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Substance Use Awareness and Preventive Practices among Adolescents of Selected Senior Secondary Schools in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract:

Adolescent substance use is a significant public health issue with far-reaching physical, psychological, and social consequences. This study examined substance use awareness and preventive practices among senior secondary school students in Ibadan, Nigeria. Using a descriptive cross-sectional quantitative design, 548 students from four schools across Ibadan Northeast and Lagelu local government areas participated. Data were collected with standardized instruments, including the ASSIST-TEEN, SURP-SF, and ASAPQ-SF, covering ages 11–20 with parental consent. Analyses employed descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed a 50.7% prevalence of substance use, with 36.5% having used at least one substance. Alcohol (26.1%) was most commonly consumed, followed by cannabis (9.5%) and inhalants (6.7%). Substance use was significantly associated with family environment, school context, mental health issues, and accessibility of substances. While overall awareness of substance use was low, knowledge of preventive practices was relatively higher. Urban students were less likely than rural peers to misuse prescription medications, and private school students reported greater awareness (65.2%) than public school students (35.0%), though public school students showed higher willingness to participate in prevention programs (58.7% vs. 41.3%). Peer influence appeared minimal, with 94% reporting that friends did not use substances. The study identified school type, location, and class level as significant predictors of substance use but found no relationship with age. These findings underscore the need for targeted, school-based, and community-driven interventions, particularly in public schools, to improve awareness, enhance preventive practices, and reduce adolescent substance use in Nigeria.

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Introduction

Substance use among the adolescents is a growing public health concern globally. It is a prevalent and devastating issue that significantly impacts the physical health, well-being, and future prospects of adolescents worldwide (World Health Organization (WHO, 2019). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2020) reported that substance use is a leading cause of morbidity and mortality among Nigerian youths. Equally alarming is the National Bureau of Statistics (2019) report, which revealed that 34.6% of adolescents aged 15-19 years have used psychoactive substances. Adolescence is a crucial period of growth and development, often characterized by experimentation, peer influence, and vulnerability to substance use (WHO, 2024). The prevalence of substance use varies across countries; for instance, cigarette smoking is high in Europe and the Western Pacific Regions, while alcohol consumption is more prevalent in America and Men are generally more engaged in substance use than women, the adolescents are increasingly getting involved due to factors such as peer group influence, quality of parenting, and biological predisposition toward addiction (Slam et al., 2016).

The use of illicit substances is rapidly increasing in Africa, Cannabis the most widely used substance, has a prevalence of between 5.2% and 13.5% in West and Central Africa, followed by amphetamine-type stimulants and benzodiazepines (Onaolapo et al., 2022). In the last decade, Africa has shifted from being primarily a transit zone for illicit drugs, linking Latin America and Europe, to a consumer market. This shift is believed to be a contributing factor to the rapid rise in substance use, particularly in urban centers. The continent has a long history of drug cultivation, production, trade, and consumption, with indigenous psychoactive plants such as cannabis resin (known as hashish in North Africa), *Catha edulis* (known as khat in East Africa), and cannabis (known as dagga in Southern Africa) Jason (2021). These substances, traditionally used for centuries, are now being grown and traded on a larger scale, with the recreational use of opiates, synthetic stimulants, and prescription drugs emerging as new threats (Onaolapo et al., 2022).

The consequences of substance use among adolescents can be severe, long lasting, and encompassing physical health problems like mental health disorders, impaired cognitive and academic functioning, with increased risk of addiction, overdose and mortality. Furthermore, substance use can have ripple effect on families, communities, the society as a whole perpetuating cycles of poverty and crime. In Nigeria, drug use and its associated problems are widespread, although the actual figures are difficult to estimate. A report on drug use prevalence indicates that the southern political zones (South-East, South-West, and South-South) have prevalence rates of 13.8% to 22.4%, while the northern zones have rates between 10% and 14.9% (United Nations Development Corporation, (UNDC2018). Charles et al., (2024) reported a disturbingly high prevalence of substance use among teenagers in Nigeria, making it a significant public health burden. Teenagers often obtain substances from friends, motivated by the desire to enhance their physical activities, a trend that calls for serious concern. At specific locations in Nigeria, the prevalence of substance use has been reported to be high. Umukoro et al., (2021) found a prevalence of 26.3% in Oyo State, with 40.0% of adolescents expressing positive attitudes toward substance use. This is consistent with findings from secondary school students in Kagoro, Kaduna State, where 21% of students reported using substances. Other studies have shown prevalence rates of 47.4% in Uyo, 33.7% in Kiru (Kano State), 39% in Lagos public secondary schools, and 32.9% in

