

Assessing the Efficacy of Marijuana Prevention Initiatives for Promoting Students' Well-Being at Lagos State University

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Abstract

This study assessed the efficacy of marijuana prevention initiatives for a drug-free university campus with a focus on Lagos State University. The study used the descriptive survey research design. With the aid of the convenience sampling technique, out of a population of 500 sampled students, responses were obtained from 432 respondents and were used for final analysis. Using the Health Belief Model (HBM) as a theoretical framework, descriptive statistics and content analysis were adopted to analyse the collected and collated data. Results showed that there exists a notable lack of awareness among the majority of the respondents (62.3%) regarding marijuana prevention programs or initiatives at Lagos State University. Also, the study highlights the potential health and social risks associated with marijuana use, emphasizing the importance of proactive prevention efforts. These risks include impaired cognitive function, mental health issues, strained interpersonal relationships, and legal consequences. As a result of these findings, the study concluded by noting the pressing need for enhanced and consistent educational efforts, particularly through awareness campaigns during student orientation programs and the utilization of diverse communication channels. It is recommended amongst others, that Lagos State University implement regular awareness campaigns using diverse communication channels such as social media, workshops, seminars, and posters as well as enhance and promote the services of the university's counselling unit to ensure that students are aware of the available support for substance use issues.

Keywords: Awareness Campaigns; Diverse Communication Channels; Drug-free University Campus; Marijuana Prevention Programs; Substance Use Issues.

1. Introduction

Substance abuse, including marijuana use, presents a pressing issue for university students globally, adversely affecting their academic performance and overall well-being. In studies by Mehanović *et al.* (2020), Oppong-Asante (2019) and Siziya *et al.* (2013), it was observed that students engage in drug abuse, with marijuana being one of the most commonly used substances. Marijuana, also known as cannabis, is a widely used recreational drug derived from the Cannabis plant. The psychoactive properties of marijuana are primarily attributed to a compound called delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), and its popularity is driven by its perceived relaxation effects, altered sensory perception, and mood enhancement (UNODC, 2018).

Researches conducted by institutions such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) highlight the prevalence and consequences of marijuana use among university students (UNODC, 2018). In the United States, for example, College students' annual marijuana consumption has been rising over the last five years, and in 2020 it reached its highest point in more than 35 years (NIDA, 2021). In 2020, 44% of college students reported using marijuana in the previous year, up from 38% in 2015, while 35% of high school seniors reported smoking marijuana in the previous year in 2020 (NIDA, 2021). Also, since 2015, the percentage of college students who report smoking marijuana daily or almost daily has increased. In 2020, 8% of students reported doing so, up from roughly 5% in 2015 (NIDA, 2021).

In Africa, substance abuse is a growing concern, with marijuana being a commonly abused drug. However, obtaining accurate and up-to-date statistics specific to marijuana use among university students in Africa can be challenging due to varying reporting mechanisms and limited research in some regions. In Nigeria, the problems associated with marijuana use amongst university students have become recurrent, and regrettably, if these problems are not nipped in the bud, they might get to a crescendo with a negative impact on Nigeria's efforts toward achieving Goal 3 of the United Nations sustainable development goals. The 2019 result of a NOI poll revealed that 9 in 10 Nigerians believe the highest abusers of drugs (marijuana) are teenagers and young adults aged between 15 and 29 (Vanguard Newspaper, 2019). Alas, most Nigerian students (undergraduates) fall within this age bracket, and they are more prone to the use of marijuana. By 2030, there might be an increase in youths (students inclusive) who become mentally imbalanced as a result of the unchecked and continuous consumption of marijuana (Ekop *et al.*, 2019). Thus, examining the efficacy of marijuana prevention initiatives on university campuses becomes crucial to addressing the increasing concerns surrounding substance abuse, particularly marijuana use based on the following independent but mutually reinforcing reasons.

