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# EFFECTS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN WUKARI METROPOLITAN TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

***Gerison Joel Dada[1], Hussaina Modi Bubaje[2], Muhammad Z. Yahaya (PhD)[3], James Iliya Kyamru (PhD)[4], Balogun Julus Nelson[5] & Benedicta Nte O.[6]**

[1,2,3,4,5,6]*Department of Physical and Health Education, Federal University Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria*

***Corresponding author:** dada2020@fuwukari.edu.ng*

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**ABSTRACT**

Substance abuse among secondary school students has become a major social, health, and educational concern, particularly because of its negative effects on learning and academic performance. This study examined the effect of substance abuse on the academic performance of secondary school students in selected schools in Wukari Metropolis, Taraba State, Nigeria. The study also investigated the extent of substance abuse, its effects on concentration and academic tasks, its relationship with school attendance and study habits, and the factors influencing substance use among students. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population consisted of 300 secondary school students (SSII) drawn from public and private schools in Wukari Metropolis, out of which a sample of 169 students was selected using the simple random sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled *Effects of Substance Abuse on Academic Performance of selected School Students in Wukari Questionnaire (EOSAOAPSSW)*. The instrument was validated by experts and yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.76 using Cronbach's Alpha. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. The findings revealed that substance abuse exists among secondary school students, with many engaging in occasional use, especially during social activities. The results also showed that substance abuse negatively affects students' concentration, class participation, academic tasks, and overall academic performance. Furthermore, substance abuse was found to adversely affect school attendance, classroom participation, and study habits. Easy a availability of substances, lack of parental supervision, peer pressure and curiosity were identified as a factors influencing substance abuse among students. The study concludes that substance abuse adverse effects on students' academic performance and school engagement. It therefore recommends strengthened guidance and counselling services, increased parental supervision, regular awareness programmes, peer education, community collaboration, and effective policy enforcement to reduce substance abuse among secondary school students in Wukari Metropolis.

**Keywords:** Substance abuse, academic performance Secondary School Students, Adolescents, Wukari Metropolis, Taraba State. Nigeria.

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## Introduction

Substance abuse among adolescents has emerged as a major social, health, and educational challenge across the world. It refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol, tobacco, prescription medications, and illicit drugs, which can negatively affect an individual's physical, psychological, and social functioning (World Health Organization [WHO], 2018). In recent years, the increasing involvement of secondary school students in substance use has raised serious concerns among educators, parents, policymakers, and public health professionals due to its detrimental effects on learning and overall academic development. Education is widely recognised as a vital instrument for personal growth and national development. Academic performance, in particular, serves as a key indicator of students' intellectual capacity, discipline, and future opportunities. However, engagement in substance abuse during adolescence a critical stage of cognitive, emotional, and social development, can significantly impair students' ability to concentrate, retain information, attend classes regularly, and participate actively in school activities (UNODC, 2020). Studies have consistently shown that students who abuse substances are more likely to exhibit poor study habits, low motivation, truancy, behavioural problems, and declining academic achievement (Kumar et al., 2019:-)

In Nigeria, substance abuse among secondary school students has become increasingly prevalent, with commonly used substances including alcohol, cigarettes, cannabis, tramadol, codeine-based syrups, and other locally available drugs (Adelekan et al., 2017). Socio-economic challenges, peer influence, family instability, easy access to drugs, and inadequate parental supervision further intensify the problem, particularly in semi-urban and urban communities such as Wukari Metropolis in Taraba State. Despite growing awareness, many schools continue to experience rising cases of drug-related misconduct, poor academic outcomes, and school dropout linked to substance use. Wukari Metropolis, as an educational hub in the Southern Senatorial District of Taraba State, hosts several public and private secondary schools with students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Observations by teachers and school administrators suggest that substance abuse is increasingly affecting students' behaviourr, attendance, and academic commitment. However, empirical studies focusing specifically on this locality remain limited. This creates a gap in localised evidence necessary for effective policy formulation and school-based interventions. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the effect of substance abuse on the ac ademic performance of secondary school students in selected schools in Wukari Metropolis.

