



## ECONOMIC STATUS SUSCEPTIBILITY TO SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: AN EXPLORATIVE DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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### Abstract

Substance abuse is a serious social vice that affects millions of people globally. Understanding these factors requires this comprehensive research that considers the interplay of parents' economic status with various students' personal, environmental, and societal factors, including the mechanisms through which financial resources impact susceptibility to substance abuse among university students. Using ecological systems theory, the study employed an explorative descriptive survey method. Cramer's V, Pearson's chi-square, and Probability regression were used in data analyses. Findings showed parents' occupation and parents' income statistically predicted the probability of substance abuse at (0.010, p0.05), and (0.021, p0.05) respectively. Similarly, the probit model revealed that students' parents' monthly income predicted probabilities of substance abuse ( $B=0.021^{***}(.004), 0.05$ ). The paper concludes that parents' occupation plays a pivotal role in determining the economic status of the family, which in turn, shapes their children in the university access to essential resources and serves as a powerful form of role modelling that shapes student's career aspirations, work ethic, and attitudes towards substance abuse, through provided examples, instilled values, and nurtured interests and talents. The theory can inform prevention and intervention efforts aimed at addressing substance abuse by targeting relevant social influences to reinforce positive behaviours.

**Keywords:** Parents Economic Status, University Students, Social Environment, Substance Abuse, Sociology

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### 1. Introduction

Substance abuse continues to be a significant global issue among university students, with serious implications for academic achievement, health, and societal well-being. Numerous studies have identified a range of factors influencing student involvement in substance abuse, including personal characteristics and family background. Among these, parental economic status, reflected in income levels and occupational class, has been recognised as a key determinant (Odesanmi et al., 2024; Okafor, 2019).

Research has consistently highlighted the connection between parental income and youth behaviour, suggesting that financial hardship heightens stress, restricts access to constructive leisure activities, and diminishes parental oversight. However, many existing studies offer limited insight into the specific role of parental occupation in shaping students' values, aspirations, and exposure to risk-laden environments. Additionally, the complex interaction between economic status and personal and environmental factors remains insufficiently explored (Odesanmi et al., 2024; Pervaiz, Ahmed & Nisa, 2023; Rifat & Bithi, 2023). There is also a notable lack of research contextualising parental economic status, encompassing income and occupational class, within university environments in developing countries, where economic volatility and evolving cultural dynamics distinctly influence youth behaviour.

The objective of this research is to explore the influence of family economic status on their university going children. The null hypotheses for the research are as follows:

- i. Ho: There is no relationship between parents' occupation and substance abuse among university students.
- ii. Ho: There is no association between parents' monthly income and university students' rate of substance abuse.

## **2. Literature Review**

University students' parental economic status is the financial situation of an individual's family. This is influenced by income, wealth, education level, occupation, and access to social and financial resources. Student from higher socioeconomic backgrounds typically experience greater financial stability, enhanced access to quality education and healthcare, with more prospects for career advancement. Conversely, students from disadvantaged parental backgrounds encounter obstacles such as limited access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, resulting to cycles of poverty which have long-term impacts on their economic status (Pervaiz, Ahmed & Nisa, 2023; Rifat & Bithi, 2023).

Therefore, university students' parental economic status has an impact on the likelihood of those students engaging in substance abuse during their time at university. This is made manifest as the connection often influences how students access resources while in college, which potentially affects parent-child interactions and family dynamics. Such vulnerabilities lead to negative outcomes for university students (Hackshaw, 2017).

In this study, substance abuse is conceptualised as the harmful use of substances. This results in adverse effects and overall functioning of the user and the larger society (Odesanmi et al., 2024). Substances that are abused include illicit drugs like cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine (illegal to possess, manufacture, or distribute). It also involves; prescription drugs such as Tramadol, codeine, and sleeping pills. Additionally, it includes the abuse of social drugs such as alcohol,

caffeine, nicotine, and cigarettes. All these can lead to adverse effects on physical health, impaired judgment, risky behaviour, and potential addiction (Gasa et al., 2022; Alimi et al, 2020). Moreover, the social problems associated with substance abuse can lead to relationship difficulties, school problems, legal issues, financial troubles, and a decline in social functioning (Ciucă Anghel et al., 2023).

