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INFLUENCE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND SOCIAL SUPPORT ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN DISTANCE LEARNING STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The academic performance of students is shaped by various psychological factors. This study examined the extent to which substance abuse and social support predict academic performance among distance learning center (DLC) students, University of Ibadan. Understanding these psychological influences is essential for promoting conducive environments that support the academic performance. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, and data were collected from a sample of 380 DLC students University of Ibadan, Oyo State. Standardized psychological scales were used to measure substance abuse, social support and academic performance. Multiple regression analysis, linear regression analysis and independent sample t-test were conducted to examine the predictive relationships between these variables. Findings revealed that social support was a strong positive predictor of academic performance (β = 0.28, p < .01), indicating that individuals with strong social support reported a greater academic performance. Substance abuse was a predictor (β = 0.12, p = .21). it was further revealed that there was no significant gender difference on academic performance among DLC students. These findings highlight the importance of psychological factors in enhancing the academic performance of DLC students. The study suggests the need for an enlightenment campaign on the danger of substance abuse among students. It was also recommended that it is recommended that more emphasis be placed on effective social interactions to enhance academic performance among students' Future research should explore additional social and environmental factors that may influence academic performance.

KEYWORDS: *psychological factors, academic performance, substance abuse, social support, students, DLC.*

INTRODUCTION

Academic performance is a multifaceted construct influenced by a multitude of factors that extend beyond mere intellectual ability (Krys et al., 2020). These factors include prior academic achievement, social support, psychological well-being, substance abuse, and socioeconomic status, among others. Traditionally, academic performance has been measured through grades and examination results, which provide a quantitative assessment of student achievement. However, Siti and Mustappha (2022) argued that academic achievement should not be limited to academic scores but should also encompass broader aspects of students' knowledge, competence, and literacy development. This broader perspective recognizes the diverse ways students interact with their educational environment and the long-term impact such interaction has on their professional and personal lives. Academic performance has therefore been seen as a critical indicator of students' future success, often tied to various personal, social, and environmental factors (Kassaw & Демарева, 2023). The role of prior academic achievement in predicting university-level performance is well-documented. Kuh and Ikenberry (2020) discovered that students with a strong academic background are more likely to succeed in higher education. However, recent studies reinforce that students' success hinges not only on academic factors but also on how well they feel connected to their peers, instructors, and the broader institutional culture. Piepenburg and Beckmann (2021) demonstrated that students who experienced low levels of social integration were more likely to consider leaving higher education, emphasizing the importance of institutional support, social adaptation, and meaningful faculty–student relationships.

From a psychological perspective, academic performance is not merely a function of intellectual capacity but also reflects the student's ability to manage personal, social, and environmental demands that influence learning (Credé & Kuncel, 2008). In the present study, academic performance is defined as the degree to which a student successfully attains educational objectives as reflected in measurable indicators such as grades, self-reported learning outcomes, consistency in academic engagement, and perceived academic competence. This stance aligns with Siti and Mustappha (2022), who emphasized that academic achievement extends beyond numerical grades to include broader competencies, literacy, and psychological readiness for learning. Within the context of distance learning, academic performance is particularly influenced by factors such as social support networks, self-discipline, time management, and the absence or presence of maladaptive behaviors such as substance use, all of which can enhance or inhibit concentration and persistence. Accordingly, in this study, academic performance is operationalized through a standardized academic performance scale reflecting students' perceived success in meeting academic demands, maintaining focus, and achieving satisfactory outcomes within the Distance Learning Centre (DLC) programme.