## Statement of the problem

Substance abuse among secondary school students has become an escalating educational and public health concern globally and in Nigeria in particular. Adolescence represents a critical stage of cognitive, emotional, and social development, during which engagement in psychoactive substances such as alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, tramadol, codeine-based syrups, and other locally available drugs can severely disrupt learning processes and academic progression [WHO, 2018). Despite sustained efforts by governments and educational stakeholders to promote drug-free school environments, evidence suggests that substance use among in-school adolescents continues to rise, with significant implications for students' academic performance and future prospects.

Academic performance is a major indicator of students' educational attainment and preparedness for higher education or vocational opportunities. However, studies have consistently linked substance abuse to poor concentration, impaired memory, irregular school

attendance, truancy, classroom misconduct, and declining academic achievement (Kumar et al., 2019,UNODC,2020). In the Nigerian context, research indicates that a growing number of secondary school students experiment with or regularly use drugs due to peer pressure, curiosity, emotional stress, family instability, and easy access to substances (Adelekan et al., 2017). These behaviours often manifest in poor examination results, grade repetition, school dropout, and involvement in antisocial activities, thereby undermining the objectives of secondary education.

In Wukari Metropolis, Taraba State, anecdotal reports from teachers, parents, and school administrators suggest an increasing prevalence of substance use among students in both public and private secondary schools. Cases of absenteeism, declining academic commitment, indiscipline, and reduced classroom participation have reportedly become more common. However, despite these observable challenges, there is a scarcity of empirical, location-specific studies that systematically examine the extent to which substance abuse affects academic performance among secondary school students in this area. The lack of reliable local data limits the ability of school authorities, policymakers, and community stakeholders to design evidence-based intervention programmes tailored to the unique socio-cultural and economic context of Wukari.

Consequently, the problem addressed by this study is the insufficient empirical understanding of how substance abuse influences the academic performance of secondary school students in selected schools in Wukari Metropolis. Without such knowledge, efforts to curb drug use and improve educational outcomes may remain fragmented and ineffective. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by providing systematic evidence on the relationship between substance abuse and academic performance, as well as identifying key contributing factors, with the aim of supporting informed decision-making and sustainable educational interventions.

**Purpose of the study**

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the effect of substance abuse on the performance of students in Selected Secondary Schools in Wukari Metropoli Taraba State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the extent to which the use of psychoactive substances such as alcohol, cigarettes, tramadol, cannabis, and other locally available drugs influences students' concentration, school attendance, classroom participation, and overall academic Performance

**Research questions**

The following research questions guided the Study:-

I. What is the extent of substance abuse among secondary school students in selected schools in Wukari Metropolis?
II. How does substance abuse affect the academic performance of secondary school students in selected schools in Wukari Metropolis?
III. What relationship exists between substance abuse, school attendance, classroom participation, and study habits of secondary school students in Wukari Metropolis?
IV. What factors influence substance abuse among secondary school students in selected schools in Wukari Metropolis

**Research hypotheses**

I. $H_{01}$: The extent of substance abuse among Secondary School Students in Selected Schools in Wukari is not significant
II. $H_{02}$: There is no significant relationship between substance abuse and academic performance of secondary school students in selected school in Wukari Metroplis.

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**Methodology**

To achieve the purpose of the study, the descriptive survey research design was employed. A survey design is appropriate because it allows systematic collection of data from a large groups of respondents in the selected secondary schools in order to describe the effects substance abuse on their academic performance. The descriptive approach was used to provide a deeper understanding of how substance use affects students' school outcomes such as grades, attendance, concentration, and motivation. This approach has been commonly used in similar studies on substance abuse and academic performance among secondary school students (Okumu, 2024). The target Population for this study consisted of three hundred (SSII) secondary schools student Male/ Female in the selected twenty (20) Public and Private Secondary in School in Wukari metropolis (Wukari Education Authority Board, 2025). The sample for the study consisted of 169 students, representing (56.3%) per cent of the target population.

