RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AMONG UNDERGRADUATES OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
The study examined the relationship between substance abuse and sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal universities in Nigeria. A quantitative research method was adopted using a correlational research design. Multi-stage sampling procedure was applied to select 1,589 respondents in Federal universities in Nigeria. The instrument, titled: ―Substance Abuse and Sexual Violence Questionnaire (SASVQ)‖ was used to collect data from the respondents. The findings showed that there was a significant relationship between substance abuse and sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal universities in Nigeria. The findings further revealed that age, gender and class level had no significant relationship with regards to substance abuse and sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal universities in Nigeria. It was recommended based on the findings of the study that school counsellors and education stakeholders should initiate a serious campaign against abuse of substances and any act of sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal universities in Nigeria.

Keywords: Substance abuse, Sexual violence, Undergraduates, Nigeria

Introduction

Sexual violence is a global health issue that affects people of all nations, tribes and socioeconomic status. It has infiltrated higher institutions of learning and unfortunately, some of the students of tertiary institutions lack the maturity and emotional resources to properly manage sexual or interpersonal relationships with the opposite sex. Several cases of students-to-students sexual violence are under reported and this has led to rising cases of abuse especially in Nigerian universities. Sexual violence includes sexual assault, pornography and internet sexual violence, sexual harassment, stalking, indecent exposure, voyeurism, fondling and grabbing of sensitive

body parts, non-consensual condom removing, and sexual exploitation. Thus, it is disheartening and unsettling to discover that sexual violence has become the order of the day among undergraduates in Nigeria.

Iliyasu, Abubakar, Aliyu, Galadanci and Salihu (2011) defined sexual violence as an unwanted sexual activity with perpetrators using force, making threats or taking advantage of victims that are   notable to give consent. A study from Ebonyi State University in the South eastern part of the country reported 36.7% of sexual violence among undergraduates in Nigeria (Ogbonnaya, Obgonnaya & Emma-Echiegu, 2011). In South-west Ibadan Metropolis, it was 58.3% of sexual violence among undergraduates in the universities (Adeleke, Akinyemi, Adebowale & Fawole 2016); another study from South-south University of Port-Harcourt reported 51.7% of sexual violence among students in tertiary institutions (Mezie-Okoye & Alamina, 2014), while lower figures were reported from University of Maiduguri in Northern Nigeria by 22.2% (Iliyasu et al., 2011). World Health Organization (2022) reported that about 76.2% of female youths in tertiary institutions in Nigeria were victimized by sexual violence.

The problem of sexual violence among undergraduates in the tertiary institutions has remained largely unaddressed. Despite the problems caused by sexual violence, majority of the cases were not reported, primarily because of cultural practice of the society with male dominance. This has led to rising cases of abuse especially in Nigerian universities, where even reported cases has not been given appropriate attention and the culprit move freely thereby worsening the state of the abuse among undergraduates (Mezie-Okoye & Alamina, 2014). The incidence prevents these students from attaining their maximum intellectual, emotional and educational potentials, and it is a psychological threat to a conducive learning environment in Nigeria. Reasons for undergraduates_ involvement in sexual violence acts may include negative peer pressure, exposure to sexually explicit media, poor parent-child relationships, emotional abuse, aggressive behaviours, abuse of alcohol and harmful substances.

The relationship between substance abuse and sexual violence goes both ways. Undergraduates who have experienced sexual violence are more likely to abuse substances. At the same time, undergraduates who abuse substances are at a higher risk to become victims of sexual violence. The use of substance can lead to a condition called substance use disorder, which is the persistent use of drugs despite substantial harm and adverse consequences (Fadipe & Olakojo, 2021). Substance abuse has a causal relationship with many psychological disorders including mental and behavioural disorders. It is a leading cause of violence among undergraduates and is a major cause of premature deaths (Duckworth & Trautner, 2019). Apart from the various effects of substance abuse for the general population, its negative impacts on the youths (especially undergraduates) are far-reaching. Undergraduates who abuse substance persistently face an array of possible consequences ranging from lowered commitment to education, declining grades, suicides, homicides, and accidental injuries increased potential for dropout, high rate of truancy and involvement in sexual violence (Ogden, 2024).

