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PREVALENCE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND ITS IMPACT ON SENIOR CITIZENS IN JALINGO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

In recent years, drug abuse has been a major source of concern in Nigeria and other part of the globe. This concern is associated is associated with the enormous effect potency of drug abuse on perpetrators. The above scenario stimulated the researchers to examine the prevalence and impact of drug abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo, Taraba State, Nigeria. The study was anchored on the social learning theory and survey research design was adopted. The population of the study comprised of senior citizens in Jalingo, Taraba State. Findings of the study unraveled that there is a prevalence of drug abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo. Furthermore, it was also found that alcohol is the most commonly abused substance among senior citizens in Jalingo. Based on the revelation, the study recommend among other things the need for consistent awareness, counselling and support to senior citizens that are addicted to drug abuse.

Keywords: Drug Abuse, Senior Citizens, Impact, Prevalence, Jalingo

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, humans have harnessed the power of medicinal substances to heal ailments, invigorate their spirits during sluggish times, shed excess weight, bolster their physique, and lull themselves to rest when wakefulness prevails (Dauda, 2011). This age-old practice of utilizing drugs has woven itself into the fabric of societies worldwide, serving as a means to alleviate suffering, escape reality, warp perceptions, derive pleasure, and seek a sense of purpose. Oluremi (2012) defines drug abuse as the detrimental utilization of substances. The term encompasses issues associated with both illicit drugs and the harmful misuse of legal prescription medications, often involving self-medication. The pattern of drug abuse entails repetitive and excessive consumption of substances in pursuit of euphoria or as a means to evade the harshness of reality. These substances may range from illegal ones like marijuana, opium, cocaine, and heroin, along with various psychotropic compounds as noted by Mbatia (1994), to legal commodities such as prescription medications, tobacco, alcohol, and even inhalants like nail polish, solvents, paints, and gasoline. It's important to note that certain drugs, like vitamins in our food, serve necessary and beneficial roles. Initially, some individuals might perceive positive effects from drug use and believe they can maintain control, unaware of how swiftly these substances can take control of their lives.

The scourge of drug abuse has been extensively documented as a worldwide concern (Lakhanpal & Agnihotri, 2007; United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, 2007; Abudu, 2008). The question of how drugs are employed poses a persistent challenge to the global community, dating back to the introduction of substances like heroin. Daily, we are bombarded with grim reports and information concerning drug abuse and related offenses (Malima, 1995). These issues stemming from drug abuse pose substantial threats to entire nations (Giade, 2012; Oshodi, Aina & Onajole, 2010). Virtually every nation on Earth grapples with the abuse of one or more substances by its citizens (UNODC, 2007). The differing factor lies in the legislation that governs the utilization and consumption of these substances in various countries and regions. Throughout history, humans have harnessed the power of medicinal substances to heal ailments, invigorate their spirits during sluggish times, shed excess weight, bolster their physique, and lull themselves to rest when wakefulness prevails (Dauda, 2011). This age-old practice of utilizing drugs has woven itself into the fabric of societies worldwide, serving as a means to alleviate suffering, escape reality, warp perceptions, derive pleasure, and seek a sense of purpose.

In a different vein, Oluremi (2012) defines drug abuse as the detrimental utilization of substances. The term encompasses issues associated with both illicit drugs and the harmful misuse of legal prescription medications, often involving self-medication. The pattern of drug abuse entails repetitive and excessive consumption of substances in pursuit of euphoria or as a means to evade the harshness of reality. These substances may range from illegal ones like marijuana, opium, cocaine, and heroin, along with various psychotropic compounds as noted by Mbatia (1994), to legal commodities such as prescription medications, tobacco, alcohol, and even inhalants like nail polish, solvents, paints, and gasoline. It's important to note that certain drugs, like vitamins in our food, serve necessary and beneficial roles. Initially, some individuals might perceive positive effects from drug use and believe they can maintain control, unaware of how swiftly these substances can take control of their lives.

The scourge of drug abuse has been extensively documented as a worldwide concern (Lakhanpal & Agnihotri, 2007; United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, 2007; Abudu, 2008). The question of how drugs are employed poses a persistent challenge to the global community, dating back to the introduction of substances like heroin. Daily, we are bombarded with grim reports and information concerning drug abuse and related offenses (Malima, 1995). These issues stemming from drug abuse pose substantial threats to entire nations (Giade, 2012; Oshodi, Aina & Onajole, 2010). Virtually every nation on Earth grapples with the abuse of one or more substances by its citizens (UNODC, 2007). The differing factor lies in the legislation that governs the utilization and consumption of these substances in various countries and regions.

Statement of the Problem

Substance abuse is a growing problem among senior citizens in Nigeria, and its impact is significant. The prevalence of substance abuse among seniors has increased in recent years, with alcohol and prescription drugs being the most commonly abused substances (Oluremi,2012). Substance abuse can have a range of negative effects on seniors, including physical health problems, cognitive impairment, and social isolation. Physical health problems associated with substance abuse among seniors include liver damage, heart disease, and an increased risk of falls. Cognitive impairment can also result from substance abuse, leading to memory loss and difficulty with decision-making. Social isolation is another common consequence of substance abuse among seniors as they may withdraw

from family and friends. This study seeks to examine the prevalence and impact of substance abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo, Taraba State.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is to examine the prevalence and impact of substance abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo, Taraba State. The specific objectives are:

1. Identify the substances commonly abused by senior citizens in Jalingo LGA
2. To determine the prevalence of substance abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo LGA
3. To identify alternative ways to discourage senior citizens from substance abuse and its effect on their lives.

Research Questions

1. What are the substances commonly abused by senior citizens in Jalingo LGA?
2. Is there prevalence of substance abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo LGA?
3. What are the alternative ways to discourage senior citizens from substance abuse and its effect on their lives?