Abakaliki, where alcohol was the most commonly abused substance among adolescent students. Substance use among secondary school students poses significant social, psychological, and educational challenges, as observed by Nyameh (2023). Adibe et al., (2022) also emphasized that adolescence is a vital and transformative stage of life. At this critical point, secondary school students are particularly vulnerable to the dangers of substance use. Contributory factors include peer pressure, lack of parental supervision, and personality issues. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA, 2017) identified several preventive practices that adolescents can adopt, including understanding how substance use behaviors develop, avoiding temptation and peer pressure, seeking help for mental health issues, examining risk factors, and maintaining a well-balanced life. Therefore, it is essential to assess substance use awareness and preventive practices among adolescents in senior secondary schools in Ibadan, because they are in the most vulnerable stage of their life. Prioritizing awareness and preventive measures to address substance use among these students is essential as they are the future of the nation.

Substance use inflicts immeasurable harm on public health and safety globally each year, posing significant threats to the peaceful development and well-being of youths in every society. Numerous studies have established a connection between substance use and detrimental activities such as violence, robbery, cultism, and sexual molestation. If this growing trend is not curbed, it will have far-reaching negative effects on individuals, families, and society as a whole however Many adolescents have been lured into substance use due to lack of awareness, anecdotal evidence suggests an unusual occurrence of substance sales at a specific location in Ibadan, involving a physically challenged individual and some students (names of schools withheld). The physically challenged person operated a covert sales point, unnoticed by the general public but detected through careful and close observation by the researcher. This discreet and proximity of substance sales points near school increases the risk of luring vulnerable adolescents, particularly those who have not been previously exposed to substance use awareness and preventive practices.

Failure to promote awareness and preventive practices of substance among adolescent will lead to further increase in prevalence with its attendance repercussion to the society. In addition despite, various studies there is still a lack of comprehensive comparison of substance use awareness and preventive practices between students in urban and rural areas, as well as between those in public and private schools, in Ibadan. This gap highlights the need for this study, which seeks to address these critical disparities.

The broad objective of the study is to assess the awareness and preventive practices of substance use among adolescents of selected senior secondary schools in Ibadan.

The specific objectives were:

1. To determine the prevalence of substance, use among adolescents in the selected senior secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria.
2. To identify the substances used among adolescents in selected senior secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria.
3. To determine the risk and the protective factors of substance use among adolescents in selected secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria.
4. To identify the awareness and preventive practices of substance use among adolescents in the selected senior secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Research questions were:

1. What is the prevalence of substance use among adolescents of selected senior secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria?
2. What are the substances used by adolescents of selected senior secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria?
3. What are the risk and the protective factors of substance use among adolescents of selected senior secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria?
4. What are the awareness and the preventive practices of substance use among adolescents of selected senior secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant association between substance use and selected socio demographic variables (age, gender, school type, location and class), among students from secondary schools in Ibadan, Oyo State.

H02: There is no significant difference in substance use awareness between students from rural and urban secondary schools in Ibadan, Oyo State.

