

Mitigating Substance Abuse amongst Students at a University in Chongwe, Lusaka Province

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate ways to mitigate substance abuse amongst students at a University in Chongwe, Lusaka province. The study was guided by three objectives being: to establish types of substance most abused by students at a university, to determine the sources of substances which is abused by the students at a university and to assess ways to curb substance abuse through artificial intelligence development at a university. The study employed a descriptive research design on the population of students and officers from the dean of student's affairs. 55 students took part in the study with 5 officers from the dean of student's affairs bringing the total sample to 6 participants. An online google survey questionnaire was sent to students' WhatsApp groups and 55 complete results were received while the officers from the dean of student's affairs were interviewed. Data was analysed thematically through identifying similar themes and comparing them to others. The research has identified the prevalent substances abused by students at a University, with alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana (dagga), insunko, Benlyn, and shisha being the most commonly abused. The study also underscores that these substances are more accessible and accepted, especially alcohol and insunko, which can be attributed to their availability in the surrounding areas and being cheap. The emotional and psychological effects experienced by substance-abusing students, such as happiness, excitement, peaceful sleep, boosted confidence, and confusion, were highlighted. These experiences often serve as temporary escapes from academic and personal pressures and are exacerbated by factors like peer pressure, improper parental upbringing, and the influence of friends. The study also revealed some gender-based disparities in substance abuse, with more women abusing 'insunko' and more men abusing dagga, while alcohol was commonly consumed by both genders. The study recommended the establishment of a counselling centre, regular engagement on anti substance abuse awareness, and the provision of diverse extra-curricular activities to keep students occupied. It was also recommended that improvements to the OOWNU application to attach personal assistance chatbot that can be assisting those that are addicted to go for rehabilitation with prompt messages.

Key words: substance abuse, university, and sources of substances

INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse has been explored in different ways, Mwanza and Mwale (2023) recognised the drug and alcohol abuse issue in higher education institutions to be far more reaching than it is reported and that it is a public health concern that needed more attention. Kabbash, Zidan and Said (2022) describe the effects of substance abuse among young people that it not only affects the individual's health and their livelihood but also the nation. To such, Mwanza (2021) advocates for proactive student support services including counselling to be available to respond to the various challenges in institutions of learning.

A study by Adeyemo et al. (2016) sought to determine the prevalence of drug abuse among students in a

tertiary institution in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The sample size for this study was 800 students ($n=800$). Structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Three research questions and one hypothesis was answered. Descriptive statistics and Pearson product moment correlation were used for data analysis using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). Results showed that the majority of the respondents agreed that students take drugs as a result of poor teacher-student relationship, improper parental upbringing, as well as the influence of peer pressure. Therefore, the problem does not exist in Zambian universities alone but also in Nigeria.

In Pakistani, Sajid, Tatlah, and Butt (2020) conducted research to describe the causes behind drug abuse among students at universities. Qualitative approach was adopted to conduct this study. Semi-structured interviews of eight university students were conducted by using purposive snowball sampling technique. The collected data was analyzed by using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that there are different causes due to which university students started abusing drugs: individual, interpersonal and institutional. The hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine are used in a very small ratio at the universities, whereas sedatives, ecstasy pills, shisha, cannabis (Charas), injected drugs and alcohol (Murree Brewery, whisky, vodka) are commonly used drugs by university students. This provides evidence that there is more drug and substance abuse amongst students in different universities in the world.

A study was conducted to assess the prevalence and factors associated with substance abuse in selected public schools in Ogbomoso, Southwest Nigeria by (Idowu et al., 2018). The study adopted a cross-sectional study design and multi-stage sampling methods were utilized among 249 study participants who gave informed consent/assent. Data were collected using facilitated, self-administered questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistics using the Chi-Square test were carried out at $p<0.05$. The mean age of our respondents was $16.3\pm 2SD$; 40.0% of them had positive attitude to substance abuse while 21.7% had ever consumed alcoholic drinks. Tramadol was the most commonly abused substance apart from alcohol; reported by 39.0% of the substance abusers. Most (35.5%) of the substance abusers did so believing it could enhance their academic performance. The proportion of respondents who were substance abusers was significantly higher among students who had not received any formal lectures on the subject at school compared to those who had (47.5% vs 29.7%; $p=0.023$). In this case, it was a common practice that students abuse substance in colleges and universities around the world.

