

EFFECT OF ALCOHOL ABUSE AMONG UNDERGRADUATES' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN FACULTY OF VOCATIONAL AND SCIENCE EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR, CALABAR

Adie, Boniface Undigweundeye Ph.D

Edet Itam Ben

Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education

University of Calabar, Calabar

E-mail: bonnyadie82@gmail.com

☎ +234-8086336205

&

Mohammed Musa Ph.D

Department of Human Kinetics

Yusuf Maitama Sule Federal University of Education Kano, Kano State

☎ +234-7036448112

Abstract

This main thrust of this work was to investigate the effect of alcohol abuse among undergraduates' academic performance in Faculty of Vocational and Science Education, University of Calabar, Calabar. The purpose of the study was achieved through one null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Literature was reviewed based on the variable of the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Multistage sampling technique was used to select two hundred and thirty-one (231) undergraduates from three Departments in the Faculty of Vocational and Science Education, University of Calabar, Calabar. The instrument used for data collection was a structured and validated questionnaire. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used for data analysis. The result of the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between absenteeism and undergraduates' academic performance in the Faculty of Vocational and Science Education, University of Calabar. Based on these findings, it was recommended that school counselors should liaise with both parents and the school management in ensuring that, students who engage in absenteeism are counselled, so that they can be meaningful to the society and the nation at large.

Keywords: Alcohol Abuse, Undergraduates' Academic Performance, Absenteeism

Introduction

Undergraduates' academic performance is a pivotal indicator of their learning outcomes, career prospects, personal development, mental health and societal contributions. Recent research highlights that effective academic performance hinges on multifaceted determinants including student engagement, teaching methodologies, technological integration, psychosocial wellbeing, and institutional support systems (Tight, 2023; Ebele & Paul, 2020; Shahiri & Husain, 2025). Trangenstein, Yeh, Spark, Arria, Greenfield and Jernigan (2024) reveal that alcohol abuse among undergraduates significantly correlates with lower GPAs, increased absenteeism, higher dropout risks and psychosocial harms.

Alcohol abuse encompasses a spectrum of problematic alcohol-use behaviours, including excessive daily consumption (>2 drinks/day for males, >1 drink/day for females), binge drinking and Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD). The high-risk period of high consumption

of alcohol over a short period of time by students is during the first six weeks as a fresher. Many of these students fall into peer pressure and may begin drinking soon after the first day of classes. Alcohol use is commonly viewed as the “college experience” that students desire. According to Fuster and Samet (2018), after tobacco, alcohol accounts for a higher burden of disease than any other drug. Alcohol use is a major cause of preventable liver disease worldwide and alcoholic liver disease is the main alcohol-related chronic medical illness, which in most cases have resulted to deaths.

Evidence from the 2016 Global burden of disease (GBD) study estimated that Nigeria was one of the countries with the highest prevalence of current alcohol use among adults 15 years and older in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), 40 to 59.9% at a population level, for both males and females Global Burden of Disease (2018). Some scholars have ascribed the absence of a working policy on alcohol in Nigeria to the sabotaging efforts of the alcohol manufacturing companies on the formulation of effective alcohol control policies (Dumbili & Williams, 2016; Opara et al., 2020). According to Osuchukwu and Osuchukwu (2019) in the Global Journal of Medical Sciences in 2019 found that: 70.2% of students in Cross River State reported drinking alcohol regularly. 41.1% reported starting drinking before the age of 18. 27.5% reported drinking to cope with stress or anxiety. Adeoye, Adeoye, Ngozi and Ani (2014), noted that, although alcohol use studies have been conducted among high school and university students in Nigeria, but most of these studies have been confined to a particular region of the country, mostly the South-Western Region, with few studies conducted in the Northern parts (Abasiubong, Udobang, Idung, Udoh and Jombo 2014), where the rate of alcohol use is assumed to be higher.

However, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2024), noted that, excessive alcohol consumption is a risk factor for a wide range of health and social problems and is a major cause of premature illness and death. Acute intoxication with alcohol is associated with aggressive and violent behavior; increased risk of accidents and injury; Nausea and vomiting; hangovers (headaches, dehydration, nausea, etc.), a reduced sexual performance. At the same time, chronic excessive consumption can affect every part of the body and lead to long-term health problems. High-risk drinking is associated with high blood pressure and stroke; anxiety, depression and suicide; liver disease; digestive problems, ulcers and inflammation of the pancreas; blackouts and hallucinations; difficulty remembering things and solving problems; premature aging; impotence; permanent brain injury leading to memory loss, cognitive deficits and disorientation; impaired mobility as a result of osteoporosis, gout, and muscle and nerve damage; cancer of the mouth, throat, and breast.