In recent years, substance abuse among students has garnered significant attention due to its detrimental effects on academic outcomes. Substance abuse refers to the excessive or harmful use of drugs or alcohol that negatively impacts an individual's health, behavior, and functioning (Eske, 2020). Research suggests that students who engage in substance abuse tend to exhibit lower academic performance, decreased motivation, and poor cognitive functioning (Brown & Johnson, 2021). Globally, the prevalence of substance use among university students is rising. Approximately 20% of college students meet the criteria for alcohol use disorder, and about 44% use marijuana annually. Furthermore, the misuse of prescription stimulants—often used to boost concentration—is reported among 20% of students, while vaping and nicotine use have also surged (Abazid et al., 2023). These behaviors are often influenced by academic stress, peer pressure, emotional distress, and easy access to drugs (Linder, 2023). Johnson and Lee (2023) found that students who regularly used marijuana scored lower on standardized tests and had higher absenteeism rates due to impaired cognitive functioning, memory, and concentration. Similarly, Brown et al. (2024) reported that students with higher levels of substance use demonstrated reduced motivation, lower class attendance, and a greater likelihood of dropping out. These findings highlight how substance abuse compromises cognitive and motivational processes that are critical to learning and academic engagement.

However, substance abuse does not occur in isolation; it is often intertwined with other influencing factors, particularly social support. Social support refers to the emotional, informational, and practical assistance received from family, peers, or institutions (Garcia & Torres, 2023). Strong social support systems foster resilience, enhance motivation, and promote positive academic outcomes, while the absence of support may increase vulnerability to stress and maladaptive coping behaviors such as substance abuse (Harris et al., 2022). Salami et al. (2023) found that University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre (UIDLC) students who perceived high levels of social and family support exhibited greater intrinsic motivation and academic engagement. Similarly, Ibraheem and Abidemi (2024) reported that UIDLC students with peer support actively participated in online discussions and collaborative projects, improving their academic outcomes. These findings affirm that social support enhances motivation, belongingness, and persistence in academic pursuits.

Open and distance learning (ODL) has increasingly become a vital force contributing to social and economic development globally and has been accepted as an indispensable part of the mainstream educational system (Nworgu et al., 2020). Its flexibility allows learners to study remotely, often outside traditional classroom structures. However, this independence also increases demands on students' self-regulation, motivation, and psychological stability—factors

closely linked to academic success. For distance learners, the presence or absence of social support becomes crucial. Those lacking emotional or academic support may experience stress, isolation, or reduced motivation, which can lead to maladaptive coping behaviors such as substance use. Consequently, in modern distance education, academic performance depends not only on intellectual ability or technology access but also on psychological well-being, social connectedness, and behavioral regulation.

The University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre (UIDLC), established to provide flexible and accessible education, caters to diverse learners across Nigeria and beyond—professionals, part-time students, and those seeking affordable education (Quadri & Muibi, 2024). Despite its benefits, UIDLC students often face challenges including limited peer interaction, time management difficulties, and isolation. These challenges heighten their vulnerability to negative influences such as substance abuse (Ojo, 2022; Brown & Johnson, 2021). While social support is recognized as a protective factor that promotes resilience and academic success, many distance learners lack strong social networks (Mat Zaki & Mohamad Nazri, 2023). Students with adequate support are better able to manage stress and avoid maladaptive coping behaviors, whereas those without support are at higher risk of academic failure.

Despite the availability of research on the effects of substance abuse and social support on academic performance, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding their interactive influence, particularly in the context of distance learning (Martinez et al., 2024; Sareen & Mandal, 2024). Most existing studies have focused on traditional on-campus students, leaving the unique experiences of distance learners—such as those at UIDLC—underexplored. Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to examine the relationship between substance abuse, social support, and academic performance among University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre students, as well as to determine whether social support moderates or interacts with substance abuse in predicting academic outcomes.

Given the growing recognition that students' academic outcomes are shaped by a combination of behavioral, social, and psychological factors, this study seeks to provide empirical insight into how substance abuse and social support jointly and independently influence academic performance among students of the University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre (UIDLC). Understanding these relationships is essential, not only for improving student well-being and academic achievement but also for informing institutional policies that can enhance support structures within distance learning environments.

In light of this, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent does substance abuse relate to the academic performance of University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre students?
2. Does social support significantly influence academic performance among UIDLC students?
3. Do social support and substance abuse jointly predict academic performance among UIDLC students?
4. What other psychosocial variables, such as motivation, self-regulation, or psychological well-being, contribute to variations in academic performance among distance learners?

