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Table of Content

1. **Impact of self-concept and body dis-satisfaction on students' fear of negative evaluation in University of Ibadan**
   Shyngle Kolawole Balogun, Ayomipe Ajoke Temola & Adebayo Victor Adeyemi 5-23

2. **Psycho-educational intervention and stress management among business persons amidst crises situations**
   Ijang Bih Ngyah-Etchutamb 24-45

3. **Shifting gender norms and sexual/gender-based violence, wealth access, decision-making and gender equality in Nigerian tertiary institutions**
   Oluwatoyin Ilesanmi, Damilola Ibironke Adefisoye, Lanre Ikuteyijo Oluyemisi Obilade, Akanni Ibukun Akinyemi, Oyeyemi Babalola & Olutoyin Mejiuni 46-77

4. **Standardization of theory of mind task battery (TOMTB) in Lagos State**
   Olufolakemi Victoria Adedeji, Kehinde O. Ayenibiowo & Ibinabo S. Agiobu-Kemmer 78-93

5. **From anecdotes to science: The characterization of mind in Africa and its diaspora**
   Kayode A. Oguntuashe & Olufolakemi Victoria Adedeji 94-109

6. **Household financial resources as a determinant of openness to substance use among undergraduates of the University of Lagos**
   Sylvester Ororume Atiri, Simon Omonigho Umukoro & James Otieno Ekele 110-128

7. **Spousal communication among dual-income early career couples as predictor of employee's behaviour at work: An empirical study of selected banks in Lagos**
   Gabriel A. Akinbode 129-141

8. **Weight and age as correlates of negative self-image among undergraduate female fitness centre users at the University of Lagos**
   Uzochukwu N. Israel, Sylvester O. Atiri & A.M. Akande 142-150

9. **Differences in men's educational Status, ethnicity and women's educational pursuit after marriage**
   Malomo Bolajoko Ibiyemi, Ajala Muniru Alimi & Oluyoye Onyeka Maureen 151-174

10. **Organisational citizenship behaviour as a catalyst to continuous improvement and economic revitalisation in Africa**
    Elizabeth Ibukunoluwa Olowookere 175-189

Household financial resources as a determinant of openness to substance use among undergraduates of the University of Lagos

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Abstract

This study examined household financial resources as a determinant of openness to substance use among undergraduates in the university of Lagos with the aim of ascertaining the influence of household financial resources on the openness to substance use among undergraduates. The study employed a cross-sectional design involving 381 participants from two faculties in the university. Using a research protocol that was made up of a bio-data form and a Psychological scale; Drug Abuse Screening Test, (DAST - 10), to elicit data from the participants. The results indicated that, there was no significant relationship between household financial resources and openness to substance abuse. This means that the household financial resources or the family income of a participant is not a factor that determines openness to the use of a substance or illicit drug by the participant. The study concluded that family income does not influence openness to substance use among undergraduates of the University of Lagos.

Keywords: Substance use, Openness to Substance use, Household financial resources, and Undergraduate students.

Introduction

Openness to substance use can be simply viewed as a person's tendency to agree to use illicit drug in the present or in future. Openness to substance abuse refers to an individual's willingness or likelihood to engage in substance use or misuse. This can be influenced by various factors, including curiosity, risk-taking tendencies, coping mechanisms, and environmental exposure, (Alhammad, et al., 2022; Terracciano, et al., 2008). This trait can lead some individuals to seek for novel and intense experiences, including the use of drugs or alcohol, (Horvath & Zuckerman, 1993). Recently, the relationship between openness and substance abuse has drawn more attention not only in psychology but also in public discourse, (Kinyanjui & Sum, 2023). Openness, is often characterized as a personality trait associated with curiosity, creativity, and a willingness to explore novel experiences, and can play a nuance role in how individuals approach and engage with substance use, (Horvath & Zuckerman, 1993). While some argue that high level of openness might correlate with a greater likelihood of experimenting with drugs and alcohol, others suggest that this trait may also be linked to a higher rate of experimentation with substances, (Sattler & Schunck, 2016; Turiano, 2012). For instance, studies have shown that individuals high in openness are more likely to engage in exploratory behaviours, which can include substance use, (Zuckerman, 2007; McCrae & Costa, 1997). According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the global prevalence of substance use varies by region, but higher level of openness is often associated with greater experimentation with drugs and alcohol, (NIDA, 2020).

Substance abuse is emerging as a global public health issue, according to the World Drug Report in 2019 by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC). It is estimated that, about 35 million individuals worldwide will experience a substance use disorder, (UNODC, 2022). It has also been projected that, 271 million (5.5%) of the global population between the age of 15 and 64 years had used drugs in the previous year, (UNODC, 2022).