The target population for the study is as depicted below:-

| S/NO. | Name of School | Year of Study | Target Population | Sample |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1, | Marmara GDS Wukari | SS 2 | 30 | 14 |
| 2 | GDSS Wukari | SS 2 | 15 | 9 |
| 3 | GDSS Yakasi | SS 2 | 15 | 9 |
| 4 | GDSS Marmara East Wukari | SS 2 | 22 | 11 |
| 5 | GDSS Ladan Wukari | SS 2 | 18 | 9 |
| 6 | GDSS Central Wukari | SS 2 | 20 | 10 |
| 7 | GDSS Bantaje Road Wukari | SS 2 | 18 | 9 |
| 8 | A Toshi Memorial SS Wukari | SS 2 | 15 | 8 |
| 9 | GDSS General Hospital | SS 2 | 12 | 8 |
| 10 | AL-Imam SS Wukari | SS 2 | 18 | 9 |
| 11 | Jibwis SS Wukari | SS 2 | 08 | 07 |
| 12 | Sheik A. Mahud Gumi SS | SS 2 | 11 | 07 |
| 13 | Voice of Healing Academic SS Wkri | SS 2 | 15 | 08 |
| 14 | D. Fari M. SS Wukari | SS2 | 12 | 07 |
| 15 | First City of David SS | SS 2 | 15 | 09 |
| 16 | Destiny Christian Academic SS | SS 2 | 08 | 07 |
| 17 | Victory College Wukari | SS 2 | 12 | 07 |
| 18 | Jepsa Crudite academy | SS 2 | 11 | 07 |
| 19 | Matrix Academy Sc | SS 2 | 10 | 06 |
| 20 | GST College Wukari | SS 2 | 15 | 08 |
| **Total** | **20** | | **300** | **169** |

Source Wukari Metroplis Local Government Education Board 2025

The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table as cited in Ahmed (2021), which shows that a population of 300 requires a simple of 169 at the 0.05 level significance. The simple random sampling technique (ballot without replacement) was used to select. Instruments for data collection: Structured Questionnaire Tittle (EOSAOAPSSSW) Designed to capture quantitative data on the Effects of Substance Abuse on the Academic

Performance: - A Case Selected Secondary School in Wukari Taraba Nigeria. A Modified four - point Likert scale ranging from "Agree, Disagree, strongly agree, Strongly Disagree" was used.

The questionnaire was subjected to content and face validity to ensure it adequately measured substance abuse patterns and academic performance among secondary school students in Wukari Metropolis. The questionnaire items were examined by experts in Faculty of Education at Federal University Wukari Taraba State (.Education, Guidance and Counselling, and Measurement and Evaluation) to assess clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. Their corrections and suggestions were incorporated before final administration, ensuring that the instrument appropriately covered all variables of interest and was suitable for the 169 respondents (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot study conducted in a secondary school outside the study area but with similar characteristics to the sampled schools. Data obtained from the pilot test were analysed using Cronbach's Alpha method to establish internal consistency. The instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.76, which exceeds the minimum acceptable benchmark of 0.70, indicating that the instrument was reliable and suitable for assessing substance abuse and academic performance among the sampled students (Taber, 2018).

Permission was obtained from Wukari Local Government Education authority to access students from the selected secondary schools within Wukari Metropolis. The data collection was carried out for the period of three weeks researcher brief research assistants fluent in English help in administered the questionnaire. The one hundred and sixty nine (169) questionnaire was administered to the selected participants. The completed questionnaires were collected immediately to ensure a high response rate and accuracy of the data collected.

Data collected from the one hundred and sixty nine respondents were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were employed to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and patterns of substance abuse. The results of the analysis were presented in tables to enhance clarity and ease of interpretation.

Ethical consideration and approval for the study was obtained from Wukari Local Government Education Authority. Participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were adequately informed about the purpose of the research before data collection. Students were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and no names or identifying information were included in the questionnaire. Respondents were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. All data collected were used strictly for academic purposes and were handled with honesty, respect, and integrity to ensure the protection and well-being of the participants.