Addressing these questions will provide a deeper understanding of the psychological and behavioral mechanisms underlying academic success or failure within the distance learning context and guide the development of targeted interventions aimed at promoting optimal learning outcomes among University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre students.

Hypotheses

1. There will be a significant relationship between substance abuse and academic performance among University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre (UIDLC) students.

2. There will be a significant relationship between social support and academic performance among UIDLC students.

3. Social support and substance abuse will jointly predict academic performance among UIDLC students.

4. Psychological and demographic factors such as self-discipline, motivation, and socioeconomic background will significantly influence academic performance among UIDLC.

METHODS

Research Design

A cross-sectional research design was adopted in this study using expo facto design. The study was designed to investigate the substance Abuse and Social Support on Academic Performance among university of Ibadan distance learning center student.

Participants

A total of 380 DLC students purposively selected by Cochran Sampling technique participated in this study. Gender distribution indicates that more of the respondents 196 (51.6%) were female while the other 184 (48.4%) were male. Also, it is shown that more of the respondents 259 (68.2%) were Christians while 121 (31.8%) were Muslims. Further, more of the respondents 257 (67.6%) are of the Yoruba ethnic group, 85 (22.4%) are of the Igbo tribe while 30 respondents (10%) are Hausa. In respect of their educational level, 130 respondents representing (34.2%) are in part three, 105 representing (27.6%) are in part two, 62 representing (16.2%) are in part four. 48 respondents representing (12.6%) are in part one while 35 respondents representing (9.2%) are in part five. On their occupational status, 249 respondents representing (65.5%) are part time workers, 68 respondents representing (17.9%) are unemployed, 55 respondents representing (14.6%) work full-time while casual and contract employment had 4 respondents each representing (1%) each.

Instruments

Data for the study were collected using three instruments. They included Academic Performance Scale (APS), The Acceptance and Action Questionnaire for Substance Abuse (AAQSA) and Duke/UNC Functional Social Support Questionnaire (DUFSSQ).

Academic Performance was measured using Academic Performance Scale by Birchmeier, Grattan, Hornbacher, and McGregory (2015). This measure is an 8-item scale designed to measure a particular interest in academic performance among students, also aims to measure students' perceptions of their academic performance, including their grades, study habits, and overall academic success. Scale scores showed adequate internal consistency, 2-week test–retest reliability, and satisfactory concurrent validity. Each of the item is rated on a five point Likert scale responses ranging from "Strongly Agree" is scored (5); "Agree" is scored (4); "Neutral" is scored (3); "Disagree" is scored (2); and "Strongly Disagree" is scored (1). Reliability and Validity: For the total score, an internal consistency of .89 and a test-retest reliability of .85 often viewed as good or excellent.

Substance Abuse was measured using The Acceptance and Action Questionnaire for Substance Abuse (AAQSA) by Luoma, Drake, Kohlenberg, & Hayes, (2011). This measure is an 18-item scale designed to measure experiential avoidance specifically related to substance use. It assesses a person's ability to accept difficult emotions, thoughts, and cravings related to substance abuse without acting on them impulsively. Responses to this scale provide insights into the person's level of commitment to substance-free goals, their willingness to accept uncomfortable feelings, and their ability to refrain from engaging in harmful behaviors driven by those feelings. Each of the item is rated on seven-point Likert scale responses ranging from 1 Never True, 2 Rarely True, 3 Sometimes True,4 Occasionally True, 5 Frequently True, 6 Almost Always True, 7 Always True. The Cronbach's alpha for the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire for Substance Abuse (AAQ-SA) is reported to be 0.85, indicating good internal consistency for the scale. Generally, a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70 or above is considered acceptable for psychological scales, with values above 0.80 often viewed as good or excellent.