Furthermore, the Global Burden of Diseases study in 2017 estimated that there were 585,000 deaths due to substance use globally, (UNODC, 2022). Nigeria which is one of the most populous country in Africa, is not left out of this menace, as the country has developed a reputation as a center for drug trafficking and use, mostly among her adolescent and young adult population, (Jatau, 2021). According to the 2018 UNODC report, "drug use in Nigeria," based on the first large-scale nationwide drug use survey in Nigeria, suggests that one in seven persons (aged 15-64) has used a substance in the past year. Also, one in five individuals, who have used drugs in the past year, is suffering drug-related disorder, (NODC, 2018).

Nigeria's reputation as a center for drug trafficking has led to an alarming rise in substance use among adolescents and young adults in Nigeria, (Jatau, 2021). This has resulted to a high rate of physical and psychological dependence, (NODC, 2018). According to the American Psychiatric Association, (APA) substance abuse refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs (APA, 2022). This maladaptive pattern of substance use leads to clinically significant impairment or distress, as manifested by recurring substance-related problems in various life domains (APA, 2022). It is also characterised as the repeated use of alcohol and/or drugs producing clinically substantial impairment, including health issues, disability, and inability to perform key duties at work, school, or at home (Atiri, et al., 2019).

Substance abuse, encompassing the misuse of alcohol, illegal drugs, and prescription medications, continues to be a pressing public health concern (Lu, 2020). The initiation and escalation of substance use during adolescence and young adulthood can have far-reaching consequences, affecting physical health, mental well-being, academic performance, and future life prospects (Bugbee, 2019; Welsh, et al., 2019). Substance abuse not only poses a threat to an individual's well-being but also has broader implications for societal health

(Peacock, et al., 2018; Bowser, et al., 2014). Several studies have pointed to people who experienced lack of supervision in their early life, engaging in risky behaviors due to lack of supervision, positive role models and guidance; these environmental factors can increase openness and exposure to substance abuse (Trucco, 2020).

The present study considered the influence of household financial resources (family income) on adolescents and young adult's openness to substance use. The Oxford English Dictionary defines family income as a wage that is sufficient to support the family both for dependent wife or children (Oxford, 2022.). According to Muffels (2014), family income is the income shared by family members or group of persons who live together and survive on the same income. Family income plays a significant role in shaping an individual's risk for substance abuse (Johnson, & Smith, 2022). This relationship is complex and multifaceted, with both direct and indirect influences (Johnson, & Smith, 2022). Families with lower income experience higher levels of economic stress, and often experience higher levels of stress due to financial instability, which can have an impact on parental and children's behavior (Johnson, & Smith, 2022). Stress and lack of resources can also lead to less supervision and more opportunities for substance use among adolescents; which can increase the likelihood of substance abuse (Johnson, & Smith, 2022). Economic hardship can lead to psychological stress, which may drive individuals toward substance use as a coping mechanism (Conger, et al., 1992). Such individuals can be exposed to peer groups that engage in substance use, as the economic hardship can lead to social isolation or association with peers who use substance or drugs as a form of rebellion or escape (Johnson, & Smith, 2022). Higher family income often provides better access to educational and recreational resources, which can act as protective factors against substance abuse (Miller & Devellis, 2008). Conversely, lower-income families may have fewer resources for positive activities and educational opportunities, increasing vulnerability to substance use (Miller & Devellis, 2008).

Lower-income neighborhoods may have higher rates of drug availability and lower levels of social cohesion, contributing to greater substance abuse risk (Miller & Devellis, 2008).. It is important to note that the relationship between income and substance abuse is not straightforward, for example, some studies have found that higher rates of binge drinking are prevalent among adolescents from higher-income families (Humensky, 2010). Also, children from rich and affluent homes, are at higher risk of substance abuse, they especially engage in substance use to cope with anxiety and depression resulting from greater achievement pressure combined with isolation from parents whose jobs are most demanding (Luther, 2003). The distribution of resources in polygamous families (such as time, money, and emotional support) can also affect the well-being of family members, (Al-Krenawi, & Slonim-Nevo, 2020) Limited resources or uneven distribution might lead to increased stress and potentially higher risks of substance abuse (Al-Krenawi, & Slonim-Nevo, 2020).

Substance abuse remains a critical global issue, with significant variations in its impact across different regions (WHO, 2024). According to the World Drug Report 2023 by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), approximately 296 million people aged 15-64 used drugs globally in 2021, representing 5.9% of the population in that age group. This widespread drug use includes substances ranging from cannabis to opioids and stimulants. In the United States, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) reported that 18.5% of individuals aged 12 years or older used illicit drugs in the past month in 2022, and over 100,000 drug overdose deaths were recorded in 2021. The pattern of substance abuse, vary significantly by region and it is influenced by factors such as culture, economics, drug availability, and local policies.