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**Results**

**Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents**

| Item | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | | |
| Male | 75 | 68.2 |
| Female | 35 | 31.8 |
| **Total** | **110** | **100.0** |
| **Age** | | |
| 16- 18 years | 89 | 80.9 |
| 20 and above | 21 | 19.1 |
| **Total** | **110** | **100.0** |
| **Class** | | |
| SSS 1-3 | 53 | 48.2 |
| SSS 1-3 | 57 | 51.8 |
| **Total** | **110** | **100.0** |

**Research question 1**

What is the extent of substance abuse among secondary school students in selected schools in Wukari Metropolis?

| S/N | ITEMS | A | SA | D | SD | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I 1have never taken any substance (such as alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs) without a doctor's prescription. | 100 | 30 | 20 | 16 | 2.87% |
| 2 | I have experimented with substances (such as alcohol or cigarettes) once or twice. | 105 | 10 | 30 | 24 | 2.60% |
| 3 | I use substances occasionally, especially during social gatherings or with friends. | 50 | 100 | 10 | 9 | 3.43% |
| 4 | I use substances regularly and find it difficult to stop. | 120 | 30 | 10 | 19 | 2.90% |

Table 1 what is the extent of substance abuse among secondary school students in selected schools in Wukari Metropolis? I use substances occasionally, especially during social gatherings or with friends.( 3.43%) while I use substances regularly and find it difficult to stop. (2.90%).

**Research question 2**

How does substance abuse affect the academic performance of secondary school students in selected schools in Wukari Metropolis?

| S/N | ITEMS | A | SA | D | SD | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Using substances does not affect my ability to complete school assignments on time. | 60 | 40 | 39 | 30 | 2.65% |
| 2 | Sometimes, using substances makes it difficult for me to concentrate in class. | 30 | 60 | 40 | 39 | 2.66% |
| 3 | Using substances often lowers my participation in class and completion of academic tasks. | 70 | 30 | 40 | 29 | 2.60% |
| 4 | Using substances regularly negatively affects my academic performance and reduces my grades significantly. | 130 | 15 | 10 | 4 | 2.98% |

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The Table 2 how does substance abuse affect the academic performance of secondary school students in selected schools in Wukari Metropolis. While using substances regularly negatively affects my academic performance and reduces my grades significantly (2.98%) and while I Sometimes, using substances makes it difficult for me to concentrate in class (2.66%).

**Research question 3**

What relationship exists between substance abuse, school attendance, classroom participation, and study habits of secondary school students in Wukari Metropolis?

| S/N | ITEMS | A | SA | D | SD | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Using substances does not affect my school attendance, classroom participation, or study habits. | 50 | 60 | 50 | 9 | 2.95% |
| 2 | Occasional use of substances sometimes makes me skip class or reduce my attention in class. | 80 | 20 | 50 | 19 | 2.60% |
| 3 | Using substances often affects my attendance, makes me less active in class, and reduces my study time. | 90 | 10 | 41 | 28 | 2.49% |
| 4 | Regular use of substances greatly affects my attendance, classroom participation, and study habits, leading to poor academic performance. | 95 | 25 | 29 | 20 | 2.74% |

Table 3 reveal that substance abuse is related to students' school attendance, classroom participation, and study habits in varying degrees. While I Using substances does not affect my school attendance, classroom participation, or study habits with (2.95%) and with Regular use of substances greatly affects my attendance, classroom participation, and study habits, leading to poor academic performance with (2.74%)

**Research question 4**

What factors influence substance abuse among secondary school students in selected schools in Wukari Metropolis?

| s/n | Items | A | SA | D | SD | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Peer pressure occasionally influence students to try substances? | 100 | 40 | 20 | 19 | 2.90% |
| 2 | Curiosity or desire to experiment influence students to use substances? | 54 | 50 | 5 | 60 | 2.56% |
| 3 | Lack of parental supervision influence students to engage in substance use? | 100 | 39 | 10 | 20 | 2,93% |
| 4 | Easy availability of substances in the community or school environment strongly influence students to abuse substances? | 119 | 30 | 11 | 9 | 3.01% |

The table four show respondents' views on factors influencing substance abuse among secondary school students .with easy availability of substances in the co231mmunity or school environment strongly influence students to abuse substances with (3.01%) with Lack of parental supervision influence students to engage in substance use? (2.93%).