Absenteeism as a major consequence of alcohol abuse that seriously impacting undergraduates' academic performance. Oluwole and Ofo (2020) asserted that absenteeism linking with alcohol abuse are significant factors that can negatively impact students' academic achievement. Regular absences lead to missed lessons, assignments, and discussions, making it challenging for students to keep up with their peers. Students who abuse alcohol are more likely to experience academic problems, including lower grades, decreased academic achievement, and increased risk of dropping out. This and many other factors have led to the view of suggesting a possible way of curbing and preventing alcohol use and abuse among this vulnerable but very significant group of people in our society.

According to Conel (2020), absenteeism could lead student to have disconnection in the concept of learning because the students who are regularly absent have greater tendency to drop the school at early age and will not continue schooling, and this might lead to unemployment, low average incomes, and poverty in the country. The study of Ansari and Pianta (2019) shows that the student who had a weaker attendance record in the early years, in turn, had weaker attendance later on. Due to the increased likelihood of absenteeism later in a student's educational career, early absenteeism was associated with less desirable

academic and social-behavioral results. When a student is frequently absent there is a chance that the student might as well experience a hard time connecting with others (Ihekoronye et al., 2020).

An increase in antisocial tendencies and behavioral problems among undergraduate students in the school, makes it imperative to find out the effect of alcohol abuse among undergraduates' academic performance in Faculty of Vocational and Science Education, University of Calabar, Calabar.

Purpose of the study

This study investigates the effect of alcohol abuse among undergraduates' academic performance in Faculty of Vocational and Science Education, University of Calabar, Calabar. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Examined the absenteeism influences undergraduates' academic achievement.

Statement of hypothesis

Absenteeism does not significantly relate with undergraduates' academic achievement.

Literature review

Absenteeism and undergraduates' academic achievement

Maynard, Salas-Wright and Vaughn (2015) opined that school absenteeism, decreased engagement and school dropout have constantly been pointed out as major problems associated with alcohol abuse. Cadigan, Lee and Larimer, (2019) posited that, young adulthood is a developmental period associated with academic transitions, effects of alcohol use on absenteeism and engagement (i.e., defined here as attention and productivity) at school is of growing concern, particularly underlying mechanisms that contribute to poor outcomes. It is well-established that the psychoactive properties of alcohol produce cognitive deficits such as impaired attentiveness, concentration, and memory - cognitive skills important for engagement in a variety of settings, including school (Paul et. al, 2019; Bourque & Potvin, 2021).

Afolabi, Ayemoba, Ajibola & Baba (2023) investigated causes of absenteeism among secondary school students as perceived by teachers in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study used a descriptive survey design, sampling 378 teachers from the state's three senatorial districts. Data were collected using the "Causes of Students' Absenteeism Questionnaire (CASAQ)", which had a reliability of 0.79. Analysis showed main causes of absenteeism include long distance between school and residence, teachers' unfriendliness to students, and students lacking commitment to schooling. There was no significant difference in perceived causes based on teachers' educational qualification, marital status, or gender. Recommendations include building schools within communities to reduce distance, fostering good teacher-student relationships to create student-friendly environments, and educating teachers on reducing absenteeism regardless of their personal characteristics.

Although the short and long-term effects of alcohol on cognition is a complex interplay of biological and environment conditions, a growing body of research suggests alcohol use is linked to decreased engagement and poor outcomes (e.g., school drop-out) at school (Gubbels, Claudia and Mark 2019). Prior research suggests engagement is a multifaceted construct comprising at least two key components - cognitive engagement (e.g., attentiveness, motivation) and behavioral engagement (e.g., productivity, effort) (Ogunode et al., 2024; Wang & Eccles, 2014). Deficits in engagement associated with alcohol use is predictive of poor outcomes, such as reduced motivation and decreased academic performance (Bernerth & Walker, 2020), lower grade point averages (Suerken, Reboussin, Egan, Sutfin, Wagoner, Spangler and Wolfson, 2016), poor performance on assignments,