Onofa et al., (2016) examined prevalence of alcohol and drug use among students of different tertiary institutions at the same point in time. The study used a self-administered WHO Student Drug Use Questionnaire was used to collect data on drug use among 1233 college students from the Federal College of Education, Moshood Abiola Polytechnic and University of Agriculture all in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria. Findings of the study revealed that lifetime prevalence of use of one or more drugs of abuse was 69.2%. The highest lifetime prevalence rates were for alcohol (34.3%), tobacco (14.4%), hypnotosedatives (8.8%) and cannabis (6.2%). The majority of respondents who abused psychoactive drugs initiated the habit in primary and secondary school. Alcohol use was more common among male students and Christians. It was also associated with parental drug use, parental educational level and marital status.

A cross-sectional study was conducted by Wada, Khalid, Shitu and Ibrahim (2021) using online survey tool (Google Form) validated by content validity and pilot study. The hyperlink to the online survey tool was shared with undergraduate students from three universities located in Katsina State via emails and social media platforms, namely WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter. Data collected from eligible participants were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study found that a total of 308 students from the three universities returned the online questionnaire, of which 67.2% were men and 32.8% were women. Among the respondents, 37% admitted practicing drug and/or substance abuse. Majority of them (56.2%) were third-year students in the age range of 20-25 years. It was further established that drug and substance abuse among the undergraduate university students in Katsina State is common, and it cuts across both male and female students. The study recommended that concerted efforts towards parental support and supervisions, social intervention programs, and campus-based prevention and supported programs against drug and substance abuse should be encouraged.

The objective of the study by Tembo, Mambwe and Moyi (2022) was to examine the reasons and the consequences of alcohol and other drugs abuse among students in Zambia taking one private university as a

case study. A total of 30 participants whose age ranged between 21 and 27 years were sampled through snowball sampling. Qualitative data was collected between March and June, 2022. The study found that some students entered the university already hooked on drugs and alcohol while others got influenced while on campus. Trigger factors for substance abuse on campus included satisfying cravings arising from addiction; desire to integrate with a social group, to read intensively for higher grades, to navigate stress and problems and for fun. The study recommended preventive Health Education, counselling, treatment and intensified rehabilitation are critical to combating the problem of substance abuse among young people.

Zhang, et al., (2020) examined the associations of ACEs with individual and clusters of health risk behaviour among college students in Zambia. A total of 624 college students participated in this cross-sectional study. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect information on their ACEs and health risk behaviours. The study revealed that there were 58.3% (364) reporting some forms of ACEs, with 27.6% (172), 16.3% (102), and 14.4% (90) being exposed to 1, 2, and ≥ 3 ACEs, respectively. The prevalence of health risk behaviours ranged from 6.0 to 34.2%. Overall, ACEs were associated with increased risk of alcohol drinking, smoking, binge drinking, suicide attempt, risky sexual behaviours, and illicit drug use. Logistic regression suggested that participants with ≥ 3 ACEs (OR, 3.62; 95% CI, 2.14–6.13) were more likely to engage in the unhealthy cluster, characterized by the presence of any health risk behaviour, than those without ACE.

Kasaro, Chiundira, Velmurugan, and Chansa (2021) sought to establish the reasons for drug abuse among students at these two Universities. The most commonly perceived reason for drug abuse by students was peer pressure of which was reported by about 59% of the respondents. The other reasons for drug and alcohol abuse among students were coping with school and family problems, need for acceptance by friends, lack of knowledge about the dangers of drug abuse, easy availability of drugs, low cost of drugs, excessive pocket money, the wish to increase intelligence and lack of concern by school administrators. 21% of the respondents also reported that boredom is also a major cause of drug and alcohol abuse. The study recommended that there was need for students to be counselled by professional counsellors once in a semester, increase sensitisation programs which focus on drug reduction and consequences and also, to increase public awareness on the dangers of substance abuse in universities and among students. This would save some of the students who are able change.

