



The Effects of Addictive Behaviours Among Students In A Nigerian University

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ABSTRACT

Addictive disorders, including substance abuse and behavioral addictions, are increasingly prevalent among student populations, posing significant challenges to their academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being. This study aims to investigate the multifaceted effects of addictive disorders on students, with a particular focus on their neurological and behavioral implications.

To achieve these objectives, a mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with students from diverse backgrounds. A total of three hundred and eighty five 385 students across the various departments in the college of health sciences were involved in this study.

The data was analyzed and results showed that majority 54.4% of the respondents are addicted to social media, 35% to the internet while other percentage 10.5% are addicted to gambling and another 3.5% are addicted to substances. The remaining 7% to masturbation, 3.5% to porn addiction and a close percentage of 1.8% to procrastination and k-dramas respectively. While one percent claim not to have any addiction. The common impact of addiction on the respondents as seen in this study is depression with a percentage of 47.4%, while a lesser number of 33.3% suffers from low self esteem.

The findings reveal a significant correlation between addictive behaviors, such as substance abuse and internet addiction, and a decline in academic performance, increased mental health issues, and deteriorating social relationships. Neurologically, addiction is associated with neuroplastic changes that perpetuate dependence and complicate recovery. The findings from this research will contribute to a better understanding of addiction and its effect in the student population, potentially informing the

effects, preventive measures and interventions for addiction.

KEYWORDS: addictive disorders, academic performance, university students.

I. Introduction

Addiction is a chronic relapsing disorder characterized by compulsive drug seeking continued use despite harmful consequences and long lasting changes in the brain (Goldstein & Volkow 2011; Baler & Volkow, 2006). It involves both physical and psychological dependence on substances or behaviors that can lead to significant impairments in one's life (Grant *et al.*, 2010; Winters & Lee 2008). Key features of addiction usually include craving, loss of control, negative consequences, tolerance and eventually withdrawal. Addiction can occur with substances such as alcohol, drugs and even activities like gambling or Internet use (Winters & Lee, 2008; Kim *et al.*, 2008; Kuss & Griffiths, 2011).

An addictive disorder refers to a condition where an individual experiences a compulsive and harmful dependence on the substance or behavior often leading to negative consequences (Davis 2013; Kim *et al.*, 2012). Addictive disorders among students require a comprehensive approach that includes education, prevention, and early intervention and assist to support services (Winter & Lee, 2008). Understanding the effects of addictive disorders is crucial for several reasons. It helps in developing effective prevention strategies, providing appropriate treatment, reducing societal impact, and fostering empathy and support for individuals facing addiction. Additionally, awareness aids in addressing the complex interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors contributing to addictive behaviors (Brown & L'Engle, 2009; Ko *et al.*, 2009). Moreover, comprehending the effects of addictive disorders is essential for de-stigmatizing



the issue, promoting early intervention, and advancing research to enhance treatment modalities (Patel & Johnson 2020). It also contributes to informed policymaking, as a deeper understanding of addiction aids in creating supportive environments and allocating resources effectively to combat the widespread impact of addictive behaviors on individuals and communities. Furthermore, an understanding of addictive disorders is integral to breaking the cycle of relapse, promoting long-term recovery, and improving overall mental health outcomes (National institute of drug abuse 2020). It empowers healthcare professionals, families, and communities to collaboratively address the root causes of addiction, fostering a holistic approach that goes beyond just symptom management. This knowledge is a cornerstone for building a more compassionate and effective approach to addiction prevention and treatment. Addictive disorders can have profound physical and anatomical effects on the body. For instance, substances like drugs or alcohol can impact the central nervous system, altering brain structure and function. Chronic substance abuse may lead to neuro adaptations, affecting areas related to pleasure, motivation, and impulse control (Volkow et al., 2016; Goldstein & Volkow, 2011; Grubbs *et al.*, 2015). Additionally, substances can harm organs, such as the liver in the case of alcohol abuse or the respiratory system with smoking. These physical changes underline the importance of a comprehensive understanding of addiction for effective medical interventions and treatments. Moreover, addictive disorders often contribute to cardiovascular issues, respiratory problems, and compromised immune function. The repeated exposure to substances can result in tolerance, where higher doses are needed for the same effects, leading to a heightened risk of overdose. Behavioral aspects of addiction, such as poor nutrition and disrupted sleep patterns, can further exacerbate physical health challenges (Davis 2013; Grant et al., 2011). Recognizing and addressing these physical consequences is vital for a holistic approach to addiction treatment and recovery. Addictive disorders among students can stem from various factors. Academic stress, peer pressure, family issues, and a desire for coping mechanisms are common contributors. Social environments, like college campuses, may normalize substance use, increasing the likelihood of experimentation. Mental health conditions, such as anxiety or depression, can also play a role (American psychiatric association 2013). Access to substances and a lack of awareness about the risks can further contribute.