H03: There is no significant relationship between substance use and preventive practice among students from private and public secondary schools in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional quantitative approach using questionnaire to assess for substance use awareness and preventive practices among adolescents of selected senior secondary school in Ibadan. A total of 548 participants were drawn from the 4 selected senior secondary schools in Ibadan. Study was focused on adolescents from age 11- 19. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the four schools used for the study. From the 11 local government areas in Ibadan i.e. (6 from rural LGA, and 5from Urban LGA). Simple random sampling technique of fishbowl without replacement was adopted in selecting One local government from the rural and one from the urban LGAs. Lagelu was selected for rural and Ibadan north east was selected for urban. Two secondary schools (one private and one public) was selected from Lagelu and Ibadan North East Local Government. Viz Monatan High School and Global School of Science for Lagelu LGA, while Army Barracks Grammar school and Frontliners College Ibadan, were selected for Ibadan Northeast.

The proportional sampling method was used to estimate the number of participants from each of the four (4) selected schools from SS1 to SS3 adolescent senior secondary school students (548) were recruited from the four schools. The first adolescent to be selected for the study was randomly selected from the register while the other participants were systematically selected, total number of 548 participants were recruited from the four schools.

The study employed three standardized self-report questionnaires adapted by the researcher to assess adolescent substance use, risk factors, and preventive practices. The first, the ASSIST-Teen (Section B), is an eight-item short-form screening tool developed by the WHO to identify adolescents at risk of substance use disorder, measuring the prevalence and frequency of substance use as well as commonly used substances. The second, the Substance Use Risk Profile Scale short form (SURP-SF; Section C), a 14-item questionnaire developed by Dembo, Schmeidler, and Belcher at the University of South Florida, includes subscales on substance use (6 items), peer influence (4 items), family environment (4 items), and mental

health (6 items), and was used to assess predictors of substance use. The third instrument, the Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention Questionnaire short form (ASAPQ-SF; Section D), is a 14-item self-report tool developed and validated among Nigerian adolescents by Afolabi and Oyefeso (2017), with yes/no responses to assess knowledge, attitudes, and preventive behaviors toward substance use. Data collection involved coding and entry into SPSS version 25 (IBM Corp., 2017), with checks for errors and variations. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, and pie charts, were used to summarize demographic and study variables, while inferential statistics were applied to test hypotheses at a 0.05 alpha level.

Results

Table 1

Socio-Demographic Information of Respondents (*n=548*)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age group (Years)		
10-15	353	64.5
16 and above	195	35.5
Gender		
Male	183	33.5
Female	363	66.5
Religion		
Christianity	306	55.8
Islam	233	42.5
Traditional	9	1.6
Home Setting		
Flat	306	55.9
Face me and I face you	169	30.9
Others	73	13.2
Family Setting		
Nuclear	423	77.1
Extended	112	20.4
Others	13	2.4
Parent's Employment Status		
Working	527	96.2
No job	21	3.9
Parent's work Specification		
Private	136	24.8
Government	97	17.7
Self employed	315	57.5
Class		
SS1	141	25.7
SS2	142	25.9
SS3	265	48.3
School type		
Public	436	79.6

Private	112	20.4
School Location		
Urban	304	55.5
Rural	244	44.5
Local Government		
Ibadan North	304	55.4
Lagelu	244	44.5
Class Category		
Art	135	24.6
Commercial	123	22.4
Science	290	52.9

The study sample comprised mainly younger adolescents aged 10–15 years (64.5%; mean age 13.74), with more females (66.5%) than males (33.5%). Most students identified as Christian (55.8%) or Muslim (42.5%) and lived in flats (55.9%) or shared housing ("Face me I face you," 30.9%). A majority (77.1%) came from nuclear families, and 96.2% had employed parents, predominantly self-employed (57.5%). Students were distributed across SS1 (25.7%), SS2 (25.9%), and SS3 (48.3%), with 79.6% attending public schools, 55.5% in urban areas. Academic streams included Science (52.9%), Arts (24.6%), and Commercial (22.4%).

Table 2: Prevalence of Substance Use in Selected Secondary Schools.