First, an assessment of prevention initiatives helps gauge the effectiveness of current strategies in curbing marijuana use among students. Universities invest considerable resources in these programs, and understanding their efficacy ensures the optimal allocation of resources for the most impactful interventions. Second, evaluating the effectiveness of prevention initiatives allows for evidence-based improvements. By analyzing the outcomes and identifying gaps or areas of

improvement, universities can tailor interventions to suit the specific needs and demographics of their student population. This data-driven approach ensures that prevention initiatives evolve and adapt to changing patterns of marijuana use and emerging challenges related to substance abuse. Third, an examination sheds light on the unique risk factors within the university environment. Understanding the circumstances that contribute to marijuana use, such as peer pressure, stress, or easy availability, allows for the development of targeted strategies to counteract these influences effectively. Prevention initiatives can then be tailored to address these specific triggers and encourage healthier behaviours. Lastly, examining the efficacy of marijuana prevention initiatives contributes to the ongoing dialogue about drug policies at the institutional and governmental levels. Findings from these evaluations can influence policy decisions, advocating for a more proactive and comprehensive approach to drug prevention on campuses. This, in turn, can lead to the development of national or regional guidelines that promote a consistent and evidence-based approach to substance abuse prevention in higher education settings.

It is in light of the foregoing that this study examined the efficacy of marijuana prevention initiatives for a drug-free university campus through the collection of data from students studying at Lagos State University with a view to making recommendations for prevention initiatives to promote community well-being within the university.

2. Literature Review

Peer influence and accessibility: Shaping marijuana use among university students

Peer influence is a potent force in shaping the attitudes and behaviours of university students towards marijuana use. Numerous studies have consistently underlined the significant role of peers in the initiation and continuation of substance use, particularly marijuana (Hahlbeck & Vito, 2022; Janulis *et. al*, 2019; Vogel *et al.*, 2015). Peers, often within the immediate social circles of students, actively contribute to the availability and accessibility of marijuana, making experimentation and regular consumption more likely. The influence of social networks and peer interactions cannot be understated as they play a vital role in normalizing marijuana use within the student population, thereby reinforcing its acceptance and presenting a challenge to prevention efforts (Vogel *et al.*, 2015).

University students, in the midst of their academic and social transitions, are particularly susceptible to peer influence. The desire to fit in, be accepted, and establish social connections can prompt individuals to conform to the behaviours and attitudes of their peers (Laursen & Faur, 2022). Consequently, when peers within their social networks endorse or engage in marijuana use, it can considerably influence a student's perception of the acceptability and desirability of such behaviour (Brook et al., 1998). The normalization of marijuana within peer groups can perpetuate a cycle of use, making it a socially acceptable activity.

Additionally, the accessibility of marijuana within these peer networks can further exacerbate the situation. Peers often act as the immediate source of access to the substance, making it readily available for experimentation. The proximity and ease of access can lower the perceived barriers to trying marijuana, especially for those who may have been hesitant initially. This increased accessibility directly contributes to a higher likelihood of experimentation and regular consumption, intensifying the influence of peers on an individual's marijuana use patterns (Polkosnik, Sorkhou & George, 2021).

To mitigate the impact of peer influence and accessibility, prevention strategies must encompass targeted educational initiatives that debunk myths surrounding marijuana use and emphasize the associated risks. Furthermore, promoting alternative social activities and providing support for individuals to resist peer pressure can significantly reduce the influence of peers on marijuana use among university students. Acknowledging the potency of peer influence is essential for the design and implementation of effective preventive measures aimed at fostering a healthier campus environment.

Societal norms and personal beliefs: Shaping Marijuana use among university students

Societal norms wield a considerable influence over the use of marijuana among university students. The collective beliefs and behaviours within a society or community can either deter or encourage the consumption of marijuana (Phillips *et al.*, 2018). These norms are shaped by various factors, including cultural attitudes, legal frameworks, and media portrayal of marijuana. In some cultures, marijuana use might be deeply embedded and normalized, reducing the perceived risks associated with its consumption.

Conversely, in societies where marijuana is stigmatized or prohibited, individuals may be less likely to engage in its use due to the fear of social sanctions or legal

consequences (Gunn, *et al.*, 2021). Cultural attitudes towards marijuana can vary significantly, impacting usage patterns among university students. Some cultures may view marijuana as part of traditional practices, spirituality, or even as a medicinal herb (Dempsey *et al.*, 2016). In such contexts, acceptance and use can be normalized and even encouraged within the community.