Substance abuse among undergraduates is assuming an increasingly alarming dimension, a tendency which if, left unchecked, could spell disasters of an unimaginable proportion (World Health Organization, 2019). Substance abuse is defined as the excessive consumption or misuse

of addictive substances, particularly when such consumption or misuse is not for therapeutic purposes but rather to alter the normal functioning of the mind and body (Hewitt & Enoch, 2009). Substance abuse, such as cannabis, heroin, cocaine, and, to a lesser extent, alcohol, could play a role in the proliferation of sexual violence among undergraduates in Nigeria. The psychological effects of substance abuse could result to anxiety, guilt, nervousness, phobias, sleep disturbances, depression, alienation, sexual dysfunction, aggression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and suicidal thoughts and behaviours. According to Olusolami, Jonathan and Abiodun (2021), one-third to half of sexual violence victims suffered physical injuries as a result substance abuse, and up to 43% of victims contracted Sexually Transmitted Diseases (DeLahunta & Baram, 2017).

Alcohol is the most common drug used to facilitate sexual assaults. Unlike some other drugs, alcohol is legal, readily available, and socially acceptable if not socially encouraged in some settings (Scalzo, 2023). Lo, Tse, Cheng and Chan (2019) examined the association between substance abuse and sexual misconduct among Macau youths in India. The results showed that substance abuse, apart from susceptibility to peer-influence and school attachment/commitment, was significantly related to sexual misconduct. Gary, Alan, Farzad, Robert, Adele and Carl (2004) investigated the substance abuse and behavioural correlates of sexual assault among South African adolescents. The finding revealed that age, drug use, and cigarette smoking were not significant predictors of sexual abuse victimization, while socioeconomic status was found to be marginally significant.

Idowu, Taiwo and Salaudeen (2019) investigated the prevalence and factors associated with substance abuse among undergraduates of Lagos State University, Ojo. The results of the study revealed that there was high prevalence 60.5% of substance abuse among participants. Substances commonly abused were alcohol, tramadol, codeine, marijuana, shisha, cigarette, palm wine mixture, methane from septic tanks, pawpaw leaf, propane, emzor tablet, absinthe, 542 (rohypnol) and molly. Majority of the respondents who abused drugs picked up the habit after gaining admission to the university. Curiosity, feeling good, sex performance and to gain confidence were the factors responsible for substance abuse. This means that involvement in sexual violence could be traced to substance abuse on the part of the victim or the perpetrator.

Although a number of research works had been conducted on nature of sexual violence in and outside Nigeria. For instance, Iliyasu, Abubakar, Aliyu, Galadanci and Salihu (2011) carried out a study on prevalence and correlates of gender-based violence among female university students in Northern Nigeria; Idowu, Taiwo and Salaudeen (2019) studied the prevalence and factors of substance abuse among undergraduate students in Lagos State University. Lo, Tse, Cheng and Chan (2019) examined the association between substance abuse and sexual misconduct among Macau youths in India. Earlier researchers had worked extensively on sexual violence, but their studies did not establish any relationship between substance abuse and sexual violence. Therefore, the gap left by the previous researchers in their studies was identified and thereby filled by investigating the relationship between substance abuse and sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria.

Research Question

The following research question was raised and answered in this study:

1. What is the relationship between substance abuse and sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were postulated and tested in this study at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between substance abuse and sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria.
2. Age, gender and level of study will not significantly predict substance abuse among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria.
3. Age, gender and level of study will not significantly predict sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey of correlational type. Descriptive survey is used to uncover new facts and meaning in a research while correlational research is a type of non-experimental research method in which a researcher considers two or more factors, assess and understands the statistical connection among them with no influence from any variable (Ahuja, 2020). The correlational survey type was therefore considered appropriate because the study determined the relationship between substance abuse and sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria.

Population

According to National Universities Commission (2023), the total population of undergraduates in Federal Universities in Nigeria was 1,917,333. The target population consisted of undergraduates selected from six universities across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The six geopolitical zones were; North-Central (University of Agriculture, Makurdi); North-West (Federal University, Dutsin-Ma), North-East (Federal University, Kashere); South-South (University of Port-Harcourt), South-East (Michael Okpara University of Agriculture), and South-West (University of Lagos). According to Research Advisor Sample Size Determination Table (2006), the sample size recommended for this population was 1,536 at 95% confidence level and 2.5% margin of error. However, the researcher added 5% (76) of the sample size in order to cater for attrition, making a sample size 1,612.

Sample and Sampling Procedures

A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted in selecting samples for the study. At the first stage, purposive sampling technique was used to select one federal university with highest population in each of the six geo-political zones. At stage 2, proportional sampling technique was used to select appropriate number of respondents in each selected university.

Table 1: Selected Federal University in Each Geo-Political Zone

Geo-Political Zone	University	Population of Undergraduates	Selected Sample Size
South-West	University of Lagos, Lagos.	45,552	434
South-South	University of Port-Harcourt, Port-Harcourt.	32,462	309
South-East	Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike.	18,584	177
North Central	University of Agriculture, Makurdi.	20,990	200
North-East	Federal University, Kashere.	23,850	227
North-West	Federal University, Dutsin-Ma.	27,900	266
	Total	**169,338**	**1,612**

Source: NUC, 2023

At stage 3, simple random sampling technique was used to select the required number of respondents in each selected university. The respondents were selected through dip-hat method. Hence, 1, 612 respondents were used for this study.