S/N	Substance	Yes	%
1	Tobacco products	11	2.0%
2	Alcoholic beverages)	82	15.0%
3	Cannabis	29	5.3%
4	Inhalants	45	8.2%
5	Prescription medications	78	14.2%
6	Other substance	33	6.0%
	Total	278	50.7%

Among 548 respondents, the prevalence of substance use was 50.7%. Alcoholic beverages were the most commonly used substance, reported by 82 students (15.0%), followed by prescription medications without a doctor's prescription by 78 students (14.2%). Inhalants were used by 45 students (8.2%), cannabis by 29 (5.3%), and other substances by 33 (6.0%). Tobacco products were the least used, with 11 respondents (2%). Alcohol and non-prescribed medications were the most frequent substances.

Table 3: Type of Substances Used by Adolescents of Selected Secondary Schools

S/N	Substance	No	Yes
1	Tobacco products ((e.g cigarettes, e-cigarettes)	537 (98.0%)	11 (2.0%)
2	Alcoholic beverages (wine, beer, liquor)	466 (85.0%)	82 (15.0%)
3	Cannabis (marijuana, hashish)	519 (94.7%)	29 (5.3%)
4	Inhalants (glue, aerosol sprays)	503 (91.8%)	45 (8.2%)
5	Prescription medications (painkillers, sedatives) without doctor's prescription	470 (85.8%)	78 (14.2%)
6	Other substances (skush, colos)	515 (94.0%)	33 (6.0%)

The frequency distribution of commonly used substances is presented in Table 3. According to student responses, the three most used substances are alcoholic beverages, with 15.0% of students reporting use, followed by prescription medications obtained without a doctor's prescription at 14.2%, and inhalants at 8.2%. In fourth place are other substances at 6.0%, while cannabis and tobacco products are in fifth and sixth place with 5.3% and 2.0%, respectively.

Table 4: The Risk and Protective Factors of Substance Use

SN	Peer Influence (PI)	No	Yes
1	Do your friends use substances?	515 (94.0%)	33 (6.0%)
2	Have friends ever offered you substances?	519 (94.7%)	29 (5.3%)
3	Do you feel pressure from friends to use substances?	525 (95.8%)	23 (4.2%)
4	Have you ever used substances to fit in with friends?	524 (95.6%)	24 (4.4%)
SN	**Family Environment (Fe) & school factor**	**No**	**Yes**
5	Do your parents or guardians use substances?	521 (95.1%)	27 (4.9%)
6	Have family members ever offered you substances?	519 (94.7%)	29 (5.3%)
7	Do you use substance to boost your performance in your school work?	515 (94.0%)	33 (6.0%)
8	Is substance easily accessible in your environment?	432 (78.8%)	116 (21.2%)
SN	**Mental Health (MH)**	**No**	**Yes**
9	Do you feel anxious or depressed?	419 (76.5%)	129 (23.5%)

10	Have you ever used substances to cope with anxiety or depression?	526 (96.0%)	22 (4.0%)
11	Do you take substance to stabilize your mood?	526 (96.0%)	22 (4.0%)
12	Have you ever thought about seeking help for substance use?	526 (96.0%)	22 (4.0%)
13	Have you ever experienced withdrawal symptoms?	486 (88.7%)	62 (11.3%)
14	Have you ever felt like you needed help but didn't know where to go?	452 (82.5%)	96 (17.5%)

Among secondary school students, peer influence appears low, with 94.0% (519) reporting friends do not use substances, 94.7% (519) never offered substances, and 95.8% (524) not feeling peer pressure. Family influence is also low: 95.1% (521) of parents/guardians do not use substances, and 94.7% (519) never offered them. However, 21.2% (116) reported substances are easily accessible. Mental health concerns are present: 3.5% (129) reported anxiety/depression, 11.3% (62) experienced withdrawal, and 17.5% (96) needed help but did not know where to seek it, though substance use to cope remains low.