On the other hand, cultures with a negative view of marijuana may discourage its use, considering it a taboo or associating it with deviant behaviour. In the same vein, legal frameworks also play a crucial role in shaping societal norms. Stringent legal regulations and penalties against marijuana use can dissuade individuals from engaging with the substance, aligning their behaviour with the law (Wheeldon & Heidt, 2022). Conversely, lenient or permissive legal frameworks may contribute to a more relaxed attitude towards marijuana, potentially increasing its use.

Also, media portrayal, through various platforms such as movies, television, and social media can significantly influence societal perceptions. Positive or normalized portrayals of marijuana in the media can contribute to shaping a permissive attitude towards its consumption. On the other hand, negative portrayals or campaigns highlighting the risks and consequences of marijuana use can deter individuals from experimenting with the substance.

Role of family dynamics and peer support in preventing Marijuana use among university students

The influence of family dynamics and peer relationships on an individual's decision to engage in or abstain from marijuana use is crucial in understanding substance abuse patterns among university students. Supportive family dynamics create a nurturing atmosphere that fosters open communication, trust, and strong interpersonal relationships. In such environments, individuals are more likely to confide in their family members about their struggles and challenges (Giordano *et al.*, 2019). This openness facilitates discussions about the dangers of substance abuse, enabling students to make informed decisions regarding marijuana use. Supportive families often provide guidance and emotional stability, acting as a protective barrier against succumbing to drug experimentation (Kam & Cleveland, 2011).

Conversely, adverse family dynamics, characterized by dysfunctional relationships, lack of parental guidance, or strained communication, can pose a significant risk. Students experiencing such dynamics may turn to marijuana use as a coping

mechanism to escape their problems or deal with emotional stress. The absence of a supportive family structure may make them more susceptible to peer influence and seek solace in substance use.

Theoretical Framework

Understanding the factors that influence marijuana use among university students necessitates a robust theoretical framework. The Health Belief Model (HBM) serves as an invaluable framework to comprehend the intricate interplay of psychological, social, and environmental factors that contribute to marijuana use behaviours. The health belief model, originally developed by Rosenstock and others in the 1950s, postulates that an individual's health-related behaviour is influenced by their perception of the threat posed by a health problem and the perceived benefits and barriers associated with a particular behaviour (Rosenstock, 2000). When applied to marijuana use among university students, the HBM helps in understanding how students perceive the risks and benefits associated with marijuana consumption. For instance, students evaluate their susceptibility to the adverse effects of marijuana (e.g., academic decline, health issues) and the perceived severity of these consequences and also, students weigh the perceived benefits of marijuana use (e.g., stress relief, peer acceptance) against potential negative consequences. In the same vein, students assess the obstacles (e.g., legal implications, health risks) that deter or facilitate marijuana use.

Also, they interrogate external factors like educational campaigns, personal experiences, or advice from health professionals that act as cues that trigger preventive actions or influence behaviour change. To this end, interventions derived from the HBM would focus on addressing these factors. For instance, educational campaigns could emphasize the risks associated with marijuana use (perceived severity) and highlight the benefits of abstaining (perceived benefits), aiming to influence students' behaviour by altering their perceptions.

3. Methodology

In the study examining marijuana use among students at Lagos State University, a descriptive survey research design was employed to comprehensively investigate the efficacy of marijuana prevention initiatives at the Lagos State University. This approach integrated both open-ended and close-ended questions on the survey to gather a diverse range of data for a more nuanced understanding. With the aid of the Morgan and Krejcie (1970) sample size determination table, copies of the structured questionnaires were administered to 500 conveniently selected students

of the Lagos State University to elicit their opinions on specific aspects related to the efficacy of marijuana prevention programs/initiatives of the University.

Closed-ended questions were utilized to gather data on the prevention initiatives and programmes that they are aware of in the University. The structured nature of the survey allowed for efficient data collection from a larger pool of participants. The questionnaire was divided into two distinct sections: Section A consisted of demographic data while section B asked questions about the prevalence of marijuana use amongst undergraduate students at the Lagos State University.