In dealing with learners with addictive substance abuse tendencies, there is need to use local language as it brings about better understanding in the multilingual Zambian community. Nyimbili (2021) argued that there was need to adopt translanguaging pedagogical practices since they have proved to be more beneficial in multilingual classes than the current monolingual practices. This meant that students who abuse substance should be counselled using more than the official language. Tembo and Nyimbili (2021) also noted that the Nsenga learners provided the learners with the practical understanding of the content the teacher was teaching about. This demonstrates that when the official language was used to learners whose language was not the regional official language it never made sense. Therefore, talking to students who are addicts needed to use their languages or a common language so that there is understanding and information sharing amongst them.

A study by Menon, Kusanthan and Mwaba (2016) explored the usage of alcohol and tobacco among University of Zambia students and factors contributing to this behaviour. The study utilised a cross-sectional quantitative survey method design. Approximately 800 undergraduate students were targeted and surveyed in classrooms selected through a stratified random sample procedure. Data was collected by a self-administered questionnaire using the Health and Behavior Survey and the Global School Health Survey. The results suggest that consumption of alcohol was higher than that of tobacco. The prevalence of tobacco and alcohol use occurs across all years and it was because the product was cheap and more accessible to the students since the sale of such was not under strict rule like cocaine. However, the use of tobacco products was higher among first years and drinking alcohol was high among fourth years. Drug abuse should be curbed in all institutions to this effect.

The purpose of the study by Shibalika (2021) was to investigate the causes and effects of drug abuse among primary school learners in Shibuyunji district of Zambia. The study sample included head teachers, guidance and counselling teachers, learners, and parents in the four selected primary schools. The research instruments used to collect data were semi-structured interview guides and focus group discussions. The researcher further

established that the causes of drug abuse in Shibuyunji district were peer pressure, lack of recreational activities, curiosity and amusement, lack of parental supervision, prevalence of drugs in the locality and poverty, and that the effects of drug abuse were deviant behaviour predisposing crime, drug addiction, rebellious behaviour towards authority, lower academic performance and expulsion or suspension from school. The study's recommendations were that there was great need to strengthen guidance and counselling in schools, and to enhance communication between administration and learners about the need for drug-free school environments.

Çam, Kılınc, Ahmet, Önsüz, Metintaş (2020) conducted a study which aimed at determining the prevalence of hazardous alcohol consumption (HAC) according to gender among university students and associated factors. The study is a cross-sectional study conducted on undergraduate students who were studying at Eskisehir Osmangazi University in 2019. To ensure a representative sample of 26036 students from all grade levels, we used a stratified sampling technique from 11 faculties at the university and the questionnaire was applied to 2349 undergraduate students. The study found that HAC prevalence is high among university students. The risk of HAC increases with the use of alcohol in family and circle of friends, smoking, illegal substance usage and depressive disorders. The factors associated with the risk of HAC in males and females are similar. Different scholars in Zambia have conducted studies on substance abuse. Masiye and Ndhlovu (2016) and Masiye (2016) focused on drug and alcohol abuse in secondary schools while Mwanza and Mwale (2023) focused also on drugs and alcohol abuse among University students in the Copperbelt province. These and other studies left a gap on how substance abuse can be mitigated at a University in Lusaka province. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to investigate ways to mitigate substance abuse amongst students at a University in Chongwe, Lusaka province

Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives.

- i. To establish types of substance most abused by students at a university
- ii. To determine the sources of substances abused by the students at a University.
- iii. To assess ways to curb substance abuse through artificial intelligence development at a university.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive research design on the population of students and officers from the dean of student's affairs. 55 students took part in the study with 5 officers from the Dean of student's (DOS) affairs department bringing the total sample to 60 participants. An online google survey questionnaire was sent to students' WhatsApp groups and 55 complete results were received while the officers from the dean of student's affairs were interviewed. Data was analysed thematically through identifying similar themes and comparing them to others. Those responses that were similar were grouped in one category and coded while most frequent responses were presented in verbatims to show the voices of the participants. Consent from the university management was sought through its approval from the ethical committee and all the students who answered the questionnaires were assured of personal data protection as the data was only meant for this study only. Those who did not take part were not questioned or forced hence the number of participants was a genuine representation of the students who so it fit to contribute to this study.