Table 5: Awareness and Preventive practice of substance use among respondents (protective factors)

SN	Items		No	Yes
1	What do you know about substance use?	Nothing	151(27.6%)	397 (72.4%)
		A little	463 (84.5%)	85(15.5%)
		A lot	499(19.1%)	49(8.9%)
		Almost everything	531(96.9%)	17(3.1%)
2	Have you learned about substance abuse in school		88 (16.1%)	460 (83.9%)
3	Do you know the risks associated with substances use		102 (18.6%)	446 (81.4%)
4	Do you think you can resist substance use		189 (34.5%)	359 (65.5%)
5	Do you know how to resist peer pressure to use substance		232 (42.3%)	316 (57.7%)
6	Do you think substance use is a problem among adolescents		117 (21.4%)	431 (78.6%)
7	How do you feel about substance use	Concerned	386 (70.4%)	162(29.6%)
		Indifferent	252(46.0)	296(54.0%)
		Very concerned	458 (83.6%)	90 (16.4%)
8	Do you believe substance abuse can harm your health		62 (11.3%)	486 (88.7%)
9	Do you think substance use can affect relationships		77 (14.1%)	471 (85.9%)
10	Is substance use a moral issue		200 (36.5%)	348 (63,5%)

11	Have you participated in substance use prevention activities	340 (62.0%)	208 (38.0%)
12	Do you have plans to avoid substance use	137 (25.0%)	411 (75.0%)
13	Have you sought help for substance use	369 (67.3%)	179 (32.7%)
14	Are you willing to participate in substance use prevention programs?	164 (29.9%)	384 (70.1%)

The study assessed adolescents' participation in substance use prevention activities, knowledge of risks, and willingness to engage in preventive programs. Findings revealed that 62.0% (340) of respondents had never participated in prevention activities, while 38.0% (208) had. Most participants, 75.0% (411), reported having plans to avoid substance use, with 25.0% (137) lacking such plans. Regarding seeking help, 67.3% (369) had not sought assistance, whereas 32.7% (179) had. About 65.5% (359) believed they could resist substance use, and 34.5% (189) felt they could not. Willingness to participate in prevention programs was high, with 70.1% (384) expressing interest, and 29.9% (164) unwilling. Knowledge gaps were notable: 83.9% (460) had not received formal education on substance abuse, though 81.4% (446) were aware of associated risks. Only 8.9% (49) reported knowing a lot about substance use, while 72.4% (397) admitted having little to no knowledge. Most participants recognized its harmfulness (78.6%, 431) and potential health impact (88.7%, 486), though concern levels were low, with 70.4% (386) unconcerned. Overall, findings highlight the need for targeted educational and preventive interventions to improve adolescent awareness and engagement in substance use prevention programs.

Table 6 A: Association between substance use and selected socio demographic variables (age, gender, school type, location and class).

SN	Socio demographic		Substance Use	Yes	X2	P values
1	**Age**	**10-15 Years (353)**	Tobacco products	38(10.8%)		
			Alcoholic beverages	127(36.0%)		
			Cannabis	8(2.3%)		
			Inhalants	76(21.5%)		
			Prescription medications	89(35.2%)		
			Other substances	15(4.2%)		
2		**16 and above Years (195)**	Tobacco products	20 (10.3%)		
			Alcoholic beverages	50(35.9%)		
			Cannabis	5(2.6%)	**3.43**	**0.634**
			Inhalants	42(21.5%)		
			Prescription medications	50(25.6%)		
			Other substances	8(4.1%)		
r3	**Class**	**SS1(141)**	Tobacco products	15(10.8%)		
			Alcoholic beverages	50(35.5%)		

		Cannabis	3(2.1%)		
		Inhalants	30(21.3%)		
		Prescription medications	35(24.8%)		
		Other substances	8(5.7%)		
	SS2(142)	Tobacco products	15(10.6%)		
		Alcoholic beverages	51(35.9%)		
		Cannabis	2(1.4%)		
		Inhalants	31(21.8%)	**29.35**	**0.001**
		Prescription medications	36(25.4%)		
		Other substances	7(4.9%)		
	SS3 (265)	Tobacco products	7(2.6%)		
		Alcoholic beverages	70(26.4%		
		Cannabis	2(0.8%)		
		Inhalants	32(12.1%)		
		Prescription medications	10(3.8%)		
		Other substances	1 (0.4%)		

Table 6 B: Association between substance use and selected socio demographic variables & location).