On campuses, affluent students possess the means to purchase substances or attend gatherings where drugs and alcohol are readily available. This heightens the likelihood of experimentation and subsequent substance abuse. In another dimension, students from lower-income families are more likely to encounter substance abuse within their social circles due to factors such as neighbourhood environments or peer pressure. This often elevates the likelihood of experimentation with drugs or alcohol as they seek acceptance or social connections (Henderson & Dressler, 2020).

In the present-day Nigeria, financial instability exacerbates mental health, resulting in self-medication among students grappling with these conditions. This has led to a perpetuating cycle of dependence leading to (Bachman & Schulenberg, 2014).

In Nigeria, agencies such as National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and National Agency for Food, Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) play vital roles in mitigating drug abuse through diverse activities. However, Nigeria faces complexities where policies and programs contend with socio-cultural backgrounds, government workers' the pursuit of financial gain, and the erratic attitudes of law enforcement agencies (Odesanmi et al., 2024; Shah & Sengar, 2021). Nonetheless, through persistent efforts and innovative strategic approaches, the menace of substance abuse can be significantly reduced (Okubor & Mormah, 2022).

This study raises inquiries regarding how the presence or absence of financial resources within the family impacts a student's susceptibility to substance abuse stress, resource accessibility, peer influences, or other factors. Comprehending these factors necessitate comprehensive research that considers the interplay of parents' economic status with various personal, environmental, and societal factors influencing students, with the mechanisms through which financial resources impact susceptibility to substance abuse among university students.

## **2.1 Study Gap**

While previous research on substance abuse among students has extensively examined factors such as mental health issues, academic pressure, peer influence, substance availability on campus, and media exposure, limited attention has been given to the impact of parental economic status and the broader social environment of students. Additionally, much of the existing literature tends to approach substance abuse from either a purely individualistic or sociological perspective, often lacking comprehensive theoretical integration. This study addresses these gaps by highlighting the

significance of socio-economic background and social context, and adopting the Ecological Systems Theory to provide a more holistic understanding of student behaviour.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

The theory used for understanding the relationship between parental economic status and substance abuse among university students is the Ecosystem theory, developed by Bronfenbrenner in 1979. This theory offers comprehensive human development, spanning from individual microsystems (such as family and peer groups) to broader macrosystems (such as cultural norms and societal structures) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Microsystems, the primary focus, denote the immediate environments where individuals, including university students, interact daily with family dynamics, peer groups, and academic settings. The theory posits that parental economic status directly impacts the family microsystem through access to resources, living conditions, and parental involvement. This, in turn, shapes a student's experiences, including susceptibility to substance abuse (Neal & Neal, 2013; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Mesosystems entail interactions between different microsystems in an individual's life. To this theory, financial strain within the family can affect a student's academic performance and social interactions, subsequently influencing their exposure to substance use (Boer, Van Den Eijnden, Boniel-Nissim et al., 2020; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Ecosystems, the third component, assert that external environments indirectly shape an individual's development. In Nigeria, economic policies, cultural norms regarding substance use, and access to healthcare and support service shapes students' attitudes towards substance use. Similarly, parental economic status influences the availability of resources and opportunities for university students' vulnerability to substances (Neal & Neal, 2013; Hong, Kral, Espelage & Allen-Meares, 2012).

Lastly, macrosystems are the broader cultural, societal, and historical contexts that shape human development. In Nigeria, especially among university students, economic disparities and societal inequalities contribute significantly to parental economic status often, affects available resources (Vélez-Agosto et al., 2017).