Understanding these causes is essential for implementing targeted prevention strategies and support systems tailored to the unique challenges faced by students. Academic stress often pushes students to seek relief through substances, while peer pressure and the desire to fit in can lead to experimentation. Family problems or a lack of a support system may drive students to cope with emotional distress through addictive behaviors. Social environments in educational institutions might normalize substance use, making it more acceptable (Kiss & Lopez, 2013; Kim et al., 2008). Additionally, underlying mental health conditions increase vulnerability. Easy access to substances on campuses and a lack of awareness about the potential risks can create an environment conducive to the development of addictive disorders among students. Recognizing and addressing these factors is crucial for effective prevention and intervention strategies. Among students, the anatomical effects of addictive disorders often involve alterations in brain structure and function (Goldstein & Volkow, 2011). Substance abuse can impact the developing brain, particularly areas related to decision-making, impulse control, and memory. Chronic drug or alcohol use may lead to structural changes in the brain's reward system, contributing to addictive behaviors (Volkow et al., 2016).

The primary objectives of this study are to identify the types of addictive behaviors most commonly observed in student the population under study, examine the psychological and environmental factors that contribute to these disorders, and assess the effects on students' academic achievements, mental health, and social interactions.

This study aims to investigate the multifaceted effects of addictive disorders on students, with a particular focus on their neurological and behavioral implications as well as a focus on understanding the prevalence, contributing factors, and the consequent impact on academic performance and overall well-being.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional design that allows a snapshot analysis of knowledge (and perceptions) towards addictive disorders in students offering a current perspective.

The study population of 385 comprise of male and female students of the faculty of basic medical sciences in the college of health sciences of Niger Delta University, Nigeria.

The primary independent variables in this study are participants' knowledge about addiction and their perception of the condition. Dependent variables are



demographic information, such as age, academic year, and gender.

A self structured questionnaire was developed for this study. The questionnaire has a total of 20 close ended questions.

Questionnaire was uploaded on Google Forms and shared electronically via relevant departmental communication channels. This ensured easy access for participants providing more convenient and widespread participation.

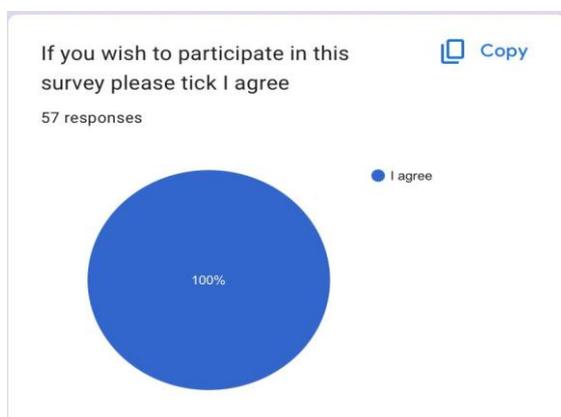
Informed consent was provided along with the survey form explaining the study's purpose and their voluntary participation.

III. DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 23); descriptive statistics, chi-square and cross-tabulation. Participants' knowledge of addiction was scored using items on the scale with 0/28 and 28/28 being the minimum and maximum scores respectively. Variables were presented using charts. The chi-square test was used to determine the association between knowledge of Addiction and the socio-demographic data of the participants. $P \leq 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

IV. RESULTS

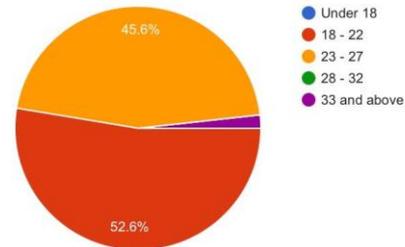
Results are presented in tables and charts showing the socio-demography of the participants, year of study and the different addictive behaviors involved in.



100% of the respondents agreed to participate in this survey

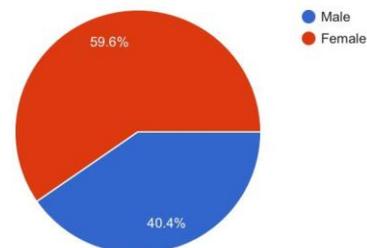
What is your age group

57 responses



What is your gender

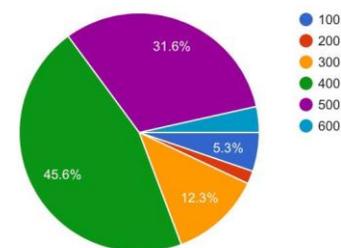
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Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Study Participants

In this study, a total of 385 subjects participated (chart 1). The mean age of the respondents was 23 years (range 15-30). A total of 45.6% ($n = 57$) of the respondents are between 23-27 years. The genders involved are also displayed in chart 2 above which are both male and female.

What is your current Level



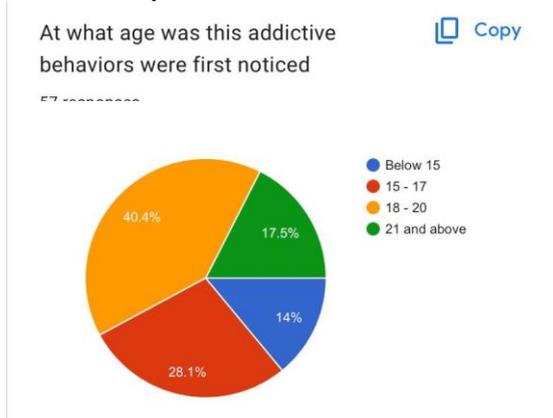
The chart above shows the student's level of study involved in this survey, which ranges from 100-600 level respectively.



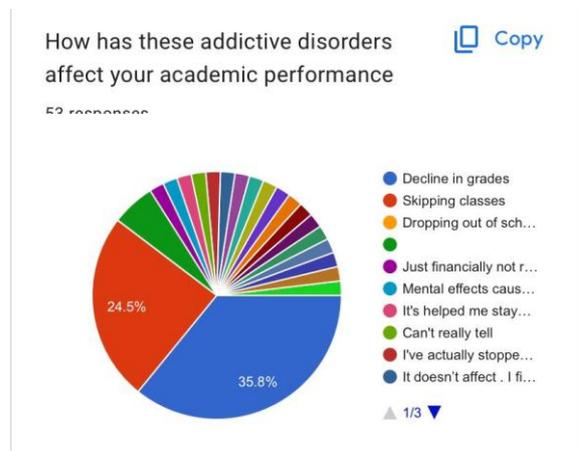
Table1. Showing frequency and percentage representation of participant’s response to the different types of addictive behaviors.

Type/s of addictive behaviors you likely indulge in	Frequency	Percentage
Gambling	41	10.6%
Substance use	14	3.6%
Gaming	47	12.3%
Internet	135	35%
Food	81	21%
Social media	207	53.7%
Masturbation	27	7%
Pornography	13	3.4%
Procrastination	27	7%
k-drama	7	1.8%
Can’t disclose	7	1.8%
None	7	1.8%

The table above revealed majority 54.4% of the respondents are addicted to social media, another 35% to the internet while other percentage 6(10.5%) are addicted to gambling and another 2 (3.5%) is addicted to substances. The remaining percent 4 (7%) for masturbation, 2 (3.5%) to porn addiction and a close percentage of 1.8% to procrastination and k-dramas respectively. While one percent claim not to have any addiction.