FINDINGS

The study findings are presented under the objectives, which guided the study as below.

To establish types of substance most abused by students at a university

Participants were asked on the types of substance the students abused at a University. The findings revealed that students abused mostly alcohol, cigarettes, dagga, nsunko, Benlyn and shisha in that order. Participant 1 from DOS said:

The most common cases we have been dealing with in this university is to do with alcohol drinking because these students have a lot of freedom away from their parents. We receive reports of some sleeping in local bars across the road and others failing to reach their boarding houses because they are too drunk. Smoking is on a small quantity and fewer smoke than the alcohol abusers.

A student 2 said:

Most of the students drink alcohol, both females and males in this institution. However, few students' smoke compared to the ones who drink alcohol. We can say some of the students have taken alcohol like a career and they drink almost on a daily basis, and they come to class smelling alcohol.

Student 3 added that:

Students abuse alcohol more than these other substances. Even if they are not caught, it is more common to drink than smoke dagga and shisha amongst students. The ladies of today drink more than us men in this institution but they do not make much noise as we do.

A female student added that:

Some ladies abuse the traditional '*nsunko*' especially when they have a catch to see. They believe that when they sniff '*nsuko*' they become warm, and their partners feel better. So, most of the female students have falling into this abuse and the rate at which '*nsunko*' is sold amongst them is very high.

Therefore, students abuse substances in the university and the trend is on the rise. Participants were asked on how they felt when they abused the mentioned substances. It was learnt they had different experiences that included being happy, excited, having peaceful sleep, boost confidence, speak good English, confused, violent and for ladies sexually excited and body warming for sexual acts, excited for new adventures. To the addicted, it was learnt that they felt normal and behave normally unlike when they had not taken any of the substances. Therefore, substance abuse provided different experiences for different students in the university hence controlling this was necessary. With regards to the causes of substance abuse in the university, different experiences were recorded which included peer pressure, school / course pressure, curiosity, trying to explore new things especially first year students, limited extra curricula activities to keep them busy during their off time from school, low self esteem and academic stress. A participant from DOS said:

Most of the causes is just experimental and the student fails to cope up with the experiment. Some of the students we find with problems of over drinking alcohol are beginners, and some have experienced a failed relationship and other social challenges. I feel to some it is just a way of channelling frustration and stress at times.

Student 5 said:

Most of the students who abuse substances are those with pressures of life like a failed course, failed relationship and financial problems from their parents and they fail to accept reality of poverty. So, they feel when they abuse these substances it will help with status will unfortunately it doesn't change much.

With regards to the gender, which abuses substance more than the other, participants stated that it was dependent on the type of substance. It was found that more women abused '*nsunko*' than men while more men abused marijuana (dagga) than women. Alcohol was abused by both while shisha was not common in school unless in town club. A participant from DOS noted that: "*all the students abuse alcohol while nsunko is more of women and men were abusing dagga according to the records I have.*" This provided evidence that students were abusing substances in the institution of learning, and it was not limited to one gender but all.

To determine the sources of substances that are abused by the students at a University.

Participants were asked to choose on the substances, which were easily accessed by students at a University. The results are presented in the pie chart below.