SN	Socio demographic	Substance Use	Yes	X2	P values	SN
1	**School Type**	**Public (350)**	Tobacco products	20 (5.7%)		
			Alcoholic beverages	60 (13.8%)		
			Cannabis	48 (13.7%)		
			Inhalants	7 (6.2%)		
			Prescription medications	54 (12.4%)	**28.29**	**0.00003**
			Other substances	33 (9.4%)		
		Private(198)	Tobacco products	20 (5.7%)		
			Alcoholic beverages	22 (19.6%)		
			Cannabis	5 (2.5%)		
			Inhalants	7 (6.2%)		
			Prescription medications	24 (21.4%)		
			Other substances	4 (2.0%)		
2	**School Location**	**Rural**	Tobacco products	7 (2.9%)		
			Alcoholic beverages	30 (12.3%)		

	Cannabis	2 (0.8%)	**28.18**	**0.00003**
	Inhalants	15 (6.1%)		
	Prescription medications	28 (11.5%)		
	Other substances	14 (5.7%)		
Urban	Tobacco products	45 (15%)		
	Alcoholic beverages	30 (12.3%)		
	Cannabis	25 (8.2%)		
	Inhalants	30 (9.9%)		
	Prescription medications	50 (16.5%)		
	Other substances	15 (4.9%)		

The Chi-square analysis examined the relationship between alcohol use and socio-demographic factors. Age showed no significant relationship with substance use (p = 0.634), while class level was significant (p = 0.001). School type (public vs. private) and school location (urban vs. rural) were highly significant (p = 0.00003 each), indicating strong associations. Thus, class, school type, and location influence substance use, whereas age does not.

Table 7: Difference in Substance Use Awareness Between Students From Rural and Urban Secondary Schools in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Awareness level	**Frequency (n, %)**		**Chi-square χ^2**	**p-value**
	Rural	**Urban**		
Nothing	200(65.5%)	197(80.7%)	84.96	.000
A little	10(3.3%)	75(30.7%)		
A lot	0(0.0%)	49 (20.1%)		
Almost everything	2(0.7%)	15(6.1%)		

The level of awareness about substance use among students varied between rural and urban secondary schools in Ibadan. Among rural students, 65.8% reported having no knowledge about substance use, while a higher percentage (80.7%) of urban students also indicated having no knowledge. Regarding those who claimed to know a little, only 3.3% of rural students fell into this category, whereas a significantly higher proportion (30.7%) of urban students reported having some awareness. Additionally, none of the rural students reported knowing a lot about substance use, while 20.1% of urban students indicated they had considerable knowledge. Similarly, only 0.7% of rural students believed they knew almost everything about substance use, compared to 6.1% of their urban counterparts. This distribution suggests that urban students generally have a higher level of awareness about substance use compared to rural students.

Table 8: Association between substance use and preventive practice among students from private and public secondary schools in Ibadan, Oyo State

SN	Items		Frequency (n, %)		Chi-square $\chi 2$	p-value
			Private	Public		
1	What do you know about substance use?	Nothing	200 (50.4%)	197(49.6 %)		
		A little	40(42.1%)	45(47.4)		
		A lot	30(61.2%)	19(39.0%)		
		Almost everything	10(59.0%)	7(41.1%)		
2	Have you learned about substance abuse in school		300 (65.2%)	160(35.0 %)		
3	Do you know the risks associated with substances use		400(89.7%)	46(10.3%)		
4	Do you think you can resist substance use		300(84.0%)	59(15.6%)	857.23	.000
5	Do you know how to resist peer pressure to use substance		200(63.3%)	116(3.7%)		
6	Do you think substance use is a problem among adolescents		400(93.0%)	31(7.2%)		
7	How do you feel about substance use	Concerned	160(99.0%)	2(1.2%)		
		Indifferent	100(34.0%)	196(66.2 %)		
		Very concerned	80(89.0%)	10(11.1%)		
8	Do you believe substance abuse can harm your health		286(58.9%)	200(41.2 %)		
9	Do you think substance use can affect relationships		400(85.0%)	71(15.1%)		
10	Is substance use a moral issue		200(57.5%)	148(43.0 %)		
11	Have you participated in substance use prevention activities		150(72.1%)	58(28.0%)		
12	Do you have plans to avoid substance use		300(73.0%)	111(27.0%)		
13	Have you sought help for substance use		100(56.0%)	79(44.1%)		