Instrumentation

Substance Abuse Scale (SAS)

Substance Abuse Scale was an adapted version of Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST) developed by Skinner (1982). It is a brief, simple, practical but valid way of identifying individuals who are abusing drugs. It was a 20-item self-report measure scored on a 2-point scale ranging from no to yes, _no_ was scored 0 and _yes_ was scored 1. The internal consistency as reported by the authors was 0.74. The instrument was therefore adapted the Drug Abuse Screening Test by changing the response options to a four-point Likert type response format. This was to give the respondents many options to choose from. Also, the twenty items were reduced to 10 items and reworded to suit the purpose of identifying substance abusers. The adapted instrument was validated by five experts from the Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin who scrutinized the scale and made necessary corrections. The reliability of the scale was ascertained through test-retest reliability method. The instrument was administered to twenty undergraduates of the Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. After an interval of two weeks, the same instrument was re-administered on the same group of students. The two sets of scores were then correlated using Pearson_s Product Moment Correlation. The result yielded a correlation of 0.73 which was adjudged to be reliable.

Sexual Violence Questionnaire (SVQ)

The Sexual Violence Questionnaire was designed by the researcher based on literatures, to elicit information from respondents on types of sexual violence. It contained 10 items on sexual violence and it was scored on a Strongly Agree (SA) -4 points, Agree (A) - 3 points, Strongly Disagree (SD) - 2 points and Disagree (D) - 1 point. The instrument was given to five lecturers in the Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin to vet the appropriateness and quality of the items. The necessary corrections and suggestions were effected after which the instrument was adjudged to collect the required information for this study. The reliability of the instrument was established through test-retest reliability method. The instrument was administered to twenty undergraduates of the Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. After an interval of two weeks, the same instrument was re-administered on the same group of students. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to ascertain the instrument_s internal consistency reliability. 0.76 was derived from the test and the result was acceptable for use in this study.

Hypotheses Testing

This result presents the analyses and out of expected number of 1,612 copies of the questionnaire administered to undergraduates in Federal universities in Nigeria, but 1,589 were successfully retrieved and analysed. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Correlation Matrix were used to analyse the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between substance abuse and sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria

Table 2: Pearson 'r' showing a relationship between substance abuse and sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	Calc. R-Value	p-value	Decision
Substance abuse	1589	27.38	2.79296				
				1587	0.134*	0.000	Rejected
Sexual Violence	1589	26.68	3.29567				

*Significant, p<0.05

Table 2 shows the relationship between substance abuse and sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria. Based on the analysis of the results, since the p-value of 0.000 which was less than 0.05, thus the hypothesis was hereby rejected, meaning that, there was a significant relationship between substance abuse and sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria.

Hypothesis Two: Age, gender and level of study will not significantly predict substance abuse among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria

Table 3: Summary of Correlation Matrix Showing the Relationship between the Age, gender, level of study and substance abuse among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria

		Substance abuse	Age Range	Gender	level
Substance abuse	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
Age Range	Pearson Correlation	-.025	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.317			
Gender	Pearson Correlation	-.029	.591**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.245	.000		
Level of study	Pearson Correlation	-.034	.843**	.825**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.175	.000	.000	

The results from table 3 revealed that Age had no significant relationship with substance abuse among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria ($r = 0.025$, $p > 0.05$). The table also showed that gender had no significant relationship with substance abuse among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria ($r = 0.029$, $p > 0.05$). It was also revealed from the table that the level of study had no significant relationship with substance abuse among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria ($r = 0.034$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis implied that age, gender and level of study had no significant relationship with substance abuse among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria was thus accepted.

Hypothesis Three: Age, gender and level of study will not significantly predict sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria

Table 4: Summary of Correlation Matrix Showing the Relationship between the Age, gender, level of study and sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria

		Sexual violence	Age Range	gender	level
Sexual violence	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
Age Range	Pearson Correlation	-.015	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.540			
Gender	Pearson Correlation	-.012	.591**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.619	.000		
Level	Pearson Correlation	-.011	.843**	.825**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.662	.000	.000	