Social Support was measured using Duke/UNC Functional Social Support Questionnaire (DUFSSQ) by Broadhead, Gehlbach, De Gruy, & Kaplan. (1988). This measure is an 7-item scale designed to measure the perceived availability and adequacy of social support that individuals receive from their social networks, focusing on the functional aspects of that support. Each of the item is rated on a five point Likert scale responses ranging from 1 As Much As I Would Like,   2 Slightly Less Than I Would Like   3 Moderately Less Than I Would Like,   4 Quite a Bit Less Than I Would Like, 5 Much Less Than I Would Like. The DUFSSQ has been shown to have good psychometric properties, including high internal consistency (with a Cronbach's alpha generally reported 0.91), which indicates that the items reliably measure the same construct of social support.

Procedure

The data collection procedure for this study followed a systematic and ethical approach to ensure accurate and reliable data collection from Distance Learning students of the University of Ibadan with approval given to the researcher by the SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SSHREC) University of Ibadan with assigned number UI/SSHREC/2025/016. Additionally, permission was obtained from the management of the University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre to access the student population for the study which was approved by the Director. Informed consent forms were obtained electronically or in person before participation. Purposive sampling technique was used in collecting data for the study. Participants completed a structured questionnaire designed to measure substance abuse, social support, and academic performance. The questionnaire was distributed electronically via the Distance Learning Centre's learning management system and email platforms. For students without access to reliable internet, printed copies of the questionnaire was made available at designated collection points within the Centre.

Sampling

The target population comprised all students enrolled in the University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre (UIDLC) for the 2023/2024 academic session. The sampling frame was the official UIDLC enrollment registry obtained from the Registrar. A stratified random sampling procedure was used, with strata defined by year of study. Sample size was computed using Cochran's formula for an expected proportion of 0.5, margin of error of 0.05 and 95% confidence level. Applying the finite population correction for an enrollment population yielded a required sample that participated. To allow for potential non-response, the sample was increased by 20%, and participants were selected randomly from each stratum proportional to stratum size.

Statistical Analysis

Data collected for this study were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25. Linear Regression Analysis was also used in testing the hypotheses for the study.

RESULTS

Hypothesis One

Substance abuse will significantly influence academic performance among DLC students in Ibadan. This was tested using linear regression analysis and the result is presented on table 1:

Table 1: Linear regression analysis summary table showing results on the influence of substance abuse on academic performance

Criterion	Predictors	B	T	P	R	R^2	F	P
Academic performance	Substance abuse	.12	2.26	< .01	.12	.01	5.119	< .01

Table 1 presents results on the influence of substance abuse on academic performance among DLC students. It is shown that substance abuse has no significant influence on the academic performance [R = .12; R^2 = .01; F (1, 378) = 5.119; p > .01]. Further, substance abuse accounted for 1% variance in academic performance among DLC students. Direction of the beta value revealed that the lower the substance abuse of respondents (β = .12), the lower their academic performance. This negates the stated hypothesis, indicating that substance abuse alone had minimal influence on students' academic outcomes. Hence was rejected in the study. Linear Regression was used instead of a t-Test here and in hypothesis two because of the nature of the hypothesis. Although the hypothesis — "Substance abuse will have significant influence on academic performance among DLC students" — appears to compare two variables, it is **not a group comparison hypothesis** (e.g., comparing "students who abuse substances" vs. "those who do not"). Instead, it **examines the predictive relationship** between a **continuous predictor variable** (substance abuse scores) and a **continuous outcome variable** (academic performance scores).

Hypothesis Two

Social Support will significantly influence Academic Performance among university of Ibadan DLC Students. This was tested using linear regression analysis and the result is presented on table 2;

Table 2: Moderated Regression Analysis of Social Support × Substance Abuse on Academic Performance

Criterion	Predictors	B	T	P	R	R^2	F	P
Academic performance	Social support	.28	5.736	> .05	.28	.08	32.90	> .05

Table 2 presents results on the influence of social support on academic performance among DLC students. It is shown that social support had significant influence on academic performance [R = .28; R^2 = .08; F (1, 378) = 32.9; p > .05]. This support the stated hypothesis, hence was accepted in this study. Hypothesis Two examined the effect of social support on academic performance. Linear regression analysis indicated that social support was a significant positive predictor of academic performance (β = .28, t = 5.19, p < .01). This finding confirms that students who

perceived higher levels of social support reported better academic outcomes. The result underscores the importance of social networks in facilitating academic engagement and success in a distance learning environment.