**Discussion of findings**

This section discusses the findings of the study based on the four research questions that guided the investigation of substance abuse among secondary school students in selected schools

in Wukari Metropolis. What is the extent of substance abuse among secondary school students in selected schools in Wukari Metropolis? The findings in Table 1 reveal that substance abuse exists among secondary school students in selected schools in Wukari Metropolis. The statement, "I use substances occasionally, especially during social gatherings or with friends," recorded the highest mean score of (3.43). This indicates that occasional substance use is a common behaviour among some students, particularly in social settings and through interactions with friends. This was followed by the statement, "I use substances regularly and find it difficult to stop," which recorded a mean score of (2.90). Furthermore, the statement, "I have never taken any substance without a doctor's prescription," recorded a mean score of (2.87), while experimentation with substances once or twice recorded the lowest mean score of (2.60) .The findings suggest that the extent of substance abuse among secondary school students in Wukari Metropolis is considerable, with occasional substance use being more prominent than regular substance use. This may indicate that students are exposed to substances through peer interactions, social gatherings, and other environmental influences. The finding further suggests that although some students may begin substance use as occasional experimentation, continued exposure could lead to more frequent consumption and possible dependence. Therefore, there is a need for preventive education, counselling services, and parental monitoring to discourage substance abuse among secondary school students.

How does substance abuse affect the academic performance of secondary school students in selected schools in Wukari Metropolis? The findings in Table 2 show that substance abuse has negative implications for the academic performance of secondary school students in Wukari Metropolis. The statement, "Using substances regularly negatively affects my academic performance and reduces my grades significantly," recorded the highest mean score of (2.98). This suggests that regular substance use is perceived by respondents as having a negative influence on their academic achievement. This was followed by the statement, "Sometimes, using substances makes it difficult for me to concentrate in class," with a mean score of (2.66). Similarly, the statement, "Using substances does not affect my ability to complete school assignments on time," recorded a mean score of (2.65), while the statement, "Using substances often lowers my participation in class and completion of academic tasks," recorded the lowest mean score of (2.60). The findings indicate that substance abuse may affect students' academic performance through poor concentration, reduced classroom engagement, difficulty completing academic assignments, and declining academic grades. In particular, regular substance use appears to have a stronger perceived negative effect on students' academic achievement than occasional use. This may be because substance abuse can interfere with students' ability to concentrate, retain information, manage their time, and participate effectively in learning activities. Consequently, substance abuse constitutes a serious challenge to students' educational development and academic success.

What relationship exists between substance abuse, school attendance, classroom participation, and study habits of secondary school students in Wukari Metropolis? The findings in Table 3 reveal that substance abuse is associated with students' school attendance, classroom participation, and study habits in varying degrees. The statement, "Using substances does not affect my school attendance, classroom participation, or study habits," recorded the highest mean score of (2.95). This suggests that some respondents do not perceive substance use as having a direct effect on their school-related activities. However, the statement, "Regular use of substances greatly affects my attendance, classroom participation, and study habits, leading to poor academic performance," recorded a mean score of (2.74). The statement, "Occasional use of