Conceptual Clarification

Drug abuse

Defining drug abuse is a multifaceted task, with numerous perspectives and dimensions to consider. Here are ten definitions of drug abuse, each from distinct sources, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the concept. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), drug abuse is "the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs," where harmful use refers to "use that results in physical or psychological harm. Conversely, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines drug abuse as "the use of prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, or any other substances, legal or illegal, in a manner or amount that is harmful or illegal."

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) characterizes drug abuse as "the use of illegal drugs, or the misuse of prescription or over-the-counter drugs, for purposes other than those for which they are indicated, or in a manner or in quantities other than directed. While the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual

of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) defines drug abuse as "a maladaptive pattern of substance use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress." All the above definition imply that drug abuse refers to "the use of any substance(s) of abuse, particularly those of a narcotic or psychotropic nature, in a manner which is harmful or hazardous to the health of the individual or to others.

Substance abuse is a growing concern in Nigeria, and it is not limited to the younger generation. Senior citizens are also affected by this problem, and its impacts can be devastating. The prevalence of substance abuse among seniors in Nigeria is alarming, with many turning to drugs and alcohol as a way to cope with the challenges of aging. The impact of substance abuse on senior citizens can be severe, leading to physical and mental health problems, social isolation, financial difficulties, and even death. Substance abuse can also exacerbate existing health conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease.

Senior Citizen

In this study, Senior citizens are individuals who have reached the age of 65 or above. They are considered to be a valuable part of society due to their vast life experiences, wisdom, and knowledge. Senior citizens have contributed significantly to the development and progress of society in various fields such as science, politics, arts, and literature. As people age, they may face physical and mental challenges that can affect their quality of life. However, senior citizens continue to remain active by engaging in social activities and pursuing hobbies that keep them mentally stimulated. They also play an essential role in providing emotional support to their families and communities.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is anchored in the Social Learning Theory, which posits that individuals acquire behaviors through observational learning, reinforcement, and cognitive processes. The social learning theory was propounded by Albert Bandura in in 1977(Akers, & Jennings, 2015). Applying this theory to the context of drug abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo, Taraba State, has the potency to provide a valuable lens through which to explore the multifaceted aspects of this issue.

Observational learning plays a pivotal role, suggesting that senior citizens may be influenced by their social environment, including family, friends, or media, in shaping their drug-related attitudes and behaviors. Thus, the prevalence and types of substances being abused among this demographic may be linked to what they observe in their immediate

surroundings. Addressing this aspect of the theory is essential for understanding the potential role of social and familial influences in drug abuse among senior citizens.

Reinforcement, as outlined in the Social Learning Theory, signifies that positive or negative experiences related to drug use can strongly influence drug abuse patterns. Therefore, the impact of drug abuse on the physical and mental health of senior citizens is likely intertwined with the reinforcement they perceive from these experiences. Furthermore, addressing the underlying reasons for drug use, such as pain management or social isolation, is essential in the context of the theory, as it could help reduce drug abuse among this population by providing alternative sources of reinforcement.

Cognitive processes, another key aspect of the theory, highlight the significance of self-efficacy and outcome expectations. In the context of senior citizens in Jalingo, Taraba State, understanding their self-efficacy in resisting drug use and altering their outcome expectations are pivotal. These cognitive factors can significantly influence their decisions and actions. Therefore, educational programs and counseling are valuable tools for bolstering self-efficacy and modifying outcome expectations, reducing drug abuse among senior citizens.

The application of the Social Learning Theory as the theoretical framework for this study provides a comprehensive approach to understanding the prevalence and impact of drug abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo, Taraba State. It offers insights into the role of observational learning, reinforcement, and cognitive processes in shaping drug-related behaviors within this demographic, thereby guiding the development of effective interventions and policies tailored to their unique needs.

METHODS

This research study meticulously employed a survey research methodology, demonstrating a focused and comprehensive approach to understanding the prevalence of substance abuse and its associated effects on senior citizens residing in the vibrant Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria. Jalingo Local Government Area, with a documented population of 139,845 individuals according to the 2006 Census records, presented a fertile ground for this investigation. Notably, the population consisted of 77,425 males and 62,420 females, positioning it as the most densely populated city within Taraba State.

The pivotal task of establishing the appropriate sample size for data collection and subsequent analysis was accomplished through the employment of the Roasoft Online Calculator arrived at a sample size of 384 individuals. These chosen respondents were engaged through the distribution of methodically constructed structured questionnaires, facilitating the systematic collection of data pertinent to the research inquiries.

In the course of this research, a thorough analysis of the gathered data transpired, employing a dual-pronged approach encompassing both descriptive statistics and the utilization of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). This methodological duality ensured a nuanced exploration of the subject matter, facilitating a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Through the judicious blending of qualitative and quantitative techniques in the data analysis process, this research aimed to offer a comprehensive and multifaceted insight into the dynamics of substance abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo Local Government Area, Taraba State.

Data presentation/Analysis

In this section of the paper, we will examine the data gathered from the survey. The data will be showcased through charts and analyzed using straightforward percentage-based methods.