This study rigorously adhered to established ethical procedures throughout the entire data-gathering, analysis, and reporting process. Ethical considerations were a primary concern and were incorporated at every stage to ensure the protection of participants' rights, privacy, and well-being. Collected and collated data were analysed using content analysis and descriptive statistics with the aid of MS Excel and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26.

4. Results and Discussions of Findings

From the data, four hundred and thirty-two (432) responses were received and found usable for analysis which represents 86.4% response rate.

Table 1: Analysis of Respondents' Demographic Information

Variable	Indicators	Responses
Sex	Male	263 (60.9%)
	Female	169 (39.1%)
Age	16-25	300 (69.4%)
	26-30	80 (18.5%)
	31-35	52 (12.1%)
Marital Status	Single	427 (98.8%)
	Married	5 (1.2%)
Faculty	Arts	83 (19.2%)
	Communication	17 (3.9%)
	Engineering	7 (1.6%)
	Science	32 (7.4%)
	Social Sciences	41 (9.5%)
	Management Sciences	145 (33.6%)
	Education	67 (15.5%)
	Law	21 (4.9%)
	Agriculture	6 (1.4%)
	Medicine	8 (1.8%)
	Transport	5 (1.2%)

Academic Level	100 level	109 (25.2%)
	200 level	277 (64.1%)
	300 level	33 (7.6%)
	400 level	13 (3%)
Hostel Location	On-Campus	16 (3.7%)
	Off-Campus	416 (96.3%)

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Table 1 provides the demographic composition of the respondents who are undergraduate students at Lagos State University. The study participants were predominantly male, accounting for approximately 60.9% of the total sample. In contrast, female participants represented 39.1% of the respondents. This indicates a noticeable gender imbalance among the sampled undergraduate students with a higher representation of male students. Also, the age distribution demonstrates that the majority of the respondents fall within the age range of 16-25 years (69.4%). A smaller proportion of respondents were aged between 26-30 years (18.5%), and an even smaller group fell within the 31-35 years age bracket (12.1%).

An overwhelming majority of the respondents identified as single, constituting 98.8% of the sample. Only a small fraction (1.2%) of the respondents reported being married. This distribution aligns with the typical marital status of undergraduate students. The data highlight the diverse representation of faculties among the respondents. Management Sciences had the highest representation at 33.6%, followed by Arts (19.2%) and Education (15.5%). On the other hand, Medicine (1.8%), Agriculture (1.4%), and Transport (1.2%) had the lowest representation. In terms of academic level, the majority of respondents were in their second year (200 level, 64.1%), followed by the first year (100 level, 25.2%). A smaller proportion was in higher levels: 300 level (7.6%) and 400 level (3.0%). Regarding hostel location, the data revealed that the majority of respondents (96.3%) reside off-campus, while only a small proportion (3.7%) live on campus.

Table 2: Have you ever used Marijuana Before

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	271	62.7
No	161	37.3
Total	432	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2023)

Among the total respondents surveyed, a significant portion, constituting 63%, acknowledged having used marijuana at some point in their lives. This indicates that marijuana usage is relatively prevalent within this particular group of respondents. On the other hand, a notable portion of the respondents, accounting for 37%, reported that they had not used marijuana. This signifies that a considerable segment of the study population refrains from marijuana use.

Table 3: How often do you use Marijuana?

	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	110	40.6
Weekly	24	8.9
Monthly	52	19.2
Rarely	85	31.3
	271	100

Source: Field Survey (2023)

The distribution of marijuana usage frequency provides valuable insights into the habits of the respondents. Notably, 40.6% reported using marijuana on a daily basis, indicating that a substantial portion of the respondents engage in daily usage. Furthermore, 8.9% reported using marijuana on a weekly basis, while 19.2% reported a monthly frequency. Additionally, 31.3% reported rare usage, suggesting a less frequent but existing pattern of marijuana usage within this group. It is pertinent to note that daily marijuana usage by 40.6% of respondents raises concerns about potential health and psychological implications.