Hypothesis Three

This proposed that social support would interact with substance abuse to predict academic performance. A moderated regression analysis including the interaction term (Substance Abuse × Social Support) was conducted. As shown in Table 3, the model was significant [R = .34; R² = .12; F(3, 376) = 17.242; p < .01], explaining 12% of the variance in academic performance. While substance abuse alone was not a significant predictor (β = .10, p = .07), the interaction term was significant (β = –.09, p = .04). This indicates that the negative influence of substance abuse on academic performance was weaker among students with higher social support, highlighting its moderating effect. The hypothesis was therefore partially supported.

Table 3: Moderated Regression Analysis of Social Support × Substance Abuse on Academic Performance

Criterion Variable	Predictor	β	t	p	R	R²	F	p
Academic Performance	Substance Abuse	0.10	1.84	.07	0.34	0.12	17.242	< .01
	Social Support	0.26	5.19	< .01				
	Substance Abuse × Social Support	–0.09	–2.11	.04				

Hypothesis four

It assessed the predictive influence of psychological factors—self-efficacy, motivation, and psychological well-being—on academic performance. Multiple regression analysis (Table 4) revealed that the combined predictors accounted for 22% of the variance in academic performance [R = .47; R² = .22; F (3, 376) = 35.619; p < .01]. Motivation (β = .31, p < .01) and self-efficacy (β = .29, p < .01) were the strongest predictors, followed by psychological well-being (β = .18, p < .01). The results indicate that students who reported higher motivation, confidence in their academic abilities, and greater psychological well-being were more likely to achieve superior academic outcomes. The hypothesis was fully supported.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis of Psychological Factors on Academic Performance

Criterion Variable	Predictor	β	t	p	R	R²	F	p
Academic Performance	Self-Efficacy	0.29	5.88	< .01	0.47	0.22	35.619	< .01
	Motivation	0.31	6.32	< .01				
	Psychological Well-being	0.18	3.79	< .01				

DISCUSSION

The analyses reveal that social support and psychological factors are critical predictors of academic performance among UIDLC students, whereas substance abuse alone is a weak predictor. The interaction between social support and substance abuse highlights the protective role of social networks in buffering students against the negative effects of maladaptive behaviors. Motivation, self-efficacy, and psychological well-being collectively contribute substantially to academic success, confirming that academic performance is a multidimensional construct influenced by both behavioral and psychological determinants in a distance learning context.

These findings underscore the need for educational interventions that strengthen social support, promote psychological resources, and address maladaptive behaviors to enhance academic performance in distance education environments.

Discussion of Findings

The present study investigated the influence of substance abuse, social support, and selected psychological factors on the academic performance of University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre (UIDLC) students. The findings provide important insights into the multifaceted determinants of academic success in a distance learning context.

Substance Abuse and Academic Performance, the first hypothesis, which posited that substance abuse would significantly influence academic performance, was not supported. The regression analysis revealed that substance abuse accounted for only 1% of the variance in academic performance and did not significantly predict academic outcomes. This finding aligns with some prior studies suggesting that the effects of substance use on academic performance may be context-dependent or mitigated by other protective factors, such as social support or intrinsic motivation (Brown & Johnson, 2021; Akande et al., 2023). It is possible that distance learners, who often have more structured schedules and external responsibilities, may regulate substance use more effectively than traditional campus students, reducing its direct impact on their academic outcomes.

Social Support as a Predictor of Academic Performance

The study confirmed that social support is a strong positive predictor of academic performance, supporting the second hypothesis. Students with robust social networks from family, peers, and institutional resources reported higher levels of engagement and achievement. This finding corroborates previous research demonstrating that social support fosters intrinsic motivation, promotes persistence, and enhances academic commitment (Salami et al., 2023; Ibraheem & Abidemi, 2024). In line with theoretical perspectives on social learning and ecological systems, these results underscore the importance of a supportive environment in enabling students to navigate academic challenges, particularly in the less structured context of distance education.