This chart shows the age at which these addictive behaviors were first noticed giving 14% to those below the age of 15, 28.1% to those between 15-17 years of age, 40.4% to 18-20 years of age and 17.5% to those within the age of 21 and above.



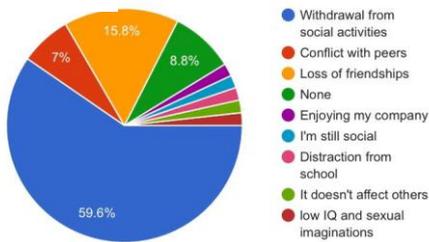
From the chart above it has been noticed that these addictive behaviors has had adverse effects on the students for suffers from different addictions. These effects includes; decline in grades, skipping classes, dropping out of school and to some, they claim not to be affected by these addictive behaviors. But from the chart we can denote that 35.8% of those who filled the questionnaire has different from decline in grades because of certain addictions.



What are the changes in social relationships among students affected by addictive disorders

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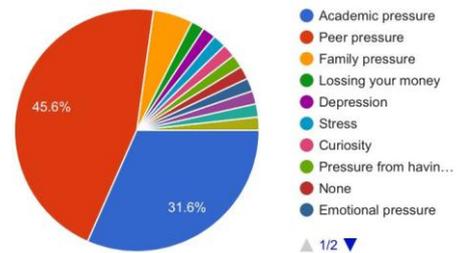
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majority of respondents 59.6% experience withdrawal from social activities.

What are the common triggers or stressors contributing to addictive behaviors among students

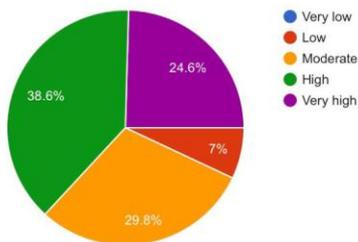
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What are the perceived prevalence of addictive disorders among students in your community or school

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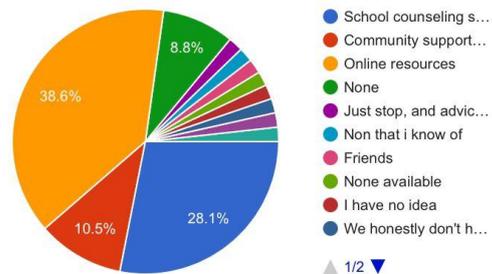
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What are the available resources or support systems for students struggling with addictive disorders

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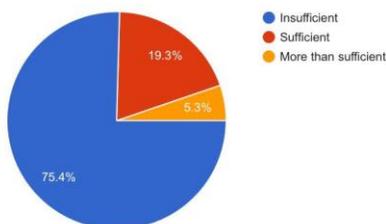
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What level is the awareness and education about addictive disorders among students:

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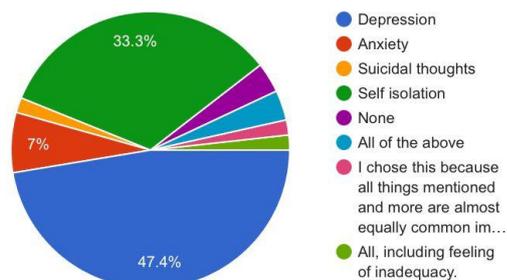
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What are the Impact of addictive disorders on mental health among students

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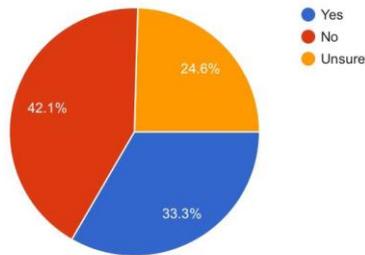
The common impact of addiction on the respondents as shown in the chart above with a percentage of 47.4% is depression, while a lesser number of 33.3% suffers from low self esteem.