The results from Table 4 revealed that Age had no significant relationship with sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria (r = 0.015, p > 0.05). The table also shows that gender had no significant relationship with sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria (r = 0.012, p > 0.05). It was also revealed from the table that the level of study had no significant relationship with sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria (r = 0.011, p > 0.05). This implied that the level of study had no significant relationship with sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria. Therefore, this implied that irrespective of the age range, gender, and level of study had no significant relationship with sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings
Finding obtained from this study revealed that substance abuse had significant relationship with sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria. Hence, substance abuse was positively associated with sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria. The reason might be that substance abuse significantly impair judgement and inhibit self-control, increasing the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviours such as sexual violence. When students are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, their inhibitions may decrease, leading to a higher probability of engaging in aggressive or non-consensus behaviour. In addition, substance abuse could contribute to altered perceptions, impaired decision-making and distorted boundaries, all of which can escalate the risk of perpetrating or experiencing sexual violence among undergraduates. This is in agreement with Scalzo (2023) whose study showed that alcohol was the most common drug used to facilitate sexual assaults.

Age, gender and level of study had no significant relationship with substance abuse among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria. The reason for this is that undergraduates, regardless of age, gender and class level, might be affected by changing social norms, and has access to substances. Similarities in these relationships may arise from shared experiences, societal pressures, or common risk factors affecting diverse groups of students. The study corroborated Adeleke, Akinyemi, Adebowale and Fawole (2016), who revealed no significant relationship among age, class level and gender of undergraduates with regards to substance abuse. Also, Briggs and Joyce (2017) showed no significant correlation between age, gender and substance abuse among undergraduates in Nigeria. North, Sheridan, Maltby and Gillett (2007) revealed no relationship between age, gender and substance abuse among undergraduates.

Age, gender and level of study had no significant relationship with sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria**.** The reason could be that undergraduates, regardless of their age, gender, and level of study, may share common societal attitudes and beliefs about sexual violence due to the pervasive nature of certain cultural narratives, social conditioning, and shared experiences that shape their perceptions. Hensel, Fortenberry, O_Sullivan and Orr, (2011) showed no significant relationship between age and sexual violence among undergraduates. Csete, Kamarulzaman and Kazatechkine (2016) showed no significant relationship between class level and sexual violence, while Slightham and Legg (2020) indicated

no significant relationship between gender and sexual violence among undergraduates in the United Kingdom. Dranzoa (2018) showed that class level, gender and age had no significant relationship with sexual violence among undergraduates in Ukraine. Hence, the study showed sexual violence is underreported and it is highly sensitive and stigmatised issue among undergraduates across ages, gender and class level.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there was a significant relationship between substance abuse and sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal universities in Nigeria. Age, gender and level of study had no significant relationship with regards to substance abuse and sexual violence among undergraduates of Federal Universities in Nigeria.

Counselling Implications

The implications of these findings call for the government, universities authorities, guidance counsellors and undergraduates to be informed that sexual violence has become a regular nauseating feature in Nigerian institutions of learning. Counselling can work towards challenging and changing the attitudes, beliefs, and norms that contribute to sexual violence. It may involve addressing harmful gender stereotypes, addressing entitlement, promoting equality and respect, and dismantling rigid beliefs about power and control. By challenging these attitudes, counselling can help shift perceptions and foster a culture of non-violence. Counsellors can conduct workshops and educational programs on consent, bystander intervention, and the importance of respectful relationships, aiming to prevent sexual violence and promote a culture of consent on campus. Addressing substance abuse and sexual violence, counselling programmes may help to reduce the rate of substance abuse as a way of decreasing sexual violence occurrence. There is need for comprehensive approaches that target individual beliefs, social influences, and substance-related behaviours to promote safer and healthier campus environments.

Counselling should be integrated into the universities programme on a regular basis and involvement of undergraduates in the counselling process which will guide them against substance abuse and sexual violence. School counsellors and stakeholders should initiate a serious campaign against abuse of substances and factors influencing sexual violence among undergraduates in various institutions of learning in Nigeria. Hence, there is need for proactive measures and continuous/periodic counselling for students. Counsellors can provide a safe and confidential environment for survivors of sexual violence to share their experiences, express emotions, and seek support. Encouraging positive self-talk, challenging negative beliefs and promoting self-acceptance can promote positive behaviours among undergraduates in tertiary institutions of learning.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the followings are thereby recommended;

1. Counselling unit should intensify awareness programmes on substance abuse through seminars and workshops for undergraduates in order to prevent any act of sexual violence in Federal Universities in Nigeria.

2. School management should provide preventive programmes on substance abuse among undergraduates in Federal Universities in Nigeria regardless of their age, gender and class level.

3. Guidance counsellors should recognise their role as advocates in the prevention of sexual violence among undergraduates in Nigeria.

4. There should be proper sexual education for the undergraduates coupled with setting up of disciplinary committee on sexual violence so as to minimize the occurrence of this problem among undergraduates.

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