Applying ecosystem theory to students' susceptibility to substance abuse is a holistic approach that could aid in identifying the intricate interplay of factors shaping students' behaviours and experiences with substances and other deviant behaviour.

### **Conceptual Framework Showing the Relationship between Parental Economic Factors and Substance Abuse among University Students**

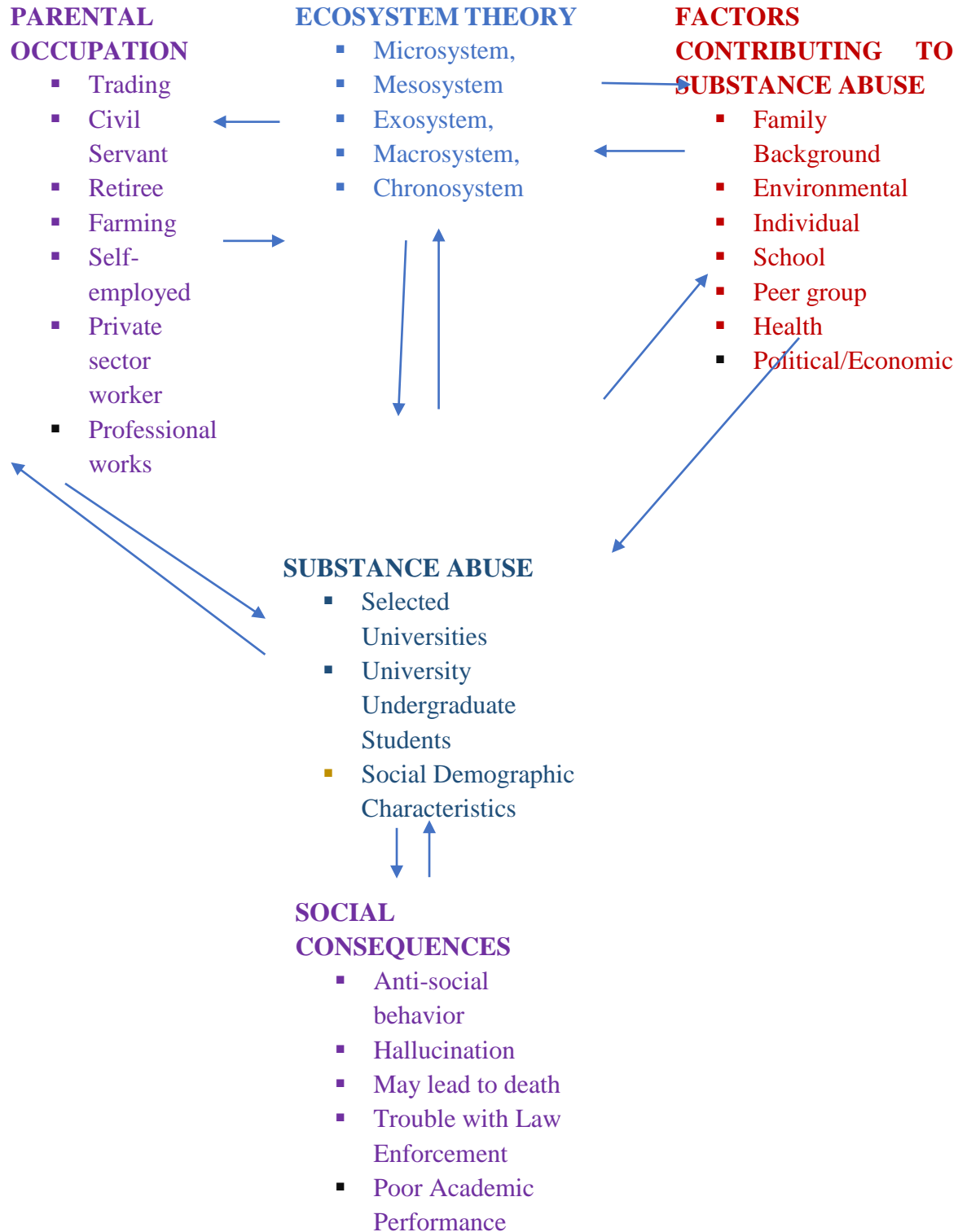


Figure 1:

Conceptual Framework

#### **4. Research Methodology**

This survey research involved the collection of information from a sample of students through their responses to the questionnaire to meet the predetermined criteria.