substances sometimes makes me skip class or reduce my attention in class," recorded a mean score of (2.60), while the statement, "Using substances often affects my attendance, makes me less active in class, and reduces my study time," recorded the lowest mean score of (2.49). The findings suggest that the relationship between substance abuse and students' school attendance, classroom participation, and study habits is not the same for all respondents. While some students indicated that substance use does not affect their school activities, others acknowledged that regular substance use negatively influences their attendance, participation in classroom activities, and time devoted to private studies. This implies that frequent substance use may contribute to absenteeism, reduced attention during lessons, poor study habits, and decreased academic involvement. Therefore, students should be encouraged to develop positive study habits, attend classes regularly, and avoid the use of substances that may interfere with their educational responsibilities. What factors influence substance abuse among secondary school students in selected schools in Wukari Metropolis? The findings in Table 4 reveal that several factors influence substance abuse among secondary school students in selected schools in Wukari Metropolis. The statement, "Easy availability of substances in the community or school environment strongly influences students to abuse substances," recorded the highest mean score of (3.01). This indicates that the availability and accessibility of substances constitute an important factor influencing substance abuse among students. This was followed by the statement, "Lack of parental supervision influences students to engage in substance use," with a mean score of (2.93). Peer pressure also recorded a mean score of (2.90), while curiosity or the desire to experiment with substances recorded the lowest mean score of (2.56). The findings suggest that environmental and social factors play important roles in influencing substance abuse among secondary school students. Easy access to substances may encourage students to experiment with and continue using them. Similarly, inadequate parental supervision may expose students to negative influences and behaviours without sufficient guidance or monitoring. Peer pressure may also encourage students to engage in substance use to gain acceptance or approval from their friends. Furthermore, curiosity and the desire to experiment may lead some students to try substances without fully understanding their harmful consequences. These findings imply that addressing substance abuse among secondary school students requires the combined efforts of parents, teachers, school administrators, community leaders, and relevant government agencies. Measures such as parental monitoring, school-based awareness programmes, counselling services, and control of the availability of harmful substances are necessary to reduce substance abuse among students in Wukari Metropolis. Pallant, J. (2020

**Conclusion**

The study concludes that substance abuse exists among secondary school students in selected schools in Wukari Metropolis, with occasional substance use being more prevalent than regular substance use. The findings indicate that some students engage in substance use, particularly during social gatherings and interactions with friends. This suggests that substance abuse is a growing concern that may begin through experimentation and social influence before developing into frequent use. Therefore, there is a need for increased awareness, effective counselling, and proper parental guidance to discourage students from engaging in substance abuse. Furthermore, the study concludes that substance abuse has negative implications for the academic performance of secondary school students. Regular substance use was perceived by respondents to contribute to poor academic grades, reduced concentration, low classroom participation, and difficulties in completing academic assignments. The study also establishes that substance abuse is associated with students' school attendance, classroom participation, and

study habits. Although some students indicated that substance use does not affect their academic activities, the findings suggest that frequent substance use may result in absenteeism, reduced attention during lessons, poor study habits, and declining academic involvement, which can ultimately affect students' educational achievement. Lastly, the study concludes that easy availability of substances, lack of parental supervision, peer pressure, and curiosity are important factors influencing substance abuse among secondary school students in Wukari Metropolis. Among these factors, easy availability of substances emerged as the most prominent. This demonstrates that substance abuse is influenced by both environmental and social conditions surrounding students. Consequently, addressing the problem requires collective efforts from parents, teachers, school administrators, community leaders, and government agencies through effective parental supervision, school-based drug education, counselling programmes, and stricter control of substance availability. These measures are essential for reducing substance abuse, promoting healthy behaviours, and improving the academic performance and overall well-being of secondary school students in Wukari Metropolis.

**Recommendations:**

1. Strengthening Guidance and Counselling Services:-Schools should establish and strengthen guidance and counselling units to educate students on the dangers of substance abuse and provide support for students at risk.
2. Parental Involvement and Supervision:-Parents and guardians should be encouraged to improve supervision and monitoring of their children's activities, peer groups, and behaviour, as poor parental supervision was identified as a major contributing factor.
3. Substance Abuse Awareness programmes: - Regular awareness campaigns, seminars, and workshops should be organise in schools to address curiosity-driven substance use and inform students about the academic and health consequences of substance abuse.
4. Peer Education and Positive Role Models:-Schools should promote peer education programmes where well-behaved students serve as role models to counter negative peer pressure and encourage positive behaviours.
5. Collaboration with Community and Authorities:-School authorities should collaborate with community leaders and law enforcement agencies to reduce students' access to substances within and around the school environment.
6. Policy Implementation and Monitoring: - Educational stakeholders should implement and enforce clear school policies against substance abuse, with consistent monitoring and appropriate disciplinary measures.

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