In Brazil, a survey found that 22.8% of adolescents had used some form of psychotropic drug, with marijuana being the most commonly reported drug. Although the rate of psychotropic drug use has decreased since 2004, Brazil remains the leader in inhalant use in

South America. Early initiation of drug use is common, with a significant number of adolescents starting between the ages of 10 and 18. This early initiation is linked to a longer duration of drug use and a higher risk of developing dependence.

In Nigeria, substance abuse is increasingly affecting both men and women across various regions (John, et al., 2024; Idowu, 2023). Recent studies indicate that substance abuse among women has become more prevalent with a notable rise in the use of drugs such as codeine, cannabis, and alcohol for instance, in the Northern part of Nigeria substance abuse has become widespread among women (Akinwale, & Ojo, 2023) and often linked to susceptibility to peer pressure. Individuals in these regions reveal that many started using substances due to peer influence or personal challenges.

Objective Statement

1.) To examine the influence of household income on openness to substance abuse among students of the university of Lagos.

Empirical Study

In their study, John et al., (2024) looked at the prevalence and patterns of drug use among 274 adolescents aged 11 to 45 from six different villages in Jos North LGA, Plateau State. Data were gathered utilising structured questionnaires. The survey discovered a modest prevalence rate of drug usage, 39.1%. Interestingly, females (39.1%) had a somewhat greater percentage of moderate drug or substance misuse than males. Significant connections were found between respondents' understanding of the health consequences of drug use and the prevalence of drug usage, as well as between having parents who use drugs and the risk of respondents abusing drugs. The study showed that the incidence of drug usage among young people in Jos North LGA is modest, with females having a slightly higher rate. Additionally,

awareness of the health concerns connected with drug use, as well as parental drug usage, have a major impact on the likelihood of drug misuse in this demographic.

In a study by Humensky (2010), the aim was to explore the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and substance use behaviors among young adults. Utilizing a longitudinal design, the researcher analyzed data from a nationally representative sample of 2,000 young adults aged 18 to 24. The findings revealed that higher family income was associated with increased rates of alcohol and marijuana use, suggesting that financial stability may provide greater access to substances

A study by Suerken et al. (2014) investigated the impact of family income on binge drinking and other substance use among college students. The researchers employed a cross-sectional survey design, collecting data from 1,500 undergraduate students at a large university. The findings indicated that students from low-income families reported higher levels of stress and emotional distress, which were linked to increased substance use as a coping mechanism. In contrast, students from high-income families exhibited higher rates of binge drinking, often associated with social activities and peer influences. In another relevant study, Chassin et al. (2009) examined the role of family socioeconomic factors in predicting substance use patterns among adolescents transitioning to young adulthood. The researchers used a longitudinal design with a sample of 1,200 participants tracked from adolescence into their early twenties. The findings revealed that adolescents from low-income families were more likely to engage in substance use as a form of escapism from their socioeconomic challenges. Conversely, those from high-income families were found to engage in substance use more for social reasons, such as fitting in with peers.

Research Question

1.) Would household financial resources influence openness to substance abuse among undergraduates of the University of Lagos?

Hypothesis

1.) Household financial resources would predict the degree of openness to substance use among undergraduates of the University of Lagos.

Method

Research Design

This study involved a cross- sectional survey of 381 undergraduates currently studying for a degree in the University of Lagos. The research design allowed the researchers to gather data from many individuals simultaneously, and it also, measured the variables of interest in the study as they exist naturally among the participants, without actively manipulating any of the variables.

Research setting

This study was carried out at the University of Lagos among undergraduates in two different faculties namely; Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Management Science.

Sampling and Population

The sample for the study was 381 participants this, was derived using the Cochran's sample size formula, with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5% with a population proportion of 27,000 undergraduates

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics (n = 378)

	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
16-20 years	100	26.5%
21-25 years	182	48.1%
26-30 years	49	13.0%
31-35 years	24	6.3%
Family Type		
Single Parenthood	80	21.2%
Monogamous	221	58.5%
Polygamous	77	20.4%
Household Financial Resources		
Less than 50,000	42	11.1%
51,000 - 100,000	107	28.3%
101,000 - 150,000	75	19.8%
151,000 - 200,000	41	10.8%
201,000 and above	113	29.9%

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 378 participants is as follows; the age Distribution shows that, 100 (26.5%) of the participants were between the ages of 16-20 years, 182 (48.1%) were aged 21 to 25 years, 40 (13.0%) from age 26 to 30 years, 24 (6.3%)

were between 31 and 35 years and lastly 23 (6.1% are) are 36 years and above.. Concerning family type, 221 (58.5%) of the participants are from monogamous family setting, 80 (21.2%) are from single-parent homes and 77 (20.4%) are from polygamous families. In terms of Household financial resources, 42 (11.1%) have a family income of less than (N50, 000), 107 (28.3%) reported a family income between (N51, 000 - 100,000), 75 (19.8%) indicated a family income between (101, 000 - 150, 000), 41 (10.8%) have a family income between (151, 000 - 200, 000) and finally, 113 (29.9%) of the participants reported a family income of (N201, 000 and above).