##### **4.1 Data Source**

The research conducted in Kwara State, Nigeria, focused on three universities. An exploratory descriptive survey method was employed. Quantitative methods were utilised to quantify variables and interactions among the study variables of the research question. Secondary data were sourced from books, journals, and websites.

##### **4.2 Sampling Size and Sampling Technique**

The target population comprised 53,000 undergraduate students ranging from 100- to 500-levels across the three categories of university ownership (Federal, State, and Private). A sample size of 652 was determined and distributed. The sample size determination utilised Johnson and Gill's method with Salkind's (1977) recommendation. Probability and non-probability sampling techniques, including stratified, purposive, and random sampling.

##### **4.3 Method of Data Analysis**

Cramer's V, Pearson's chi-square, and probability regression analysis were used to analyse the data. Probit included four variables: substance abuse (dependent variable), institutional type, parents' occupation, and parents' average monthly income. Each of these variables had two outcomes coded:

Notation: Y = substance abuse (substance abuse=1, otherwise=0)

X1 = Institutional type (private=1, public=0)

X2 = Parents' occupation (self-employed=1, paid-employed=0)

X3 = Parents' average monthly income ( $\geq 30000=1$ ,  $<30000=0$ )

#### **5 Results and Discussion**

The results of the findings are enumerated below

##### **5.1 Socio-Economic Characteristics**

Analysis reveals that the University of Ilorin had the highest proportion of respondents, accounting for 58.6 per cent. Kwara State University constituted 34.8 per cent of the respondents, while

Landmark University represented only 6.6 per cent. Regarding the occupations of the respondents' parents, the majority (39.5per cent) were civil servants, followed by traders (25.6 per cent), self-employed individuals (11.8 per cent), retirees (6.3per cent), professional workers (6.1 per cent), private sector employees (5.8 per cent), and farmers (4.9 per cent). In terms of monthly income, 22.1 per cent of respondents' parents earned between N80,000 - N129,999, 19.9 % earned between N30,000 - N79,999, 18.6 per cent earned between N130,000 - N179,999, 17.7 % earned between N180,000 – N229,000, 17.3 per cent earned more than N230,000, and 4.4 per cent earned less than N30,000. The mean and median average monthly income of respondents' parents were N143,942 and N139,505, respectively, with income levels ranging from N5,000 to N500,000.

**Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Socio-Demographic Characteristics**

<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>F(n)</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Name of Institution</b>		
University of Ilorin	382	58.6
Kwara State University	227	34.8
Landmark University	43	6.6
<b>Parents' occupation</b>		
Trading	167	25.6
Civil Servant	257	39.5
Retiree	41	6.3
Farming	32	4.9
Self-employed	77	11.8
Private sector worker	38	5.8
Professional works	40	6.1
<b>Parents' average monthly income</b>		
Less than N30,000	29	4.4
N30,000 - N79,999	130	19.9
N80,000 - N129,999	144	22.1
N130,000 - N179,999	121	18.6
N180,000 - N229,999	115	17.7

More than N230,000	113	17.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>652</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Researcher's fieldwork (2022)

### Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents in the Probit Model

The analysis of socio-demographic characteristics reveals that the majority (93.6 per cent) of respondents were enrolled in public universities, namely the University of Ilorin and Kwara State University, while only 6.6 per cent attended private universities. Regarding parental income, 4.4 per cent of respondents had parents earning less than N30,000 monthly, while 95.6 per cent had parents with incomes exceeding N30,000. Additionally, 57.7 per cent of respondents had parents who were paid employees, while 42.3 per cent had self-employed parents.