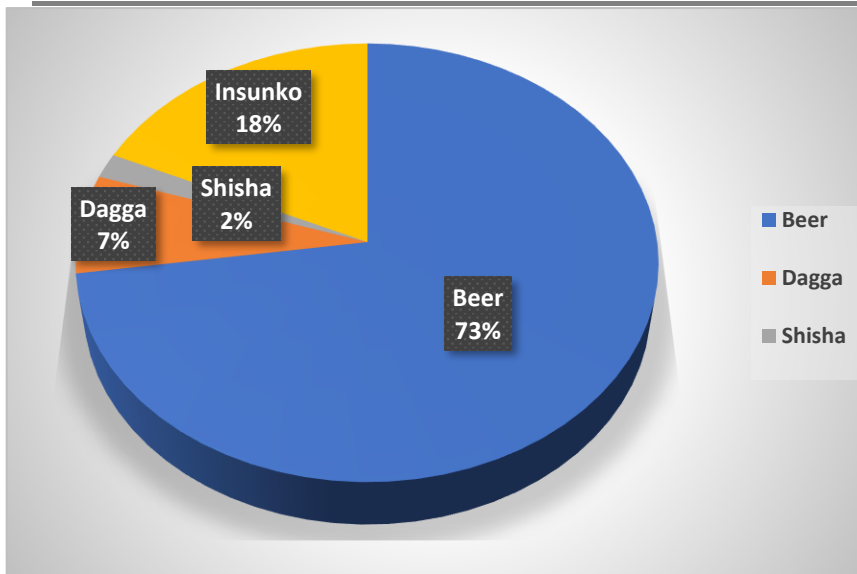


Figure 1: Which substance is easily accessed by students?

Results in figure 1 show that the substance which was easily accessed by students at A university was alcohol (n=40) 70%, insunko (n=10) 18%, dagga (n=4) 7% and shisha (n=1) 2%. The most available and accessed substances by students at A university were alcohol and insunko perhaps it could be attributed that alcohol is sold by most dealers and insunko and that the institution has more of women in the institution than men to a ratio of 65 females to 35 males.

With regards to the sources of these substances, it was established that alcohol is openly sold in most shops around A university hence any student can buy at will and anytime since they are all above 18 years. Meanwhile, insunko is found in the market at Chongwe, from the women who work at clubs, the cleaners and they buy at K5.00 as cheapest and the price goes up depending on the quantity. It was also learnt that the students come with insunko from their homes as they come to school, and they share amongst themselves and only buy when such consignments are depleted. Student 8 said:

Insunko we bring from homes and we store it in our rooms. We only share with close friends and when it is finished, we buy from Chongwe market and from the cleaners in the institution those we are close to.

Student 4 added that:

Dagga is only found amongst the smokers themselves and they do not disclose where it is sold but they only have a person who sells amongst them. It is actually found in the communities and people who smoke are the only people who can buy. A new smoker cannot buy because has no connection to the buyer since they fear DEC.

With regards to the gender linked to the sources of the abused substances, it was learnt that females were linked to insunko and males were linked to dagga. When we talk of alcohol, every gender has access at anytime always. Substances are found readily available and both male and female student abusers know where to access the substances depending on what they abuse. Therefore, substance abuse is easily accessible at a University amongst the students.

To assess ways to curb substance abuse through artificial intelligence development

The curbing of substance abuse was proposed in two ways. Firstly, is from the university point of view and secondly was a proposal of a web based application development.

University grown solutions

Participants indicated that there was need for the university to establish a counselling centre with qualified

counsellors who should be available all the time. The current counsellor that the university has is a lecturer whose service has to be divided between lecturing and counselling. It was also noted that frequent engagement with students on the dangers of substance abuse should be planned frequently so that students abusing substances can be helped. The other solution was to provide extra curricula activities to keep the student social life active away from academics. These should include more grounds for football, rugby, netball, tennis courts, badminton courts, chess and scrabble halls, body building facilities and swimming pools among others. Student 6 stated that:

The university management should bring initiatives and clubs where students can join so that they can become busy. Not only that, but also introducing short new soft skills within the university that students can start learning.

Student 1 added that:

The management of the school should be inviting ministry of health experts to come and sensitize students on the negative impact of substance abuse, and this should be done four times per term.

This meant that there was a lot to be done for the students to stop abusing drugs at the university. The lack of activities to make them busy can be one of the contributing factors to substance abuse.

An Online Application

The participants indicated the need for an online application, it was noted that AI innovation to this could help the students who abuse substance to have access to information within their halls of residence or study rooms. Students struggling with abuse and are shy but need help could easily find such assistance on the application. Firstly, there is need to add a chat centre that can be accessed by every student and AI could be used to provide specific responses. Student 40 said;

An online application could be equipped with a facility to help students with AI supported responses to help them deal with struggles of addiction in the absence of a counsellor especially that almost all students have access to a smart phone.

Other responses noted that students should have access to the applications and key in the problem he or she is facing. Then AI should respond with solutions leading to substance abuse and how such can be resolved. Through this, students will have an alternative source of help in midst of limited counselling services. AI should ensure the messages are responded via text to make sure that the number is active for the individual in need in case of further physical help.