Does gender differs in the prevalence or effects of addictive disorders among students

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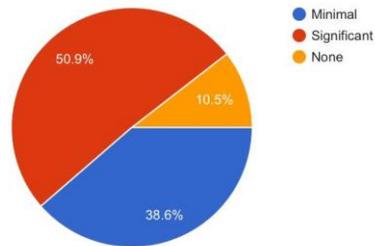
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What are the roles of family dynamics in the development of addictive behaviors among students

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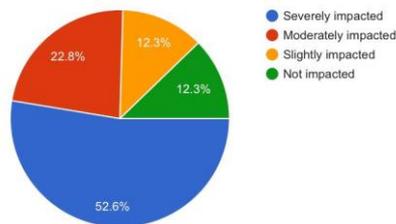
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What are the effects of addictive disorders on future prospects and career opportunities

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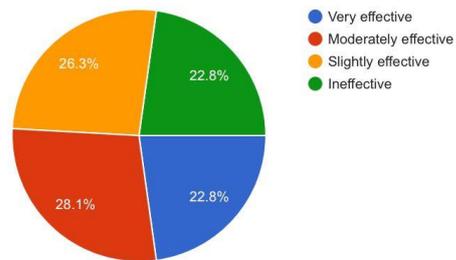
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What are the effectiveness of interventions or treatments for addictive disorders among students

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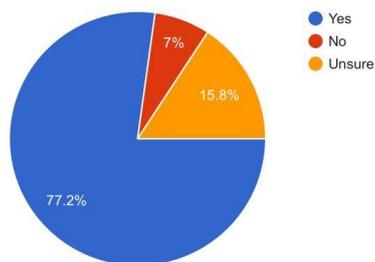
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Does cultural or societal factors influence addictive behaviors among students:

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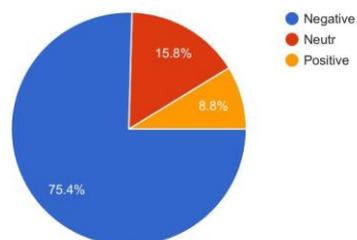
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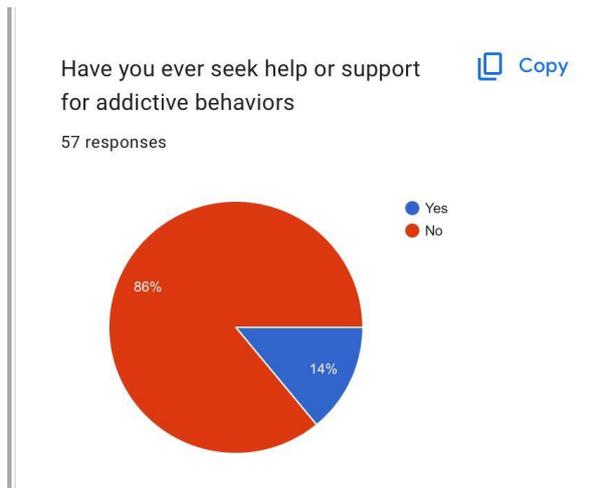
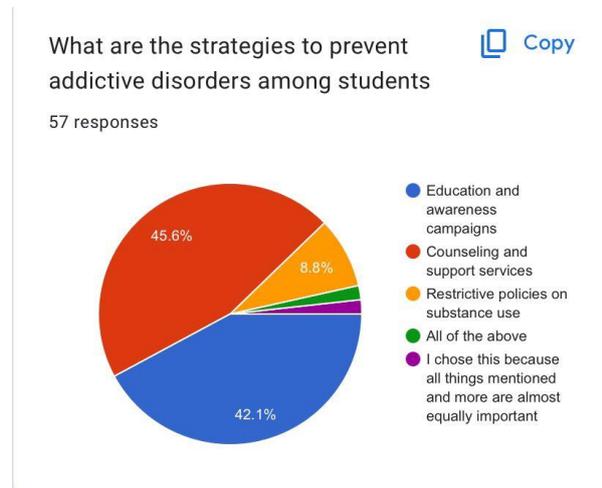