**Table 1.1. Distribution of Respondents by Socio-Demographic Characteristics by Probit**

Independent Variables	F(n)	%
<b>Institution type</b>		
Private Institution	43	6.6
Public institution	609	93.4
<b>Parental income</b>		
Less than N30,000	29	4.4
Above N30,000	623	95.6
<b>Parents' occupation</b>		
Paid employment	376	57.7
Self-employment	276	42.3
Total	652	100.0

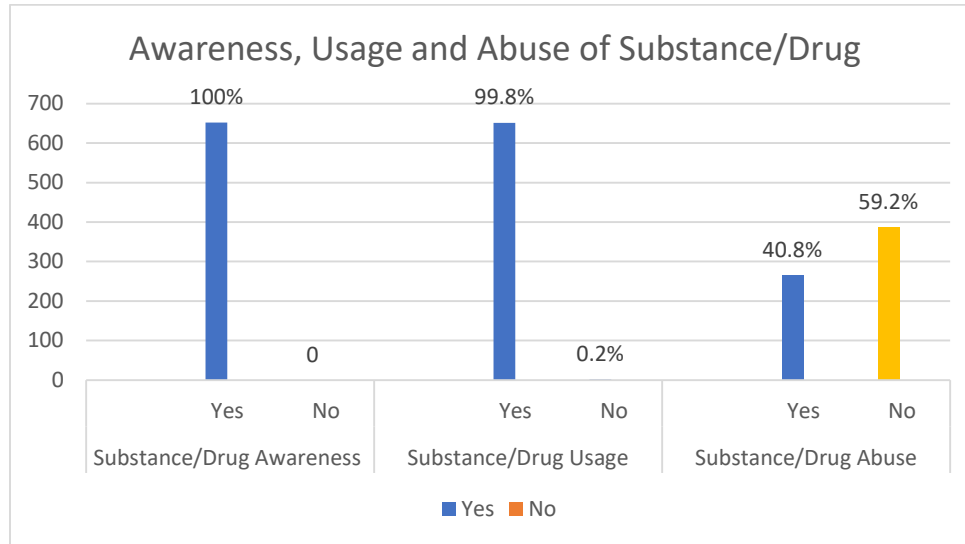
Source: Researcher's Fieldwork (2022).

### Understanding Substances/Drugs

The Chart below indicates that 100.0 % of respondents were aware of substances/drugs, 99.8 % have used one or more form of substance/drug. However, 59.2 % have not abused substances/drugs, while 40.8 % admitted to have abused substance/drug.

### Chart 1. Understanding Substances/Drug





**Source:** Researcher's Fieldwork (2022)

### Substance/Drug Abuse and Parents' Economic Status

Table 2 elucidates correlation of substance/drug abuse and parents' economic status. Cross-tabulation and hypothesis testing regarding respondents' parents' economic characteristics and substance/drug abuse reveal that 30.8 per cent who admitted to substance abuse reported their parents as civil servants, while 25.9 per cent were traders. Similarly, 10.9 per cent of respondents with self-employed parents confessed to substance abuse, compared to 6.8 per cent with parents working in the private sector. Although the association between respondents' parental occupation and substance/drug abuse was weak (Cramer's  $V = 0.205$ ), the Pearson Chi-square value indicated statistical significance ( $\chi^2(6) = 27.298$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Further exploration of the association between substance/drug abuse and parents' average monthly income revealed that 26.7 per cent of respondents who abused substances reported their parents earning more than N230,000, while 22.9 per cent mentioned parents earning between N30,000 - N79,999. Moreover, only 8.3 per cent of respondents with parents earning less than N30,000 per month admitted to substance/drug abuse. The correlation between substance abuse and parents' average monthly income was weak (Cramer's  $V = 0.304$ ), the Pearson Chi-square test indicated statistical significance ( $\chi^2(5) = 60.232$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