dropping out of college and absenteeism (Patte, Qian & Leatherdale, 2017). Together, these findings suggest that alcohol negatively impact engagement and behavioral outcomes. For instance, in a daily study of undergraduate students who use marijuana, marijuana craving was negatively associated with self-reported academic motivation in the moment (i.e., motivation to complete schoolwork) and with time spent studying at the next assessment point (i.e., later that day or the following day). Further, average time spent drinking alcohol was negatively associated with cumulative GPA. In a similar daily study, college students were more likely to skip class and less likely to engage in schoolwork the day after engaging in heavy episodic (4+/5 + drinks for women/men) and high-intensity drinking (8+/10 + drinks for women/men), suggesting consequences extend to the following day (Allen, Rowan & Singh, 2020).

Soares, De Farias and Monteiro (2019), in a cross-sectional study, examined the association between the consumption of alcohol and other drugs with school absenteeism and found that students who consumed alcohol, tobacco, inhalant products and marijuana were prone to be absent from school in Brazil. Aside from negative outcomes of school absenteeism, few studies have demonstrated that consumption of alcohol and drugs have several consequences ranging from school absenteeism, school disengagement, poor academic performance and ultimately dropping out of school (Karen, Wei & Scott, 2017). A hierarchical longitudinal study of leaners showed that frequent binge drinking was associated with low likelihood of high academic performance and school engagement in Ontario and Alberta, Canada (Karen et al., 2017).

Accordingly, Adekeye, Adeusi, Chenube, Ahmadu and Sholarin (2015) investigated assessment of alcohol and substance use among undergraduates in selected private universities in Southwest Nigeria. 431 students between ages 15 and 25 ($n=431$, mean=18.7 (+/-2.3 years) were randomly selected from four private tertiary institutions in Southwest Nigeria. An adapted and validated version of the World Health Organization (WHO) questionnaire on drug use surveys was employed for data collection. Data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results showed that amongst the respondents, cigarette smoking (81%) and alcohol (72%) use had the highest prevalence followed by use of coffee, energy drinks and kolanut (69%). Past and current use of alcohol occurred more among the males. There was no significant contribution of parental use ($\beta = -.145$; $t = 1.813$; $p>0.05$) and peer influence ($\beta = 0.006$; $t = 0.164$; $p>0.05$) on student's use of alcohol, however, age ($\beta = -.338$; $t = 4.140$; $p<0.005$) was a strong predictor of students' use of alcohol and other substances. It was concluded that there is need for urgent public health preventive intervention on our campuses. More educational campaigns on the negative consequences of alcohol and substance use is advocated. The use of alcohol and other substances poses a grave challenge to the future of our future generations. It should be discouraged by all.

Ajayi, Owolabi and Olajire (2019) determined alcohol use among Nigerian university students: prevalence, correlates and frequency of use. This was a cross-sectional study conducted in two selected universities in the North Central region of Nigeria. The study was conducted among a final sample of 784 students selected using stratified random sampling. An interviewer-administered questionnaire was used to collect data on ever and current alcohol use and frequency of alcohol use between February and April 2018. The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results revealed that the level of ever and current use of alcohol was 43.5 and 31.1%, respectively. The mean frequency of alcohol use among the study participants was three days, but ten days among current alcohol users. In the adjusted model, male sex, age above 19 years, infrequent attendance of religious rituals, and belonging to rich/middle-class family were significantly associated with a higher likelihood of ever use and current use of alcohol, while living in the same household as one's father was

associated with lower odds of current and ever use of alcohol. It was concluded that there is a high rate of lifetime and current use of alcohol among university students in the study setting. Alcohol use was significantly associated with living with parents, religion and religiosity. Both high and low socioeconomic status were associated with alcohol use. There is a need to implement measures in controlling alcohol manufacturing and marketing as well as policies regulating alcohol outlets establishment around educational institutions as well as the working hours in such outlets. Finally, there is a need to organize interventions aimed at reducing this unhealthy social norm among students in this setting