Demographic Date

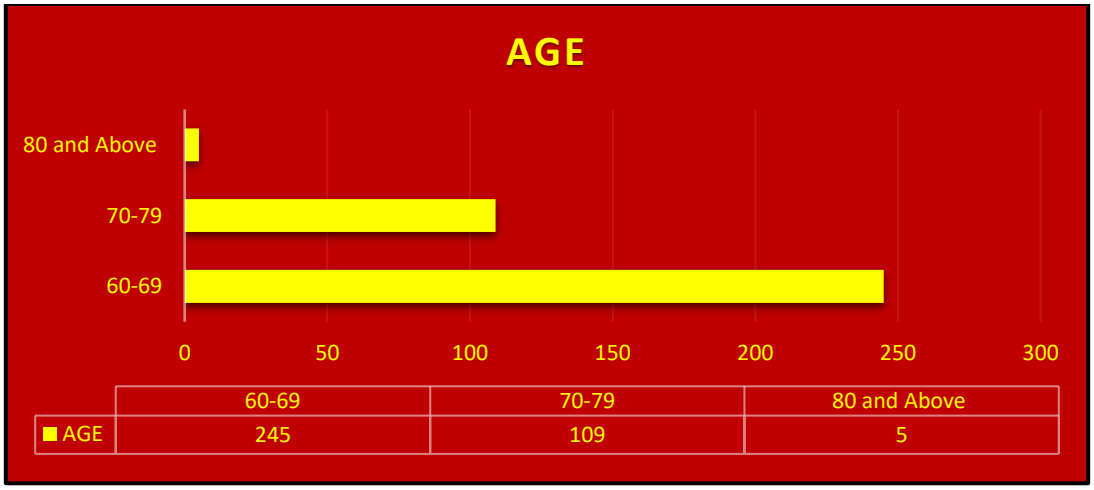


Figure 1: Respondents' Age

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data presented in Figure 1 demonstrates that the majority 245(68%) of senior citizens within the study's sample fall within the age bracket of 60-69. The implication here is that a

focus on the 60-69 age group is warranted to better understand and address potential issues related to substance abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo, Taraba State. This age cohort may have unique needs and vulnerabilities that require tailored interventions and support.

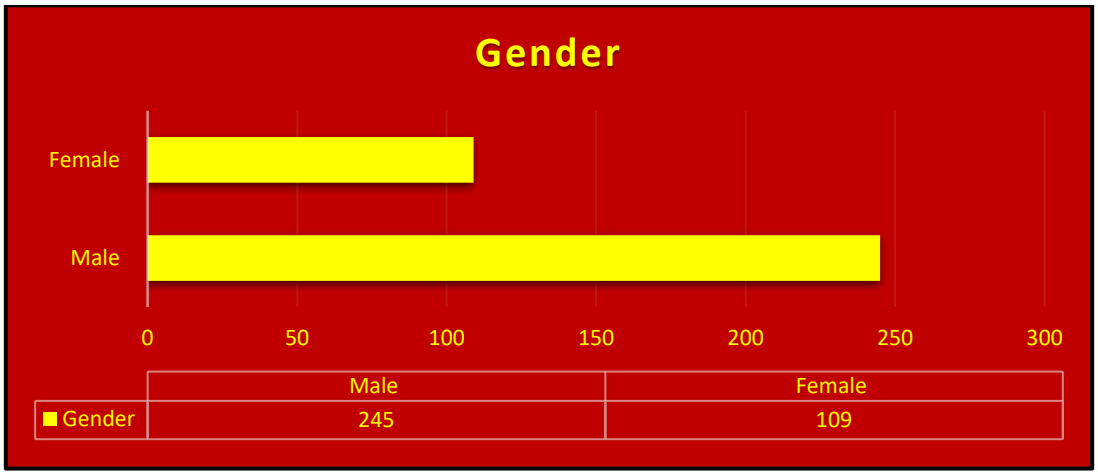


Figure 2: Gender

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data presented in Figure 2 indicates that the majority of senior citizens in the study's sample are male, comprising approximately 69% of the respondents, while females make up approximately 31%. This finding has significant implications, suggesting a potential gender disparity in substance abuse prevalence among senior citizens in Jalingo, Taraba State. Further analysis may be necessary to explore the reasons behind this imbalance and to tailor interventions and support accordingly.

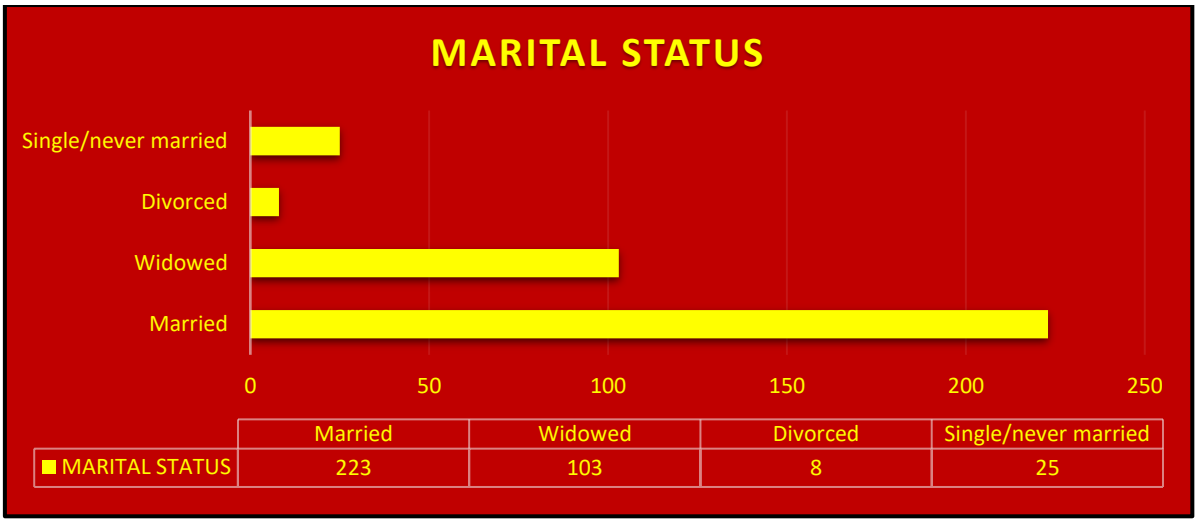


Figure 3: Marital Status

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data represented in Figure 3 illustrates that out of the total respondents, 223 individuals, approximately 59%, were married. Additionally, 103 respondents, approximately 27%, were widowed, 8 respondents, roughly 2%, were divorced, and 25 respondents, constituting around 7%, were single/never married. This finding implies a notable correlation between marital status and substance abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo, Taraba State. The higher prevalence of substance abuse among the widowed and divorced individuals could point to the need for targeted support and interventions for these specific demographic groups to address their unique challenges and circumstances.