The study found a significant difference in substance use preventive practices between private and public school students (χ^2 = 857.23, p = .000), indicating a strong relationship between school type and awareness. Private school students demonstrated higher awareness, with 65.2% learning about substance abuse in school versus 35.0% of public school students, and 89.7% knowing associated risks compared to 10.3% in public schools. Resistance to

substance use was higher among private school students (84.0% vs. 15.6%), as was knowledge of handling peer pressure (63.3% vs. 3.7%). Most private school students viewed substance use as a serious problem (93.0%) and expressed concern (99.0%) compared to public school students (7.2% and 1.2%). Despite this, more public school students (58.7%) were willing to participate in prevention programs than private school students (41.3%). These findings highlight disparities and the need for targeted interventions in public schools.

Discussion of the findings

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the relationship between substance use and preventive practices among students in private and public secondary schools in Ibadan, Oyo State. The results reveal crucial patterns regarding awareness, and attitudes toward substance use, as well as participation in preventive activities. The study sampled 548 students, predominantly aged 10-15 years (64.5%) and female (66.5%). Most students came from nuclear families (77.1%) and had parents who were self-employed (57.5%). This relate with the submission of Kugler & Kumar, 2017) who related the type of family and education. A significant majority attended public schools (79.6%) and urban schools (55.5%). Overall, 50.7% of respondents reported using at least one substance. Alcoholic beverages (15.0%) and prescription medication misuse (14.2%) were the most used substances, while tobacco use (2.0%) was the least reported. This finding was not is not in tandem with the findings observed by Ogundipe et al. (2018), Allen-Tailor et al. (2018), and Oppong (2019) who identified substance mostly used by adolescents as marijuana.

These findings align with previous studies highlighting the increasing use of substances like alcohol and prescription drugs among adolescents, often due to their accessibility and perceived social acceptance. Awareness of substance use varied significantly between public and private school students, with private school students demonstrating higher knowledge levels. For instance, 65.2% of private school students reported learning about substance abuse in school, compared to only 35.0% of public school students. Furthermore, 89.7% of private school students acknowledged knowing the risks associated with substance use, whereas only 10.3% of public school students did. These disparities suggest differences in educational exposure and curriculum focus between school types. The results indicate the need for more structured and comprehensive substance use education programs in public schools.

Secondly, for the risk and protective factors of Substance Use, the study examined various factors influencing substance use, including peer influence, family environment, school factors, and mental health. Contrary to common assumptions, peer influence appeared to be relatively low within this sample, as 94.0% of respondents reported that their friends did not use substances, and 95.8% did not feel pressured by friends to engage in substance use. This finding suggests that, while peer influence is often cited as a major risk factor, it may not be the dominant factor in this particular population. While considering the family environment and school factors, 95.1% of respondents indicating that their parents or guardians did not use substances, and 94.7% stating that family members had never offered them substances. However, a notable proportion (21.2%) reported that substances were easily accessible in their environment, suggesting that availability might be a more significant risk factor than direct familial influence.