School absenteeism is a crucial matter with a multitude of negative consequences. Furthermore, the relationship between chronic absenteeism and alcohol abuse is difficult to fully understand because of methodological issues. Gakh, Coughenour, Assoumou and Vanderstelt, (2020), in an integrative literature review demonstrated that the relationship between school absenteeism and alcohol abuse provided a limited understanding of how and why this association manifests. Using cross-sectional and local-level data often limits nuanced investigation on alcohol abuse and school absenteeism. Therefore, Gakh et al. (2020) and Bessong et al. (2024) called for absenteeism research that uses longitudinal methods and national data, which articulate methodologies and self-appraised limitations.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey design. This design is considered suitable for the study because it enabled the researcher gather detailed information about the prevalence, causes and impacts of absenteeism and alcohol abuse among undergraduates. The population of this study was one thousand, one hundred and forty-eight (1,148) undergraduates (year 1) in the Faculty of Vocational and Science Education, University of Calabar. The sample for this study comprised two hundred and thirty-one (231) undergraduates, randomly selected from three departments in the Faculty of Vocational and Science Education in the University of Calabar using multistage sampling technique. A structured questionnaire titled: Alcohol Abuse and Undergraduates' Academic Performance Questionnaire (AAUAPQ). The structured questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A addressed demographic information of the respondents. Section B measured the variable in the study, that is absenteeism. There were fifteen items that measured the variable of this study. Items 1-5 measured absenteeism while items 6-15 measured Undergraduates' Academic Performance. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was the statistical tool used for data analysis.

Result and discussions

Hypothesis one

Absenteeism does not significantly relate with undergraduates' academic performance. The result obtained is as presented below.

Table 1

Relationship between absenteeism and undergraduates' academic performance(N=231)

Variables	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	Cal.r.	Critical r-value
	$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$			
Absenteeism	5719	6526			
			6529	0.39	0.138
Undergraduates' academic achievement	1253	2715			

*Significance at .05 level, df = 229 critical r- value 0.138

The result from table one above shows that the calculated r-value of 0.39 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.138 at .05 level of significance with degree of freedom of 229. With the result, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was accepted. Hence, there is a significant relationship between absenteeism and undergraduates’ academic achievement.

Discussion of findings

Absenteeism does not significantly relate with undergraduates’ academic achievement. However, this null hypothesis was rejected because the calculated r-value of 0.39 was found to be greater than the critical r-value of 0.138. The implication of this result is that There is a significant relationship between absenteeism and undergraduates’ academic achievement.

This finding is in agreement with that of Moldes, Biton, Gonzaga and Moneva (2019) who noted that abusive consumption of alcohol has several negative consequences, among them, there are problems such as school absenteeism and early school dropouts. Stressing that school absenteeism, decreased engagement and school dropout have constantly been pointed out as major problems associated with alcohol abuse. Also, in support of this hypothesis is the assertion made by Cadigan, Lee and Larimer, (2019) posited that, young adulthood is a developmental period associated with academic transitions, effects of alcohol use on absenteeism and engagement (i.e., defined here as attention and productivity) at school is of growing concern, particularly underlying mechanisms that contribute to poor outcomes. It is well-established that the psychoactive properties of alcohol produce cognitive deficits such as impaired attentiveness, concentration, and memory – cognitive skills important for engagement in a variety of settings, including school. The finding of Patte et al, (2017) again supported of this hypothesis that alcohol negatively impact engagement and behavioral outcomes. For instance, in a daily study of undergraduate students who use marijuana, marijuana craving was negatively associated with self-reported academic motivation in the moment (i.e., motivation to complete schoolwork) and with time spent studying at the next assessment point (i.e., later that day or the following day). Further, average time spent drinking alcohol was negatively associated with cumulative GPA. In a similar daily study, college students were more likely to skip class and less likely to engage in schoolwork the day after engaging in heavy episodic (4+/5 + drinks for women/men) and high-intensity drinking (8+/10 + drinks for women/men), suggesting consequences extend to the following day.

Conclusion

The study on effect of alcohol abuse among undergraduates’ academic performance in the Faculty of Vocational and Science Education, University of Calabar, reveals a significant relationship between absenteeism and academic achievement. The findings indicate that alcohol abuse leads to increased absenteeism, which in turn negatively impacts undergraduates’ academic performance. This study aligns with existing literature, highlighting the detrimental effects of alcohol abuse on cognitive functioning, engagement, and overall academic outcomes.

Recommendation

Based in the finding obtained from analysis of data and testing of hypothesis in the study, it was recommended that school counselors should liaise with both parents and the school management in ensuring that, students who engage in absenteeism are counselled, so that they can be meaningful to the society and the nation at large.

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