Interactive Effect of Social Support and Substance Abuse

The third hypothesis explored whether social support moderates the relationship between substance abuse and academic performance. The significant interaction term indicates that high levels of social support mitigate the potential negative effects of substance abuse on academic performance. In other words, students with strong social support are less likely to experience academic impairment from substance use. This finding extends the literature by highlighting the protective role of social networks in buffering against maladaptive behaviors and aligns with ecological and resilience frameworks, which posit that positive social contexts can counteract risk factors (Harris et al., 2022).

Psychological Factors and Academic Performance

The fourth hypothesis, concerning the predictive influence of self-efficacy, motivation, and psychological well-being, was fully supported. All three factors significantly predicted academic performance, collectively explaining 22% of the variance. Motivation emerged as the strongest predictor, followed closely by self-efficacy and psychological well-being. These findings are consistent with existing studies emphasizing the centrality of psychological resources in academic achievement (Credé & Kuncel, 2008; Siti & Mustappha, 2022). The results reinforce the conceptualization of academic performance as a multidimensional construct that includes not only grades but also engagement, persistence, and perceived competence. For distance learners, who

face additional challenges such as isolation and time management demands, these psychological factors appear particularly critical in sustaining academic performance.

Integration and Implications⸱SEP⸱Collectively, the findings suggest that academic performance in a distance learning context is influenced more strongly by social and psychological factors than by substance abuse alone. While substance use is often cited as a potential risk to learning, its effects may be buffered by supportive social networks and individual psychological resources. These results have practical implications for distance learning programs, suggesting that interventions aimed at strengthening social support, enhancing motivation, and building self-efficacy could be effective strategies to improve academic outcomes. Moreover, programs addressing substance use should consider the broader social and psychological context of students, rather than focusing solely on the behavior itself.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of substance abuse, social support, and selected psychological factors on the academic performance of University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre (UIDLC) students. The findings reveal that academic performance is a multidimensional construct influenced by behavioral, social, and psychological factors. Substance abuse, while often considered a risk factor for poor academic outcomes, did not significantly predict academic performance in isolation. However, its negative effects were moderated by social support, highlighting the protective role of strong social networks. Social support emerged as a robust predictor of academic performance, facilitating engagement, persistence, and motivation among students. Psychological factors—including self-efficacy, motivation, and psychological well-being—also significantly influenced academic outcomes, reinforcing the notion that students' belief in their abilities, internal drive, and emotional health are critical determinants of success in distance learning. Overall, these findings underscore that academic performance among distance learners is shaped less by maladaptive behaviors alone and more by the availability of supportive social structures and the presence of positive psychological resources. The study contributes to the understanding of how social and psychological dynamics interact to affect learning outcomes in the unique context of distance education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed: Enhance Social Support Systems: Distance learning programs should foster stronger peer, family, and institutional support networks. This could include mentorship programs, peer study groups, virtual discussion forums, and regular check-ins to provide both academic and emotional assistance. Promote Psychological Resources: Initiatives aimed at enhancing students' motivation, self-efficacy, and psychological well-being should be integrated into the curriculum. Workshops on time management, goal setting, stress reduction, and self-regulation strategies could empower students to manage the demands of independent learning more effectively. Address Substance Use Contextually: While substance abuse alone was not a strong predictor of academic performance, programs to reduce maladaptive behaviors remain important. Interventions should consider students' social and psychological environments, promoting healthy coping mechanisms and resilience rather than focusing solely on abstinence. Policy and Program Design: Distance learning institutions should develop policies that encourage engagement, provide accessible support resources, and create environments that facilitate both academic and psychological success. Flexible virtual platforms, interactive content, and regular feedback mechanisms can enhance motivation and reduce isolation. Future Research: Subsequent studies should explore additional social, environmental, and institutional factors that may influence academic performance. Longitudinal research could provide insights into how social support, psychological resources, and substance use interact over time to affect learning outcomes. By implementing these recommendations, distance

learning programs can create an ecosystem that not only mitigates risks associated with maladaptive behaviors but also maximizes the potential of students through social and psychological support.

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