Research indicates that daily marijuana use is associated with a higher risk of developing dependence and addiction (Binkowska *et al.*, 2022). Chronic daily usage may also lead to cognitive impairments, respiratory issues, mental health disorders, and an increased risk of accidents and injuries (Hall, 2015). Also, while weekly marijuana usage at 8.9% may seem lower, it still suggests regular consumption. Research suggests that even weekly usage can impact cognitive function, particularly in youth and young adults. Additionally, weekly users may face legal consequences and social stigma, affecting their overall well-being and opportunities (Lorenzetti, Hoch & Hall, 2020).

Monthly marijuana usage at 19.2% indicates a moderate level of consumption. However, this shows that even infrequent use can lead to memory and learning impairments, especially in young users. Also, monthly users might also face legal and employment-related challenges due to drug testing policies. Although 31.4% reported rare usage, it is important to note that any usage carries potential risks. Even infrequent use may lead to acute impairments in coordination, perception, and judgment, increasing the risk of accidents and injuries (Hall, 2015). Moreover, sporadic usage may still impact social and professional aspects of an individual's life due to legal and social attitudes towards marijuana. Therefore, understanding the frequency of marijuana usage is crucial for tailoring effective public health and educational initiatives.

Table 4: Are you aware of any marijuana prevention programs or initiatives at Lagos State University?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	163	37.7
No	269	62.3
Total	432	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2023)

The study indicates a notable lack of awareness among the majority of the respondents (62.3%) regarding marijuana prevention programs or initiatives at Lagos State University. This finding is of considerable concern given the potential risks associated with marijuana use, including physical, mental, and social consequences, particularly among young students. The lack of awareness regarding marijuana prevention programs is concerning due to the potential health risks associated with marijuana use. Marijuana is known to have both short-term and long-term health effects. Short-term effects include impaired memory and

concentration, altered judgment, and motor coordination difficulties. Long-term use may lead to respiratory issues, mental health disorders, addiction, and cognitive impairments, especially in young adults which most of the respondents fall within the category.

Also, the lack of awareness regarding marijuana prevention programs is concerning from a social and interpersonal perspective. Marijuana use can strain relationships, especially if one's social circle does not share similar views on its usage. Moreover, in countries like Nigeria, marijuana use has legal implications which can negatively affect an individual's personal and professional life.

Analysis of Open-Ended Questions

Describe any Marijuana prevention programs or initiatives you are aware of in the University.

Based on the provided information, two prominent prevention programs or initiatives that the respondents are aware of are: “Awareness campaigns during orientation” and the “University Counselling Service”. For instance, one of the respondents said: “I remember the awareness campaign during orientation; it provided crucial information about the risks of substance abuse, including marijuana”. This response underscores the effectiveness of the awareness campaigns in disseminating crucial information about the risks associated with substance abuse, specifically focusing on marijuana. The term “crucial” highlights the significance and importance of the information provided during these campaigns. The campaign served as an educational platform during orientation, ensuring that students were informed about the potential dangers of substance use from the outset of their academic journey. Another respondent submitted that: “The orientation campaigns were informative; they stressed the importance of making responsible choices, especially regarding substances like marijuana”. This response emphasizes the role of the awareness campaigns in instilling a sense of responsibility among students, particularly in the context of substance use, including marijuana. The use of the term “informative” indicates that the campaigns were educational and provided insights that guided students towards making responsible decisions. The specific emphasis on marijuana suggests a targeted approach to addressing a prevalent concern among students. In the same vein, one respondent remarked: “The orientation sessions were an eye-opener. They shed light on the impact of drug use, making us aware of the consequences and the need to stay away from marijuana”. This response underscores the efficacy of the orientation sessions in enlightening students about the broader impact of drug use,

particularly emphasizing the consequences associated with marijuana consumption. The phrase “eye-opener” suggests that the sessions provided new and valuable insights, potentially challenging preconceived notions or ignorance about the risks involved. The explicit mention of the need to stay away from marijuana highlights a clear advocacy for abstinence from this substance.