Student 36 noted that;

Its easy for students to look for answers online and an application like the OWNU application has provided a valuable platform where one can read and learn about a number of topics. The only thing lacking is making it work like AI where one person can ask a question and get an immediate answer or pointers to where you can get a response.

Some participants indicated that the online application needed to have a personal rehabilitation center service. This section of the application should store personal information for the person in need and struggling with substance abuse and after feeding it with information; guidelines should be availed to the victim in line with the information fed into the next step and recommendations such as visiting a service provider can be made. Student 11 said;

There is need to have an area for the application to allow for students to store some information concerning their rehabilitation. This information can be linked to their text or email system so that they can get reminders on scheldules that support health routines and rehabilitation from substance abuse.

Therefore, the application should also have a set reminder on each individual who uses the service so that they

can be reminded on the schedule of activities and personal needs inline with the rehabilitation services they are undergoing.

Participants pointed out that application should also be programmed to allow anonymous reporting of students who need help with substance abuse and other abuse related matters in the university. Student support officer 5 added that;

The application should be provide for anonymous reporting of substance abuse related activities in university to relevant officers like security and student affairs officer to help track and reduce the occurrence of such among students.

This will allow the university to curb the substance abuse, as students will fear to go in public places and abuse substances in fear of being reported. This should only take few information from the reporter so that they are protected from harm.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

To establish types of substance most abused by students at a University

The study findings revealed that the types of substances which students abused mostly included alcohol, cigarettes, dagga, nsunko, Benlyn and shisha in that order. These results are supported by Zhang et al., (2020) which the prevalence of health risk behaviours ranged from 6.0 to 34.2%. Overall, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) were associated with increased risk of alcohol drinking, smoking, binge drinking, suicide attempt, risky sexual behaviours, and illicit drug use. These substances were more common in the areas where students resided than others. Therefore, the students at a university were abusing more of alcohol than other substances maybe it was because this was more common than dagga that is more prohibited and controlled on the market.

The study further established that students who abused these substances had different experiences which included being happy, excited, having peaceful sleep, boost confidence, speak good English, confused, violent and for ladies sexually excited and body warming, excited for new adventures. These findings are in line with Adeyemo et al., (2016) whose results showed that the majority of the respondents agreed that students take drugs as a result of poor teacher-student relationship, improper parental upbringing, as well as the influence of peer pressure. They thought that when they take such substances, they would get rid of their pressures and problems and yet this only provided short time relief in some cases of forgetting about the said pressure. In doing so, the reasons for getting into substance abuse are outweighed than the consequences students have in indulge in such activities.

The study findings established that to those struggling with addiction, it was learnt that they felt stabilized and behaved normally unlike when they had not taken any of the substances. Despite knowing how much damage these substances had caused on them, they remained in a state of struggle. Therefore, substance abuse provided different experiences for different students in the university hence controlling this was necessary. Tembo, Mambwe and Moyi (2022) concur what they sated that the trigger factors for substance abuse on campus included satisfying cravings arising from addiction; desire to integrate with a social group, to read intensively for higher grades, to navigate stress and problems and for fun. The addicts in this case are among the people who abuse substance to satisfy their cravings for a short time.

It was further found that more women abused 'nsunko' than men while more men abused dagga than women. Alcohol was abused by both while shisha was not common in school but in town club. These findings are supported by Çam, Kılınc, Ahmet, Önsüz, Metintaş (2020) who argued that the risk of HAC increases with the use of alcohol in family and circle of friends, smoking, illegal substance usage and depressive disorders. The factors associated with the risk of HAC in males and females are similar. The foregoing findings prove to the contrary the cultural notion held by most speculators that men than women mostly abuse alcohol. This study has shown that female students abused alcohol more than male students and this can be the case elsewhere. This should then be a provoking finding to others who still hold the traditional perception about men being

more of alcohol abusers than women.

To determine the sources of substances that is abused by the students at a University.