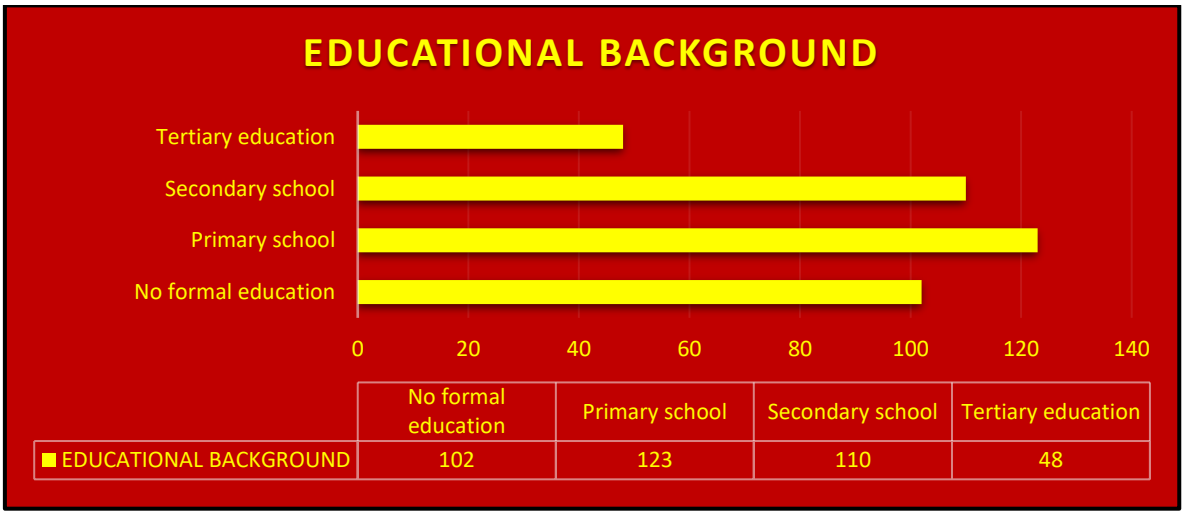


Figure 4: Educational Background

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data depicted in Figure 4 unveils that among the 359 respondents, 102, or approximately 28%, have had no formal education, 123, constituting roughly 34%, received primary school education, and 110, making up about 31%, attained a secondary level of education. In contrast, only 48 respondents, accounting for approximately 13%, had a tertiary education.

This finding suggests a substantial educational disparity among senior citizens in the study, which may have implications for understanding and addressing substance abuse patterns. Those with lower educational attainment levels might require different approaches to education and awareness regarding substance abuse prevention and intervention, given their potentially unique needs and vulnerabilities.

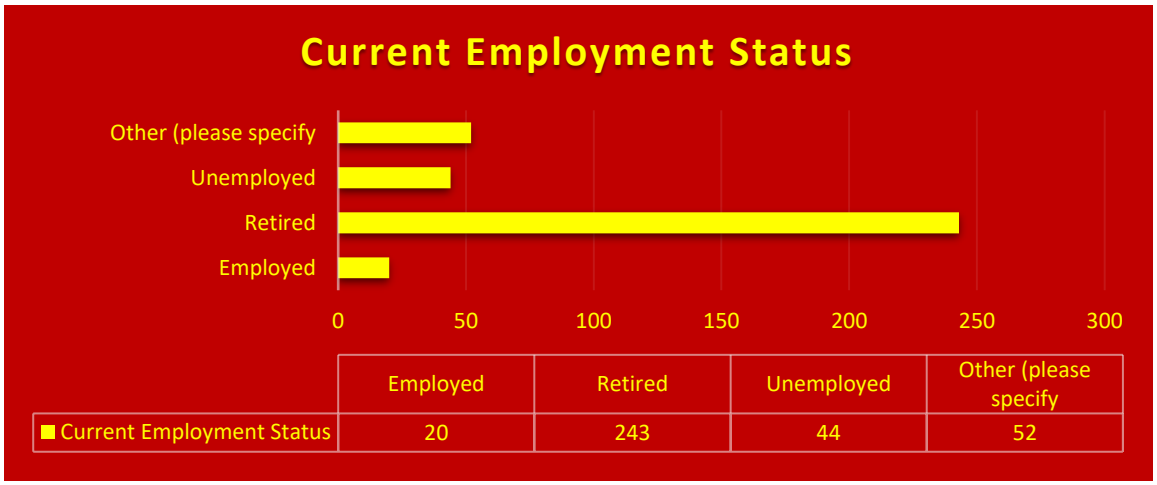


Figure 5: Current Employment Status

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data presented in the figure provides insights into the employment status of the respondents. Among the total respondents, 20 individuals, or approximately 5%, were currently employed, while 243, making up roughly 66%, were retired. On the other hand, 44 respondents, accounting for around 12%, reported being unemployed.

This finding suggests a correlation between employment status and substance abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo, Taraba State. It indicates that retired individuals may be more susceptible to substance abuse, possibly due to factors such as boredom or the need for coping mechanisms in their post-employment life. These implications could guide the development of targeted interventions and support programs for this specific group.