What are the Impact of addictive disorders on overall community well-being

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V. DISCUSSION

This study was carried out to understand the implications of addiction on students' academic performance, mental and physical health, social relationships, and overall well-being amongst students of Niger Delta University, Nigeria. The study reveals that majority 51(84.4%) of the respondents are addicted to social media and the internet. This is in line with the reports by Kiss & Lopez, 2013 in their studies with high percentage of their study populations being addicted to internet use.

While 10.5% are addicted to gambling and another 3.5% are addicted to substances. Then a 7% of the respondents for masturbation, 3.5% to porn addiction and a close percentage of 1.8% to procrastination and k-dramas respectively. While another one percent claim not to have any addiction. The common impact of addiction on the respondents as shown in the chart above with a percentage of 47.4% is depression, while a lesser number of 33.3% suffers from low self esteem. Addictive disorders have a profound impact on students' academic performance. The findings indicate that students struggling with addiction often experience a decline in grades, lower attendance rates, and decreased participation in class activities. Addiction impairs cognitive functions such as memory, attention, and executive function (Ko et al, 2009, Baler & Volkow 2006). These impairments hinder students' ability to concentrate during lectures, retain information, and complete assignments effectively. For example, students addicted to substances like alcohol or drugs may find it challenging to focus on their studies, leading to poor academic outcomes. Students with addictive disorders often exhibit higher absenteeism rates. Substance abuse can result in physical ailments or psychological issues that

cause students to miss classes frequently. This absenteeism disrupts their learning process and leads to gaps in their education; further exacerbating academic difficulties. The study also reveals that addictive behaviors can diminish students' motivation to succeed academically. Addiction can lead to a lack of interest in school-related activities, reducing the effort students put into their studies and resulting in lower academic achievement. Addictive disorders have severe consequences for students' mental and physical health, which in turn affects their ability to perform academically and maintain social relationships. Addiction often coexists with mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, and stress (Goldstein & Volkow, 2011). The study shows that students with addictive behaviors are more likely to experience these mental health issues, which can exacerbate their addiction and create a vicious cycle of dependency and psychological distress. This dual burden severely impacts their academic performance and overall quality of life. Substance addiction can lead to various physical health problems, including liver damage, cardiovascular diseases, and weakened immune systems. The physical toll of addiction can cause fatigue, illness, and other health issues that hinder students' ability to attend classes and engage in academic activities. Addictive disorders can significantly affect students' social relationships, both with peers and family members. Students with addictive disorders often experience strained relationships with their peers. Their behaviors may become erratic and unpredictable, leading to conflicts and social isolation. The stigma associated with addiction can also result in exclusion from peer groups, exacerbating feelings of loneliness and further driving addictive behaviors as a coping mechanism.



The study also highlights the role of stress, peer pressure, and inadequate coping mechanisms as major contributing factors. Findings indicate that addictive behaviors lead to impaired cognitive functions, including reduced attention span, memory deficits, and poor academic performance. Neurologically, addiction is associated with neuroplastic changes that perpetuate dependence and complicate recovery (Kauer & Malenka 2007). Behavioral consequences include increased risk of mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal. The project underscores the necessity for comprehensive intervention programs that include counseling, awareness campaigns, and support systems tailored to the needs of students. The insights gained from this research aim to inform educational institutions, policymakers, and mental health professionals about effective strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of addictive disorders among students, fostering a healthier and more productive academic environment.

VI. CONCLUSION

The effects of addictive disorders among students are far-reaching and multifaceted, impacting their academic performance, health, relationships, and overall well-being. Addressing this issue requires a holistic approach that includes educational programs, counseling services, and family involvement. By implementing comprehensive intervention strategies, schools can help mitigate the negative impacts of addiction and support students in achieving healthier and more successful lives.

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