Results in figure 1 show that the substances that were easily accessed by students at a university was alcohol (n=40), insunko (n=10), dagga (n=4), and shisha (n=1). Similarly to Çam, Kılınç, Ahmet, Önsüz, Metintaş (2020) that found that HAC prevalence is high among university students. The lifetime prevalence of use of one or more drugs of abuse was 69.2%. The results align with Menon, Kusanthan and Mwaba (2016) who suggested that consumption of alcohol was higher than that of tobacco amongst students. They stated that the prevalence of tobacco and alcohol use occurs across all years and it was because the product was cheap and more accessible to the students since the sale of such was not under strict rule like cocaine. This study showed a high prevalence of drug abuse among the students was due to its easily accessibility to the students in their environment.

The most available and accessed substances by students at a university were alcohol and insunko perhaps it is because alcohol is sold by most dealers and insunko it is because we have more of women in the institution than men to a ratio of 65 females to 35 males. These findings at a University align with the results of the study conducted by Kasaro, Chiundira, Velmurugan, and Chansa (2021) who found that the most commonly perceived reason for drug abuse by students was peer pressure. The other reasons for drug and alcohol abuse among students were coping with school and family problems, need for acceptance by friends, lack of knowledge about the dangers of drug abuse, easy availability of drugs, low cost of drugs, excessive pocket money, the wish to increase intelligence and lack of concern by school administrators. The many personal and school related challenges bring about substance abuse as they feel their problems would go away when not.

The study findings established that alcohol is openly sold in most shops around a university hence any student can buy at will and anytime since they are all above 18 years. The results tallied with Sajid, Tatlah, and Butt (2020) who also identifies alcohol as commonly used substances, as they explain that the hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine are used in a very small ratio at the universities, whereas sedatives, ecstasy pills, shisha, cannabis (Charas), injected drugs and alcohol (Murree Brewery, whisky, vodka) are commonly used drugs by university students. Menon, Kusanthan and Mwaba (2016) too concur that the use of tobacco products was higher among first years and drinking alcohol was high among fourth years as these were more openly sold than other substances in campus. This freely accesses to alcohol provided by the local business community bring about increased abuse of alcohol by students at will.

The study also revealed that *insunko* was found in the market at Chongwe, from the women who work at clubs, the cleaners and they buy at K5.00 as cheapest and the price goes up depending on the quantity. It was also learnt that the students come with *insunko* from their homes as they come to school, and they share amongst themselves and only buy when such consignments are finished. In view of the findings, Wada, Khalid, Shitu and Ibrahim (2021) indicated that drug and substance abuse among the undergraduate university students is common, and it cuts across both male and female students. They argue that 37% admitted practicing drug and/or substance abuse which was mostly traditional drugs. Majority of them (56.2%) were third-year students in the age range of 20-25 years. Also, Onofa, et al., (2016) support that the highest abuse rates for alcohol were (34.3%), tobacco (14.4%), hypnosedatives (8.8%) and cannabis (6.2%). The majority of respondents who abused psychoactive drugs initiated the habit in primary and secondary school. However, this study did not link the abuse and access to the students' background hence the current status of abuse was more accurate than before. Any cheaply sold drug can be easily accessible by any person with little cash and this brings about a habit of abuse in this context.

With regards to the gender linked to the sources of the abused substances, it was learnt that females were linked to *insunko* and males were linked to dagga. These findings in line with Idowu et al., (2018) who also revealed that tramadol was the most commonly abused substance apart from alcohol; reported by 39.0% of the substance abusers. Most (35.5%) of the substance abusers did so believing it could enhance their academic performance and men abused more of smoking related substance 56% while women were moderately abusing alcohol at 45%. This study has also provided new evidence that female students were abusing more of insunko than men despite this type of substance and general smoking being linked to males. It has also brought about

new information that insunko was now linked to female students than male which was a well known notion that traditional substances were more accessible by men than females.