Objective 1: Identifying Substances Commonly Abused by Senior Citizens

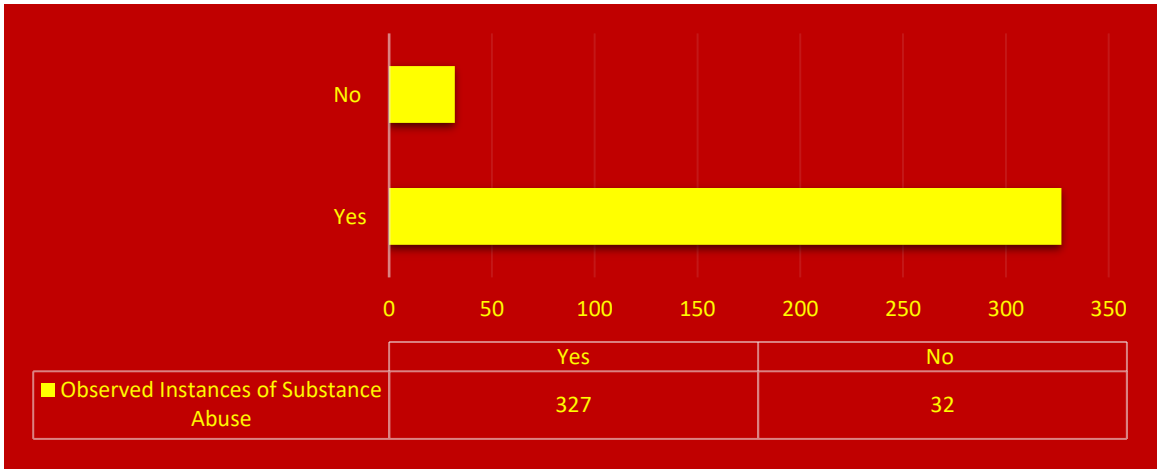


Figure 6: Have you personally observed or encountered instances of substance abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo LGA?

The data presented indicates that out of the 359 respondents, 327 individuals, comprising approximately 91%, reported that they have personally observed or encountered instances of substance abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo LGA. Conversely, 32 respondents, constituting about 9%, stated that they have not witnessed such instances.

This finding underscores the prevalence of substance abuse among senior citizens in the region and highlights the need for comprehensive strategies and interventions to address this issue effectively. It also suggests a significant level of awareness and concern among the majority of respondents regarding this problem, which can be a valuable resource for developing support and prevention programs.

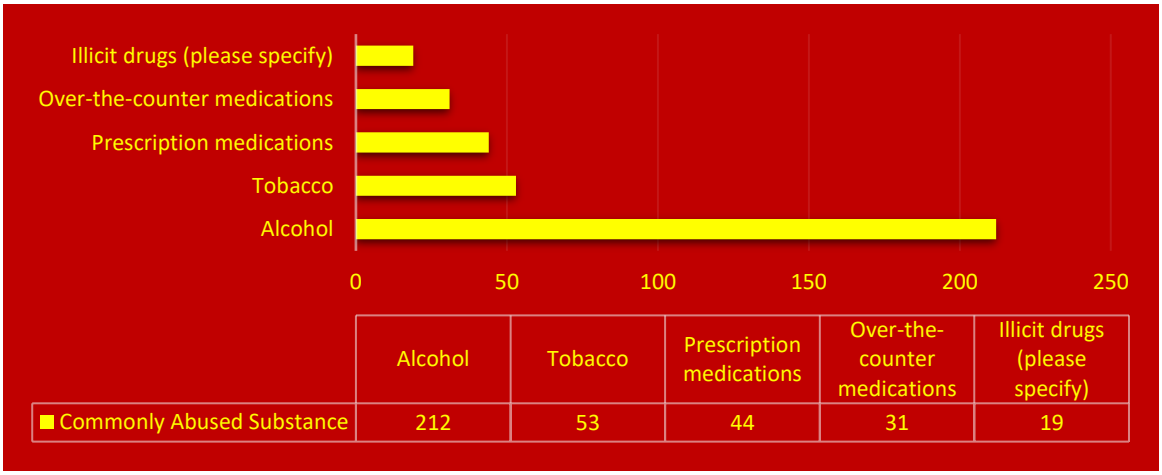


Figure 7: Which of the following substances do you believe are commonly abused by senior citizens in Jalingo LGA? (Select all that apply)

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data presented in Figure 7 provides insights into the respondents' perceptions of the substances most commonly abused by senior citizens in Jalingo LGA. According to the data, the majority of the respondents, 212 individuals, or approximately 59%, believe that alcohol is the most commonly abused substance among senior citizens. In contrast, 53 respondents, constituting about 15%, identified tobacco as a commonly abused substance, while 44 respondents, roughly 12%, pointed to prescription medications. Additionally, 31 respondents, approximately 9%, mentioned over-the-counter medications, and 19 respondents, making up around 5%, thought that illicit drugs were commonly abused.

This finding implies that there is a strong consensus among the respondents regarding alcohol as the primary substance of concern. Understanding these perceptions is crucial for designing targeted awareness and intervention programs that address the prevalent issue of

alcohol abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo LGA, while also taking into account the concerns about other substances.

