

Prevalence and Pattern of Substance Use Among Clinical Medical Students in Tertiary Institutions in Plateau State

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Substance use disorder has become a global concern with increasing prevalence across the world. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), it is the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol, nicotine, and illicit and prescription drugs. These substances can lead to dependence and various adverse effects, impacting mental, emotional, physical, and behavioral health and can result in long term consequences. Clinical medical students, due to academic stress, peer influence, and easy access to substances, are particularly vulnerable, highlighting the need to study their prevalence and usage patterns.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among clinical medical students in two tertiary institutions in Plateau state using an adapted, structured self-administered questionnaire through quantitative method of analysis. 348 participants were proportionally selected using multistage stratified random sampling. Prevalence was defined as the proportion of respondents, currently using substances, while pattern was assessed by type, frequency and context of use (e.g. academic stress, peer influence, social). Data was cleaned in Microsoft Excel and analyzed with SPSS. Results were represented in tables and charts, and chi-square tests assessed associations, with significance set at $p \leq 0.05$.

Results: From 348 validated participants, the overall prevalence of substance use was 14.9% comprising 14.4% single users and 0.6% multiple users. Most were female (62.1%) and aged 21-25 years. Academic stress, peer influence and long study hours were the main associated factors. Negative effects were reported, with mental health and physical health most impacted (5.5%).

Conclusions: Higher education involves a period of adjustment and new experiences, showing the importance of the study highlights the urgent need for proactive substance use intervention and policy adjustments in tertiary institutions to address the challenges faced by medical students.

Keywords: Substance Use, Prevalence, Patterns, Associated Factors, Clinical Medical Students