To assess ways to curb substance abuse through artificial intelligence development

The findings suggest that addressing substance abuse issues among students requires a comprehensive approach. Establishing a counselling center at the university, this is crucial for providing support to students dealing with substance abuse and related challenges. This aligns with Shibalika (2021) whose study indicated that there was great need to strengthen guidance and counselling in schools, and to enhance communication between administration and learners about the need for drug-free school environments. In addition, Tembo, Mambwe and Moyi (2022) recommended preventive Health Education, counselling, treatment and intensified rehabilitation were critical to combating the problem of substance abuse among young people. This holistic approach underscores the significance of qualified counsellors who can offer assistance and guidance to students in universities and schools, promoting healthier choices and addressing substance abuse issues effectively. If the two are taken into consideration, the students who abuse substances at different universities would slowly be assisted with emotional healing from abuse of substances and lead a better university life.

The study also noted that frequent engagement with students on the dangers of substance abuse should be planned every month so that the abusers can realise that the student population care about them. This is in agreement with Kasaro, Chiundira, Velmurugan, and Chansa (2021) who recommended that there was need for students to be counselled by professional counsellors once in a semester, increase sensitisation programs which focus on drug reduction and consequences and also, to increase public awareness on the dangers of substance abuse in universities and among students. If these recommendations can be taken and implemented by the university, perhaps we can see a reduction on substance abuse from students in long term.

The other solution was to provide more extra curricula activities to keep them busy. The need for regular engagement with students on the dangers of substance abuse and the provision of more extracurricular activities, as outlined in the initial statement, corresponds with Shibalika (2021) causes of drug abuse in Shibuyunji district were peer pressure, lack of recreational activities, curiosity and amusement, lack of parental supervision, prevalence of drugs in the locality and poverty. If the university can provide more grounds for football, rugby, netball, tennis courts, badminton courts, chess and scrabble halls, body building facilities and swimming pools among others would probably make the students be busy and forget about the habits due to the new sporting habits they would be enjoying. With such measures, it would be easy to curb substance abuse in universities.

The study found that developing a web based application that could be accessed by students on campus equipped with artificial intelligence to help give basic information concerning struggles with substance abuse would help mitigate the drug challenges. The findings have further shown that the online application could also be set to send prompts and texts over health routines and possible make recommendations for those whose challenges may need further attention to human service providers. The study findings also demonstrated that the application could be used as a reporting mechanism or whistleblowing for students to use to report drug abuse incidents on campus.

CONCLUSION

The research has identified the prevalent substances abused by students at a University, with alcohol, cigarettes, dagga, insunko, Benlyn, and shisha being the most commonly abused. The study also underscores that these substances are more accessible and accepted, especially alcohol and insunko, which can be attributed to their availability in the surrounding areas and being cheap. The emotional and psychological effects experienced by substance-abusing students, such as happiness, excitement, peaceful sleep, boosted confidence, and confusion, were highlighted. These experiences often serve as temporary escapes from academic and personal pressures and are exacerbated by factors like peer pressure, improper parental upbringing, and the influence of friends. The research has identified that, to the addicted, substance abuse provides a sense of normalcy, and for other students, and it is a coping mechanism. The triggers for substance abuse include cravings arising from addiction, the desire to fit into social groups, stress relief, and seeking pleasure. The

study also revealed some gender-based disparities in substance abuse, with more women abusing 'insunko' and more men abusing dagga, while alcohol was commonly consumed by both genders.

In summary, substance abuse is a significant concern among students at a University, with various substances readily available and accessible. It is crucial to address this issue through comprehensive strategies, including the establishment of a counselling and support service centre, regular engagement on substance abuse awareness, and the provision of diverse extra-curricular activities to keep students occupied. These interventions should aim to deter substance abuse, improve student well-being, and foster a healthier campus environment. An introduction of a web based application with a personal assistance chatbot that can act as an assistant to help remind those struggling with substance abuse could be made on the application for a rehibition and prompt messages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the conclusions drawn from the study, the following can be recommended:

- i. The school management should establishment a counselling centre with fulltime employed professionally trained counsellors.
- ii. Regular engagement on substance abuse awareness through talks from the peer educators and the drug enforcement commission.
- iii. Establish a peer-mentoring program where students who have successfully overcome substance abuse can provide support and guidance to those currently struggling, creating a supportive community within the university.
- iv. Development of an online application to act as a personal assistance chatbot to link struggling students with substance abuse to professional rehabilitation support. The technology can also be taking statistics over the number of students that visit.

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