Objective 2: Determining the Prevalence of Substance Abuse among Senior Citizens

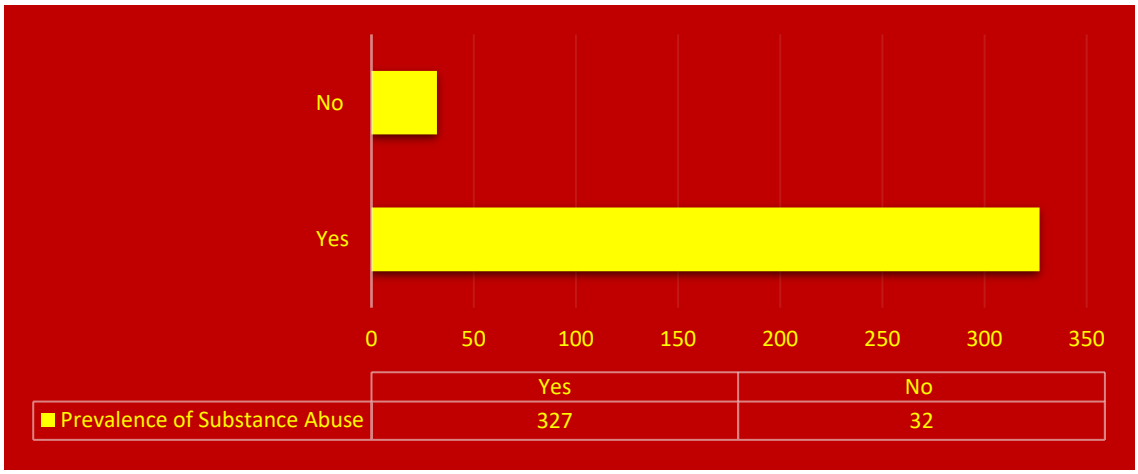


Figure 8. Do you believe that substance abuse is a common issue among senior citizens in Jalingo?

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data depicted in the figure shows that among the respondents, 327 individuals, constituting approximately 91%, believed that substance abuse is a common issue among senior citizens in Jalingo. In contrast, 32 respondents, making up about 9%, expressed the opinion that it is not a prevalent issue.

This finding highlights a widespread perception among the majority of respondents that substance abuse is a significant concern among senior citizens in Jalingo. This perception underscores the need for further research and targeted interventions to address the issue effectively. It also implies a recognition of the problem's seriousness within the community, which can serve as a foundation for collaborative efforts to mitigate substance abuse among senior citizens.

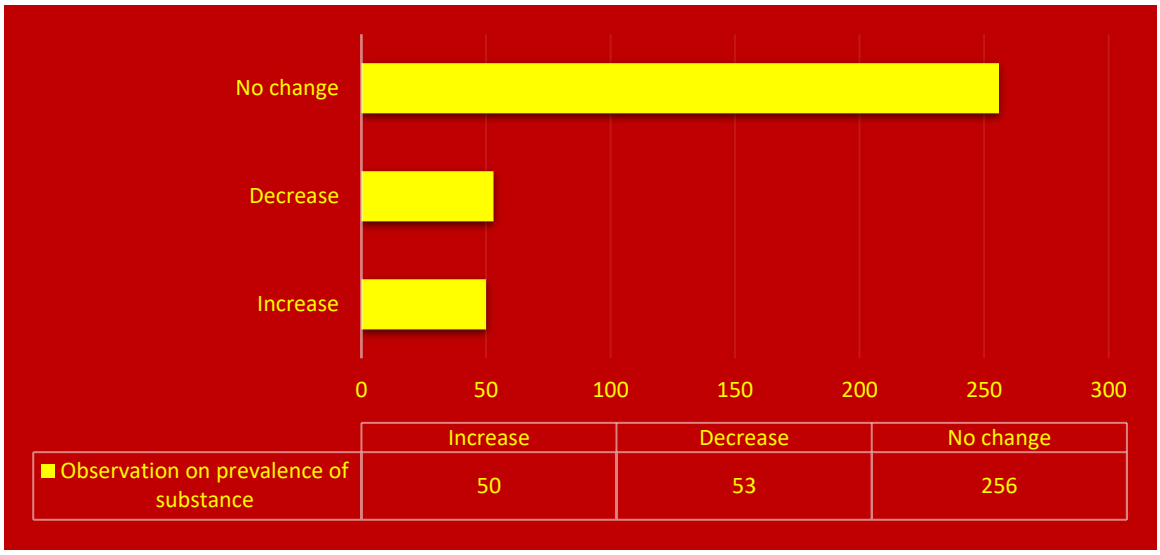


Figure 9: Have you observed an increase or decrease in the prevalence of substance abuse among senior citizens in recent years in Jalingo LGA?

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data presented in Figure 9 indicates that, according to the responses, 50 respondents, approximately 14%, observed an increase in the prevalence of substance abuse among senior citizens in recent years in Jalingo LGA. In contrast, 53 respondents, accounting for roughly 15%, reported observing a decrease. However, the majority, 256 respondents, making up about 71%, stated that they have not noticed any change in the prevalence of substance abuse among senior citizens in recent years in Jalingo LGA.

This finding suggests a somewhat divided perception among the respondents regarding the trend of substance abuse among senior citizens. It underscores the need for further investigation into the factors contributing to these different perceptions, which can inform targeted efforts to address substance abuse issues and potentially implement prevention measures where necessary.

