Delta State University, Abraka	72(59%)	51(41%)	123(100%)
Novena University	82(67%)	41(33%)	123(100%)

**TABLE 4: Showing the reasons student abuse substances**

	<b>DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY, ABRACA</b>	<b>NOVENA UNIVERSITY, OGUME</b>
Teenage Curiosity	25(21%)	16(13%)
To boost sexual performance	34(26%)	19(13%)
Lack of knowledge of the complications	28(23%)	45(38%)
To eliminate shyness	16(13%)	16(13%)
To overcome depression	14(12%)	19(16%)
Others	06(5%)	08(7%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>123(100%)</b>	<b>123(100%)</b>

**Table 5: Showing the substances abused by students**

	<b>DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY, ABRAKA</b>	<b>NOVENA UNIVERSITY, OGUME</b>
Cocaine	5(4%)	5(4%)
Codeine	20(17%)	31(25%)
Marijuana(igbo)	40(33%)	27(23%)
Heroin	0(0%)	0(0%)
Tobacco	17(14%)	27(23%)
Alcohol	40(32%)	32(25%)
Total	123(100%)	123(100%)

Furthermore, the results indicated that 70% of men and 30% of women abuse substances, which is consistent with the claims made by NDLEA (2020) that there are just as many men as women who abuse substances.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of this study showed a clear link between student depression and substance abuse. A sizable portion of Delta State students engage in substance abuse, which includes abusing alcohol and using illegal drugs. This implies that substance abuse is a problem that many students in the area face. Additionally, it was noted that substance abuse frequently functions as a coping mechanism for handling stress, pressure, and mental health problems like depression. This observation is consistent with the findings of Ibrahim A.K *et al.*, (2013), who claimed that although substances are used as coping mechanisms for mental health problems, they can also cause a variety of mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, and various disorders. In addition, it was found that 90% of students who use substances are aware of the negative effects and repercussions but are unable to quit. This result is consistent with a prior study of Yousif *et al.*, 2019, revealing that 85% of participants were aware of the detrimental effects of misuse of drugs and substances and yet abuse it.

A noteworthy discovery is how common depression is among students. Due to students' attempts to use drugs or substances to cope with their negative emotions, depression has been shown to be a significant risk factor for substance abuse. Ibrahim A.K *et al.*, (2013) claim that substance abuse contributes to a variety of mental health issues. Furthermore, according to an NDLEA Report, abusing drugs or other substances can have very negative effects on one's health and social life. The majority of abusers experience severe health and social problems such as depression, violence, injury, unprotected sex, homicide, suicide, physical or psychological trauma, dependence, and many other issues.

The results also demonstrated how depression and substance abuse are related. This is consistent with research showing that substance abuse can contribute to depression, a highly common and

pervasive issue in the nation (Iqbal *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, research indicates that roughly 40% of college students with possible mental health diagnoses begin abusing substances instead of seeking treatment or using college application services (Danjuma *et al.*, 2015). International studies reveal clinical levels of psychopathology, including anxiety and depression, among college students worldwide, making the prevalence of mental health issues among them of general interest (Chen, L., *et al.*, 2013). The effective resolution of these issues is significantly hampered by this reciprocal relationship.

## **CONCLUSION**

Substance abuse and depression among students in Delta State's tertiary institutions pose a significant threat to their overall well-being and academic performance. The results show that in order to fully address these problems, intervention strategies are desperately needed. However, intended outcomes cannot be achieved by concentrating only on one issue without taking into account how they are interconnected.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The study results suggest an urgent need for intervention strategies to address substance abuse and depression comprehensively. Merely focusing on one problem without considering their intertwined relationship will not yield the desired results. This bidirectional relationship presents a significant challenge in addressing these issues effectively. The study recommends awareness of the effects of substance abuse and depression through education, establishing campus support services, establishing peer support programmes, collaboration with external organizations and the enforcement of policies addressing substance abuse and mental health.

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