Instruments

A paper and pencil questionnaires was utilized to elicit information from the participants, this included questions that gathered demographic data like age, sex, religion, marital status, family type and Household financial resources. While, The Drug Abuse Assessment Test, (DAS 10) measured the use of drugs among the participants.

The Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST-10) developed by Skinner (1982) measured the use of substance among the participants. It is made up of 10 items which relates to the use of drugs. Each item is scored a point for Yes answers except item 3 that is reversed. When summed up, The DAST 10 has a total score of 10. Participants who have a higher total score indicate problematic drug use, which suggests a greater degree of problem or consequence related to drug use. The DAST 10 exhibits high internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha of 0.92 indicating that the items on the scale are reliable. Its validity indicates good discriminate validity, effectively differentiating between individuals with drug use disorder and those with alcohol dependency.

Procedure

The Researchers administered the research protocol to students at the faculties selected for the study, this was after the researchers introduced the research and its objectives to the participants. The researchers had earlier received approval from the University of Lagos Research and Ethics Committee, (UNILAGREC). Participants who freely consented to be part of the study were then handed the questionnaires to respond to. The retrieved questionnaires were perused to make sure they were duly completed before leaving the site of the respondents.

Results

Hypothesis Testing:

Hypothesis: Household financial resources will have significant influence on openness to substance abuse among undergraduate students of the University of Lagos

Table 2: Table mean

Family Income	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Less than 50,000	42	3.1429	1.45789
51,000 - 100,000	107	2.9346	1.46835
101,000 - 150,000	75	2.8400	1.34607
151,000 - 200,000	41	3.3659	1.60867
201,000 and above	113	2.9646	1.52906
Total	378	2.9947	1.47839

The hypothesis that stated that household financial resources will have a significant influence on openness to substance abuse among undergraduate students of the University of Lagos was tested using One-Way ANOVA and the result shows that,

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA table showing Household financial resources and openness to substance use

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
Between Groups	8.854	4	2.213	1.013	.401
Within Groups	815.136	373	2.185		
Total	823.989	377			

Household financial resources had no significant influence sustainability to substance use among the participants, $F(4, 373) = 1.013$, $p = .401$. Therefore, the hypothesis which states that "family income will have a significant influence on openness to substance abuse among students of the University of Lagos" is **rejected**.

Discussion

The present study examined the influence of Household financial resources on openness to substance use among undergraduates of University of Lagos. From the analysis of data elicited from participants, Household financial resources did not have an influence on the openness to substance use among the participants. The finding indicates that whatever income earned by the families of the participants had no influence on their being open to the use of substance. The result of the present study is not in consonant with the study of Kinyanjui, &, Sum (2023) who found being unemployed had a decreased level to openness to substance use among students in Colleges and Universities in Eldoret town, Kenya. The present research also does not agree with the study of El Ghonomeyet, et al., (2021) that

involved 600 female students from an Egyptian university. The difference between the present study and that of El Ghonomeyet, et al., 2021 might be due to the demographic of the participants involved in both studies. While the present study involved both male and female students, that of El Ghonomeyet, et al., (2021) involved only female students. Also El Ghonomeyet, et al., study was conducted in 2021 and the present study was carried out in 2024 and this difference in the years both studies were conducted might have also contributed to the different outcome of the studies. Another notable contribution to the difference in the result of the present study and that of El Ghonomeyet, et al., might be the setting of both studies; while this study was among students in the University of Lagos, El Ghonomeyet, et al., (2021) was conducted in a Cairo university.

The current finding also contradicts the finding of Baptiste-Roberts, & Hossain, (2018), which suggested that, participants whose families earn lower income engaged more in the use of illicit drugs when compared with those their families earned higher income. The finding of the present study was not also in agreement with the study by Suerken et al. (2014) which indicated that students from low-income families reported increased substance use as a coping mechanism for higher levels of stress and emotional distress among 1500 college students. In contrast, students from high-income families exhibited higher rates of binge drinking, often associated with social activities and peer influences. This contradiction can be due to the difference in the years both studies were conducted. The study conducted by Suerken (2014) was about a decade ago, and going by the rate of exposure to drugs and the easy accessibility to substance now, university students, especially the more affluent ones who have the means and so can more easily buy the substances they desire.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of household financial resources on openness to substance use among students of University of Lagos with the aim of determining the influence family income and substance use among undergraduate students. From the findings of this study, it was concluded that the Household financial resources of the participants had no influence on their being open to substance use. This suggests that the income of the family of a participant has no influence to being open to substance use among undergraduates in the University of Lagos.

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