Objective 3: Identifying Alternative Ways to Discourage Senior Citizens from Substance Abuse and Its Effects

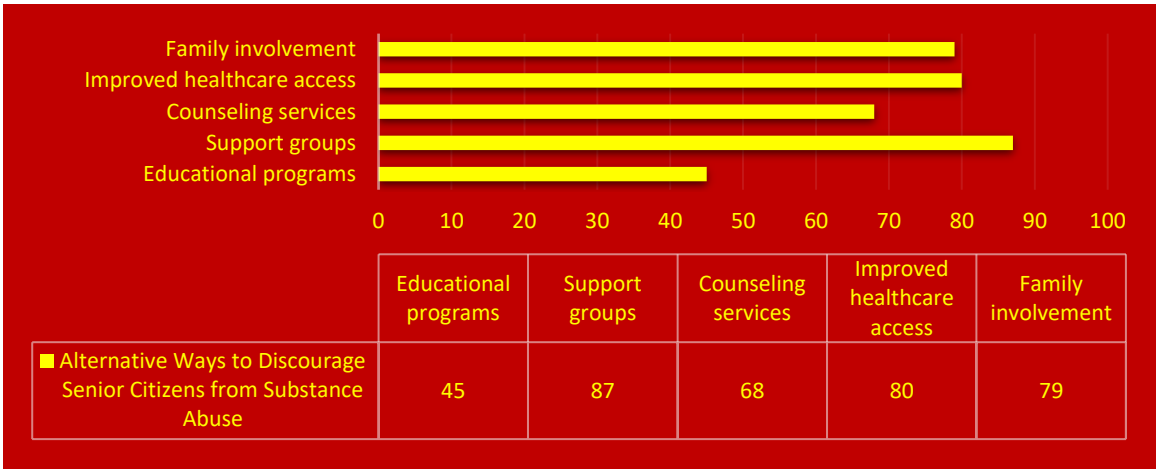


Figure 10: In your opinion, what could be effective measures to discourage senior citizens from substance abuse? (Select all that apply)

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data depicted in the figure reveals that among the respondents, 45 individuals, representing approximately 12%, believe that educational programs could serve as an effective measure to discourage senior citizens from substance abuse. In contrast, a larger group of 87 respondents, making up around 24%, believe that support groups could be effective in this regard. Additionally, 68 respondents, approximately 19%, expressed the belief that counseling services could be an effective measure, while 80 respondents, constituting about 22%, thought that improved health services could play a crucial role in discouraging substance abuse among senior citizens. Furthermore, 79 respondents, making up approximately 22%, emphasized the importance of family involvement as an effective measure in addressing this issue.

This finding illustrates diverse perspectives among the respondents regarding the most effective measures to discourage substance abuse among senior citizens. It suggests the potential need for a multifaceted approach that combines educational programs, support groups, counseling services, improved healthcare, and family involvement to comprehensively address this challenge.

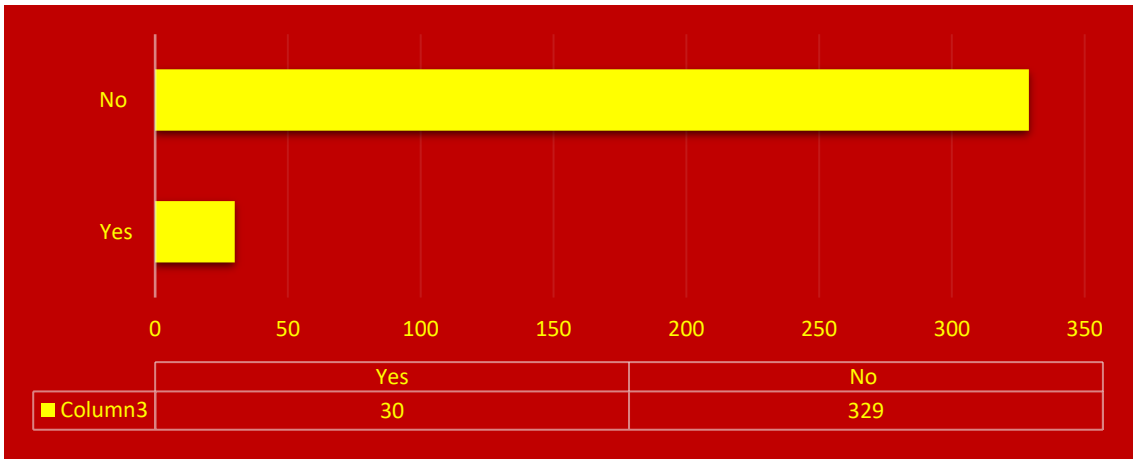


Figure 11: Do you believe that awareness campaigns about the dangers of substance abuse are currently sufficient for senior citizens in Jalingo LGA?

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data presented in Figure 11 reveals that among the respondents, 30 individuals, representing approximately 8%, believe that awareness campaigns about the dangers of substance abuse are currently sufficient for senior citizens in Jalingo LGA. In contrast, a significant majority of 329 respondents, making up about 92%, expressed the opinion that these awareness campaigns are not adequate.

This finding suggests a widespread perception among the respondents that the current awareness campaigns about the dangers of substance abuse for senior citizens in Jalingo LGA may be insufficient. This calls for a reevaluation of the existing awareness initiatives and potential adjustments or expansions to better address the issue effectively.