**Table 2. Cross-Tabulation of Respondents' Association between Substance/Drug Abuse and Socio-Demographic Statistics**

Socio-Demographic Characteristics	Substance Abuse		Cramer's V	Chi-square
	Yes	No		
Parents' occupation			0.205	$\chi^2 = 27.298$

Trading	69 (25.9)	98 (25.4)		df = 6  $p = 0.000$
Civil Servant	82 (30.8)	175 (45.3)		
Retiree	26 (9.8)	15 (3.9)		
Farming	19 (7.1)	13 (3.4)		
Self-employed	29 (10.9)	48 (12.4)		
Private sector worker	18 (6.8)	20 (5.2)		
Professional works	23 (8.6)	17 (4.4)		
<b>Parents' average monthly income</b>			0.304	$\chi^2 = 60.232$  df = 5  $p = 0.000$
Less than ₦30,000	22 (8.3)	7 (1.8)		
₦30,000 - ₦79,999	61 (22.9)	69 (17.9)		
₦80,000 - ₦129,999	39 (14.7)	105 (27.2)		
₦130,000 - ₦179,999	37 (13.9)	84 (21.8)		
₦180,000 - ₦229,999	36 (13.5)	79 (20.5)		
More than ₦230,000	71 (26.7)	42 (10.9)		
Total	<b>266 (100.0)</b>	<b>386 (100.0)</b>		

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork (2022)

### Socio-Demographic Characteristics Variables and Substance Abuse in Probit Regression.

Regression Analysis revealed significant relationships among variables, indicating their suitability for analysis ( $\chi^2(639) = 9520.377$ ,  $p < .001$ ). At 95 per cent level of significance, an estimate suggests increase in the predictor corresponds to increase in the predicted probability, while a negative coefficient indicates the opposite. Specifically, the findings indicated that parents' occupation ( $p < 0.05$ ) and parents' average monthly income ( $p < 0.05$ ) were statistically significant predictors of substance abuse. Simply put, students with self-employed parents have a higher probability of substance abuse, whereas those with parents in paid employment have a lower probability. Similarly, parents' average monthly income also had a significant impact on substance abuse probability. Consequently, null hypotheses were rejected, the alternate hypothesis were accepted.

**Table 2.1. Cross-Tabulation of Probit Regression Analysis on Socio-Demographic of Respondents**

Parameter	Estimate (SE)	Z	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Parents' occupation	.010** (.003)	3.478	.004	.016
Parents' income	.021*** (.004)	5.585	.013	.028
Intercept	-2.114*** (.049)	-42.780	-2.164	-2.065

\*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ . Model  $\chi^2(639) = 9520.377$ ,  $p < .001$

**Source: Researcher's Fieldwork (2022)**

## 5.2 Testing of Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were generated during this study and were tested using inferential statistics including Cramer's V, Pearson Chi-square, and Probit analysis. Additionally, this subsection provides Descriptive Statistics of Variables in the Model utilized for Testing Hypotheses in Probit Analysis. From the table above, the Descriptive Statistical Variables are as follows. For Parents' Occupation, the number of respondents in Paid Employment was 376, while those in Self-Employment were 276, representing 57.7% and 42.3% respectively. For parental income, there were 29 respondents with monthly income of less than N30,000 and 623 respondents with a monthly income above N30,000, accounting for 4.4% and 95.6% respectively. The numbers 0 and 1 in the table represent the unit of measurement.

### Hypothesis I

Ho: There is no relationship between parents' occupation and substance abuse among university students.