Mental health was another important factor, as 23.5% of respondents reported feeling anxious or depressed, and 11.3% experienced withdrawal symptoms. Although only a small

percentage (4.0%) of students reported using substances to cope with anxiety or depression, the presence of mental health concerns indicates a potential vulnerability. This result is as observed by Idowu et al. (2018), Nyamah (2023) and Daniel et al. (2022) and Allen et al. (2021). It was also observed that the low awareness about substance use among the participants agrees with the findings of Sajo (2014), NIDA (2023) & Ngwu (2024).

However, for awareness and preventive practices this varied significantly between private and public school students. The study found that private school students exhibited higher levels of awareness and preventive attitudes. For example, 84.0% of private school students believed they could resist substance use, compared to only 15.6% of public school students. Additionally, 63.3% of private school students knew how to resist peer pressure, whereas only 3.7% of public school students reported the same. This indicates a higher prevalence of substance use among private school students compared to their public school counterparts also reported that reported that 17.9% of private school students and 18.9% of public school students engaged in substance use. Although the difference was not statistically significant, the study highlighted that private school students exhibited higher levels of health risks associated with substance use compared to public school students. This result aggress with the findings of (Lawal et al, 2025 and Mohammed et al 2021) found that 22.02% of adolescents reported having used substances at least once, with 7.99% from public schools and 14.03% from private schools.

Despite these differences, public school students (58.7%) demonstrated greater willingness to participate in substance use awareness and prevention programs compared to private school students (41.3%). However, actual participation in prevention activities remained low across both groups, with only 38.0% of respondents reporting previous participation. This gap between willingness and actual participation suggests that while students recognize the importance of preventive measures, there may be barriers such as lack of access to programs, insufficient school initiatives, or lack of parental and community involvement. The results of this study are consistent with those of Lawal et al. (2025) and Mohammed et al. (2021), indicating that 22.02% of adolescents have used substances at least once. Among these, 7.99% attended public schools, while 14.03% were from private schools. The study also compared the patterns and predictors of substance use among in-school adolescents in both public and private secondary schools. It found that 17.9% of private school students and 18.9% of public school students engaged in substance use, with no statistically significant difference between the two groups.

The study also revealed significant relationships between school type, school location, and class level with substance use, but not with age. The hypothesis was rejected for class, school type, and school location, indicating that these factors significantly influence substance use patterns. In contrast, age did not significantly determine substance use, suggesting that other social and environmental factors play a more crucial role in influencing substance use behaviors among students.

The study also showed a highly significant relationship between school type and preventive practices meaning that private school students are more engaged in substance use prevention efforts than their public school counterparts. The disparity highlights the need for targeted interventions to improve substance use education and preventive strategies in public schools.

In conclusion, this study highlights significant disparities in substance use awareness and preventive practices between students in private and public schools. While private school

students exhibit higher awareness and resistance skills, public school students demonstrate greater willingness to participate in prevention programs. However, the low participation rates across both groups suggest the need for more targeted interventions. Addressing these gaps through education, community involvement, and mental health support will be crucial in reducing substance use among secondary school students in Ibadan.

Conclusion

The study highlights that substance use is a notable concern among secondary school students, with alcohol and non-prescribed medications being the most commonly used substances. Peer and family influences on substance use appear relatively low, though accessibility of substances and mental health concerns play a role in adolescents' risk. Awareness and preventive practices vary significantly between school types and locations, with private and urban school students generally exhibiting higher knowledge, risk awareness, and resistance skills, while public and rural students demonstrate greater willingness to participate in prevention programs. Class level, school type, and school location were identified as influential factors, suggesting that context-specific interventions are essential. Overall, the findings underscore the need for targeted, school- and community-based strategies to enhance substance use awareness, strengthen preventive behaviors, and address mental health and environmental risks among adolescents, ensuring that both public and private school students are effectively supported in reducing substance use.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The school environment should be free of materials and activities that encourage or expose adolescents to substance use.
2. The school curriculum should incorporate education on substance use, highlighting its negative effects on health and social well-being.
3. Schools should actively participate in intervention programmes aimed at rehabilitating victims of substance use.
4. Secondary school teachers should receive specialized training to identify early signs of substance use among students and take appropriate preventive measures.

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