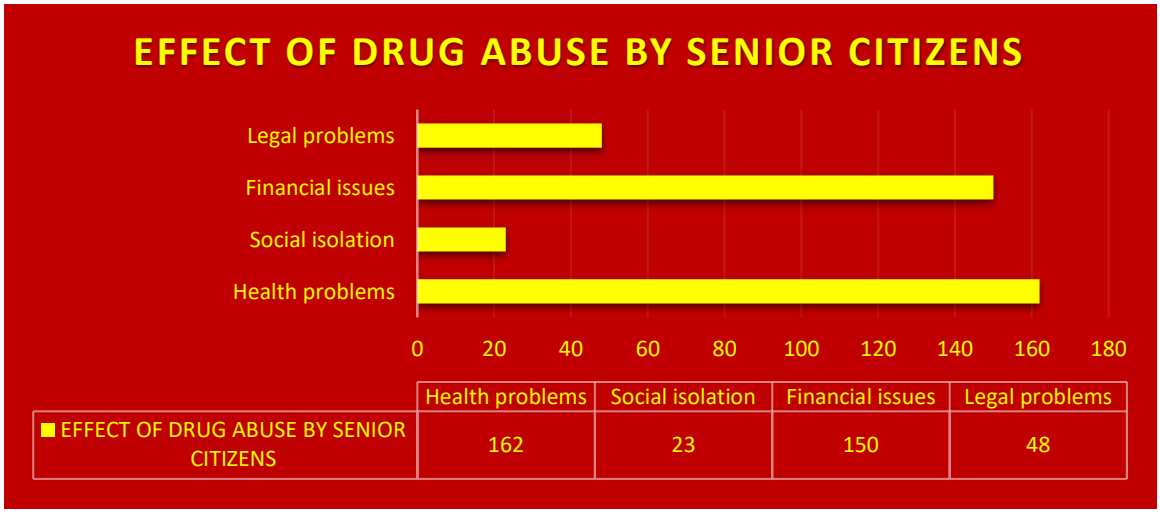


Figure 12: How has substance abuse among senior citizens affected their lives and the community in Jalingo LGA? (Select all that apply)

The data depicted in Figure 12 shows that, according to the responses, 162 respondents, making up approximately 45%, identified health problems as one of the major effects of drug abuse among senior citizens. In contrast, 23 respondents, about 6%, felt that social isolation is a significant effect, while 150 respondents, roughly 42%, pointed to financial issues. Additionally, 48 respondents, constituting approximately 13%, emphasized that legal problems are among the major effects of drug abuse among senior citizens.

This finding indicates a range of perspectives regarding the major effects of drug abuse on senior citizens in Jalingo LGA. It underscores the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses both the health-related and socio-economic consequences of substance abuse in this demographic group.

DISCUSSION

The first objective of this study seeks to identify the substances commonly abused by senior citizens in Jalingo. The data presented in Figure 6 underscores the prevalence of substance abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo LGA. A significant majority, approximately 91% of the 359 respondents, reported that they have personally observed or encountered instances of substance abuse among senior citizens. This high level of awareness and concern among the majority of respondents is a valuable resource for developing support and prevention programs. It highlights the need for comprehensive strategies and interventions to address this issue effectively. Similarly, the data in figure 7 provides insights into the respondents' perceptions of the substances most commonly abused by senior citizens in Jalingo LGA. A strong consensus, with approximately 59% of respondents, believes that alcohol is the primary substance of concern among senior citizens. Understanding these perceptions is crucial for designing targeted awareness and intervention programs that address the prevalent issue of alcohol abuse, while also taking into account concerns about other substances.

In determining the prevalence of drug abuse among senior citizens, the data presented in Figure 8 highlights a widespread perception among the majority of respondents that substance abuse is a significant concern among senior citizens in Jalingo. This perception underscores the need for further research and targeted interventions to address the issue effectively. It implies a recognition of the problem's seriousness within the community,

which can serve as a foundation for collaborative efforts to mitigate substance abuse among senior citizens.

The data in Figure 12 reveals a range of perspectives regarding the major effects of drug abuse on senior citizens in Jalingo LGA. It underscores the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses both the health-related and socio-economic consequences of substance abuse in this demographic group. This information can inform the development of targeted support and intervention programs to address the multifaceted challenges associated with substance abuse among senior citizens.

The third objective of this study is to identify alternatives on how to curb the prevalence of drug abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo LGA. Findings of the study revealed that there are diverse perspectives among the respondents regarding the most effective measures to discourage substance abuse among senior citizens indicate the potential need for a multifaceted approach. Combining educational programs, support groups, counseling services, improved healthcare, and family involvement may be necessary to comprehensively address this challenge. It highlights the importance of tailoring interventions to meet the unique needs and preferences of senior citizens in Jalingo LGA.

CONCLUSION

This study has shed light on the prevalence and impact of substance abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo, Taraba State. The findings from our comprehensive survey reveal a significant concern, with a vast majority of respondents having personally observed or encountered instances of substance abuse among senior citizens. The consensus on the commonality of alcohol abuse underscores the urgency of addressing this issue. Additionally, the perceived insufficiency of current awareness campaigns highlights the need for a more robust and tailored approach to prevention and intervention. The diverse perspectives on effective measures to discourage substance abuse emphasize the importance of multifaceted strategies that encompass education, support, counseling, healthcare, and family involvement. Furthermore, the various effects of substance abuse, including health problems, social isolation, financial issues, and legal problems, underscore the need for a comprehensive approach to address the complex challenges faced by senior citizens in Jalingo. As we move forward, this study serves as a valuable foundation for designing targeted programs to address substance abuse, improve awareness, and enhance

the well-being of senior citizens in this community. It also calls for collaborative efforts among stakeholders to develop a holistic and effective response to this pressing issue.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study on the prevalence and impact of substance abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo, Taraba State, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Enhance Awareness Campaigns: Given the perception of many respondents that existing awareness campaigns are insufficient, it is essential to strengthen and expand awareness programs focused on the dangers of substance abuse among senior citizens. These campaigns should be tailored to the specific needs and concerns of this demographic group and should employ a variety of media and community-based strategies to reach a wider audience.
2. Multifaceted Intervention Programs: Develop and implement comprehensive intervention programs that encompass education, support groups, counseling services, improved healthcare access, and family involvement. These programs should be designed to address both the root causes of substance abuse and the associated health and socio-economic consequences. Tailored interventions can help senior citizens overcome challenges and maintain a higher quality of life.
3. Collaborative Efforts: Encourage collaboration among local government agencies, healthcare providers, community organizations, and other stakeholders. A coordinated effort involving all relevant parties can maximize the impact of awareness and intervention programs. By working together, these stakeholders can pool resources and expertise to create a more effective and sustainable approach to tackling substance abuse among senior citizens in Jalingo.

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