On the flip side, as regards the University Counselling Service, one respondent said: “I am aware of the university counselling service, and it's reassuring to know that there's professional help available if one is struggling with substance use or any related issues”. This respondent expressed a sense of reassurance stemming from their awareness of the university counselling service. The use of the term “reassuring” indicates that knowing about the availability of professional help creates a sense of comfort and security. This suggests that the counselling service is seen as a reliable resource that individuals can turn to in times of need, particularly when dealing with substance use or related challenges. The phrase “professional help available if one is struggling with substance use or any related issues” emphasizes the recognition of the service's role in providing specialized assistance for substance-related concerns. This underscores the importance of specialized support for individuals grappling with substance use problems, and it showcases the understanding that professional intervention is vital in managing such issues effectively.

Similarly, another respondent was of the opinion that “The counselling service is vital. It provides a confidential platform to discuss concerns about substance use and get guidance on how to overcome challenges”. This respondent highlighted the confidentiality aspect of the university counselling service by referring to it as a “confidential platform”. The emphasis on confidentiality underscores the significance of privacy and trust in the context of seeking assistance for substance use concerns. This is particularly crucial in destigmatizing help-seeking behaviours and encouraging open dialogue about sensitive topics like substance use.

The statement “to discuss concerns about substance use and get guidance on how to overcome challenges” underscores the multi-faceted role of the counselling service. It serves not only as a platform for sharing concerns but also as a source of guidance in navigating and overcoming challenges related to substance use. This reinforces the idea that the counselling service is not only a place to share problems but also to actively work towards solutions. Lastly, a respondent submitted that “having access to the university counselling service is comforting. It's an essential

resource for students”. This respondent expressed comfort and described the counselling service as an “essential resource for students”. The term “comforting” suggests that the existence and availability of the counselling service provide a sense of ease and relief to students, knowing they have a reliable support system to turn to. Referring to the service as an “essential resource” accentuates its critical role in the university's ecosystem. It implies that the counselling service is a fundamental aspect of student support, especially concerning substance-related issues. This acknowledgement reinforces the understanding that addressing substance use concerns is an integral part of promoting student well-being.

Based on your experiences and insights, what recommendations do you have for improving or developing effective marijuana prevention programs at Lagos State University.

1. Mandatory Workshops

A considerable portion of the respondents emphasized the need for mandatory workshops on substance abuse, particularly focusing on marijuana during the first year of university. The respondents believed that such workshops are crucial in educating students early about the associated risks and in fostering a drug-free campus environment.

One respondent mentioned, “Early education is key. Mandatory workshops in the first year can set the right tone for responsible decision-making”. This underlines the idea that by imparting knowledge early, students are more likely to make informed choices regarding substance use. Another respondent was of the opinion that “A drug-free campus begins with education. Workshops can instil a sense of responsibility and discourage drug use”. This indicates the belief that education and awareness can play a crucial role in shaping the campus culture towards a drug-free stance.

Furthermore, some respondents expressed concern about the lack of knowledge among incoming students regarding the risks associated with marijuana. One respondent pointed out that “Not everyone is fully aware of the risks; mandatory workshops can fill this knowledge gap”. This suggests that workshops can bridge the information divide and ensure that all students are well-informed. Additionally, respondents also noted that mandatory workshops could provide guidance and support to students who may be struggling or susceptible to substance abuse. One respondent mentioned, “For some, it's a cry for help. Workshops can guide them to

the right resources”. This indicates that the workshops are seen as a way to offer assistance and direct individuals towards appropriate support systems.

Several respondents highlighted the importance of empowering students to resist peer pressure and say no to substance use. One respondent emphasized, “We need to empower students to stand their ground against pressure. Workshops can equip them with the confidence to say no”. This underscores the role of workshops in building resilience and promoting assertive decision-making.