Level of Significance = 0.05, Cramer's V = 0.205,  $\chi^2 = 27.298$ , df = 6, and  $p = 0.000$

Tabulated chi-square is lower than computed chi-square, therefore, alternate hypothesis is accepted as data reveals a substantial association between parents' occupation and substance abuse. Furthermore, probit model findings indicated students' parents' occupation significantly predicted the probability of drug abuse ( $B = .010^{**} (.003)$ ). This suggests parents' occupation influences substance abuse tendencies. Specifically, students with self-employed parents had a higher probability of substance abuse, whereas those whose parents were paid-employed exhibited lower probability.

### Hypothesis 2

Ho: There is no association between parents' monthly income and university students' rate of substance abuse.

Level of Significance = 0.05, Cramer's V = 0.304,  $\chi^2 = 60.232$ , df = 5, and p = 0.000

From the findings, at 0.05 level of significance, there is significant association between parents' monthly income and the rate of substance abuse by university students". This is because the tabulated chi-square is lower than the computed chi-square. Similarly, according to probit model, additional findings revealed that students' parents' monthly income significantly predicted probability of drug abuse ( $B = .021^{***}$  (.004),  $p < 0.05$ ), also suggests parents' monthly income influences students' substance abuse tendencies. Specifically, students with parents earning a monthly income less than N30,000 had lower probability of substance abuse, while those with parents earning monthly income higher than N30,000 had a higher probability of abusing substances

### 5.3 Discussions of Findings

Qualitatively, Ecosystem theory reveals that human development within interconnected systems, such as the family, peer groups, and academic settings, influence students' experiences and behaviours, including peer groups. These factors shape academic performance, social interactions, peer influences and susceptibility to substance abuse. This concept is supported by Odesanmi et al. (2024), and Ikoh, Smah, Okwanya et al. (2019). It also highlights that economic disparities and societal inequalities shape parents' economic status, which in turn affects the resources available to families and individuals. This idea is corroborated by research conducted by Boer et al. (2020), and Vélez-Agosto et al. (2017). These findings can guide prevention and intervention efforts aimed at addressing substance abuse among university students.

Quantitatively, the study found that 40.8 per cent of respondents had engaged in substance/drug abuse before the research, a concerning trend highlighted in Odesanmi *et al.* (2024) and Okafor's (2019) findings. This poses significant challenges, especially considering that these students represent the future leaders of Nigeria. With nearly half of them involved in substance abuse, there are serious implications for the nation's future. Regarding parental occupation, 42.3 per cent of students had self-employed parents, while 57.7 per cent had parents in paid employment. The analysis revealed that parents' occupation significantly predicted the likelihood of drug abuse (0.010,  $p < 0.05$ ), aligning with Odesanmi *et al.* (2024), and Welby-Solomon's (2021) research on ecological risk and protective factors influencing student behaviour and educational outcomes. Furthermore, among students, 4.4 per cent had parents earning less than the current minimum wage of N30,000, while 95.6 per cent had parents earning above this threshold. The study found that parents' monthly income significantly predicted the probability of drug abuse (0.021,  $p < 0.05$ ), consistent with the findings of Odesanmi *et al.* (2024), and Pervaiz, Ahmed & Nisa (2023) regarding the influence of parents' economic factors on students' substance abuse and academic

performance. The findings underscore the relationship between parental occupation, monthly income, and their children's behaviour in universities.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

This study has discussed the role of parents' economic status in shaping students' values, aspirations, and exposure to a risk-laden environment, which significantly impacts their susceptibility to substance abuse. The findings indicate that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are often exposed to social networks where substance use is normalised, and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds perceive substance use as a coping mechanism. It also underscores the relationship between parental occupation, monthly income, and their children's behaviour in universities. However, various factors, including pressure to maintain a lifestyle, academic expectations, familial dynamics, and social isolation, contribute to heightened stress levels and emotional distress among university students from diverse economic backgrounds. This highlights the need for targeted interventions and support systems to address substance abuse and promote positive outcomes among students for a safer society. The study has contributed to the existing knowledge by providing empirical knowledge through gathered and analysed data that can serve as a background for policymakers in finding solutions to issues of substance abuse among Nigerian students.

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