2. Confidential Helpline for Students

Many respondents highlighted the importance of providing a confidential helpline for students struggling with substance abuse. A respondent mentioned that: “Having a confidential helpline would encourage students to seek help without fear of judgment, fostering a supportive atmosphere for those dealing with substance abuse”. This quote emphasizes the critical aspect of confidentiality in encouraging students to reach out for help. The absence of judgment and the presence of a supportive atmosphere are highlighted as crucial factors that a confidential helpline can provide. A respondent was of the opinion that “A helpline is a lifeline for those struggling with substance abuse. It's a way to share your concerns without worrying about others finding out, making it easier to take the first step towards recovery”. Here, the respondent highlights the role of a helpline as a vital support system for individuals struggling with substance abuse. The anonymity it offers is seen as empowering, making it easier for students to seek help and begin their path to recovery. In alignment, a respondent averred that “In a university setting, having a private helpline is crucial. Students may hesitate to approach faculty or peers, but a helpline provides an outlet to express their struggles openly and get the guidance they need”.

This quote underscores the hesitations that students might have in seeking help from traditional channels. A confidential helpline is seen as a necessary alternative that allows students to openly express their struggles and receive appropriate guidance. The respondents' submissions reflect the pivotal role of a confidential helpline in addressing substance abuse within a university setting. The fear of judgment, stigma, or potential consequences often deters individuals from seeking help through conventional channels. A confidential helpline mitigates these barriers, providing a private space for individuals to express their concerns. Also, the emphasis on confidentiality implies that privacy and anonymity are of utmost importance for individuals seeking help. The assurance of privacy encourages

individuals to disclose their issues honestly and seek appropriate guidance without fear of repercussions.

3. Frequent Awareness Campaigns

A significant number of respondents emphasized the importance of regular and recurrent awareness campaigns to effectively address the issue of marijuana use among students. The use of diverse communication channels was particularly highlighted as an essential strategy to ensure the widespread dissemination of crucial information regarding the risks associated with marijuana use. A respondent expressed that “continuous awareness campaigns using diverse communication channels are crucial to keep students informed about the dangers of marijuana use and prevention measures”. The sentiment expressed by this respondent signifies the recognition of the need for consistent and widespread awareness efforts. Also, utilizing diverse communication channels ensures that a broader audience of students can be reached, thereby enhancing the impact of these campaigns. Frequent campaigns allow for the repetition of key messages, reinforcing the awareness of the risks associated with marijuana use. Repetition is essential in promoting behavioural change and creating a lasting impact on the target audience.

Lastly, in light of the various media and advancements in technology, diverse communication channels would enable tailoring the message to resonate with different demographics, making the information more relatable and effective. It also allows for adaptation based on current trends and issues, ensuring that the campaigns remain relevant and engaging.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has uncovered a substantial awareness and knowledge gap among undergraduate students at the Lagos State University, Ojo, regarding marijuana use and associated prevention programs. A considerable number of respondents were unaware of the available prevention initiatives. This study concluded by noting the pressing need for enhanced and consistent educational efforts, particularly through awareness campaigns during orientation and the utilization of diverse communication channels. Bridging the awareness gap is crucial to inform students about the risks of marijuana use and available preventive measures. Furthermore, the findings reported in this study highlight the potential health and social risks associated with marijuana use, emphasizing the importance of proactive prevention efforts. These risks include impaired cognitive function, mental health issues, strained interpersonal relationships, and legal consequences.

Marijuana use among university students remains a concern due to its potential impact on academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being. Addressing the issue of marijuana use among university students requires a holistic approach that encompasses prevention, education, support, and intervention strategies. Based on these findings, this study recommends amongst others that Lagos State University should implement regular awareness campaigns using diverse communication channels such as social media, workshops, seminars, and posters. The management should also tailor messages to resonate with the student population, emphasizing the risks of marijuana use and promoting responsible decision-making. Also, the university should enhance and promote the university counselling services to ensure that students are aware of the available support for substance use issues and also, they should educate students about the confidentiality and accessibility of these services. Additionally, the University should conduct periodic research to gauge the effectiveness of prevention programs and initiatives. It should evaluate the impact of campaigns and services, making necessary adjustments based on feedback and outcomes to improve future initiatives. Lastly, the university should reinforce policies that support prevention efforts and provide a legal framework for addressing substance abuse issues within the university setting. Also, the university should collaborate with legal authorities to ensure a balanced approach between punitive measures and support for affected individuals.

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