# Assessment of the Level of Awareness of Substance Abuse among Senior Secondary School Students in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria

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***Author's contribution***

*The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

*Original Research Article*

## ABSTRACT

There is limited data on the assessment of substance abuse awareness among secondary school students in Nigeria. This study aims to evaluate the level of awareness regarding substance abuse among secondary school students. The research was conducted in secondary schools in Benin City, encompassing both single-gender and mixed-gender institutions. Data collected from the survey were analyzed descriptively. Out of 195 secondary school students surveyed, 20.5% were aged 17-19, 77.9% were aged 14-16, and 1.5% were aged 11-13. Among the respondents, 1.5% attended boarding schools, 97.9% attended day schools, and 5% attended schools offering both day and boarding options. Furthermore, 29.2% attended all-boys schools, 10.3% attended all-girls schools, and 60.5% attended mixed-gender schools. In terms of religious affiliation, 90.8% practiced Christianity, 8.2% practiced Islam, 0.5% were traditional practitioners, and 0.5% followed other religions. Regarding substance abuse education, 4.6% had not been exposed to it, while 95.4% had received education on substance abuse. Therefore, the findings reveal that there is a high level of awareness of substance abuse among secondary school students in Benin City, Nigeria.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The prevalence rates of illicit substance use have become a cause of concern to policy actors and governments worldwide. As such, the 2013 World Drug Report estimates that of the adult population, illicit substance use was being perpetrated by between 167 million (3.6%) and 315 million (6.9%) people aged 15 to 64 years in the preceding year. In the same report, it is estimated that there was an overall 18% increase in illicit substance use in 2012 compared to the level of illicit substance use by people in 2008 [1]. Reports from the World Health Organization [2] indicated that for year 2000, worldwide deaths accounted for by consumption of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs combined, stands at 12.4%. Many socioeconomic problems today can be linked to substance abuse, some of which are domestic violence, aggression-related fights, and deaths, as well as numerous medical conditions [3]. In the view of Heydarabadi et al. [4], societal problems of lower life expectancy, mental problems, unplanned pregnancy, accidents, incidence of sexual aggression and other crimes are some of the offshoots of the intake of addictive drugs. Drug abuse and addiction has attracted considerable scholarly attention all over the world in the past three decades or more [5], drug dependence in its various forms and contexts has emerged as one of the most salient discourses in Social Sciences. Evidently, the issue of drug abuse and addiction has become one of the various social problems whose consequences are seen with increasing frequency by caregivers, family members and the broad spectrum of people around the globe [6].

Drug abuse among teenagers has been a great concern across the globe due to increasing risks involved in abuse itself as well as other adverse physical and psychosocial outcomes [7]. In 2003, the statistics showed that alcohol, tobacco and drugs use are in decline among the youths, but the trend is less among the teenagers, perhaps reflecting a generational shift [8]. Moreover, the age at which teenagers enter excessive drinking and drug abuse is becoming alarming [9]. Although, it was discovered that early onset of drug use is often associated with both greater likelihood of continuation [10] and greater long-term harm and dependence [11]. Worldwide, substance abuse and addiction among high school students have become a crucial issue that stakeholders-governments, drug addicts, drug addicts' relations, health care practitioners, and Non-governmental Organizations frequently ask questions about; and, which in contemporary debate is yet to attract sufficient information as far as the role of education in handling substance abuse amongst adolescents. In the case of Nigeria, drug abuse and addiction are becoming increasingly widespread, and a substantial percentage of the national budgetary health allocation is utilized for treatment and rehabilitation of people with substance use problems.

The various reports of rapid situation assessments of drug abuse and addiction in the country show a picture of widespread consumption of cannabis (10.8%), followed by psychotropic substances (mainly the benzodiapines and amphetamine-type stimulants) 10.6% and to a lesser extent heroin (1.6%) and cocaine (1.4%) in both the urban and rural areas. The use of volatile organic solvents (0.53%) is reported to be becoming popular, especially among the street children, in school and women. Thus, concerns for the control of drug abuse and addiction have become a major issue which urgently needs attention. The fact that issue of drug abuse and addiction has generated many questions of which a larger percentage are yet to be answered does not signify that there is a dearth of research works in the area, but there is a gap which need to be covered. One major aspect that should be considered in assessing the level of influence of drug abuse in Nigeria is to assess the level of substance abuse among adolescents. Therefore, this research is aimed at assessing the level of awareness of substance abuse among secondary school students in Benin-City area of Edo State, Nigeria.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The research design employed in this study is descriptive research. This design forms the foundation upon which the data will be analyzed and generalized to make inferences.

Inclusion Criteria: Students between the ages of 11 to 19.

Exclusion Criteria: Respondents who refused to complete the questionnaire.

## 2.1 Population and Sampling

The population of this study comprises secondary school students in Egor Local Government, Benin City, Edo State. The Simple Random Sampling Method was chosen for this study. This method ensures that every member or element of the population has an equal and known chance of being selected. The purpose of using simple random sampling is to draw a sample from the population such that the statistics computed from the sample accurately represent the entire population. Moreover, it minimizes bias and partiality in the selection process.

## 2.2 Sample Size and Data Source

A total of one hundred and ninety-five (195) respondents were considered appropriate for this study, covering the target population. One hundred and ninety-five (195) questionnaires will be developed and administered in the targeted study areas. The primary data source employed in this study is the primary data.

## 2.3 Research Instrument

The research instrument consists of a structured questionnaire with two sections. Section 1 gathers demographic data from respondents, while Section 2 presents options from which respondents can choose. This approach aims to collect firsthand information and comprehensive responses from the participants.

## 2.4 Validity of the Instrument

The instrument underwent content validity assessments via supervision in the Department of Clinical Pharmacy at the University of Benin, Benin City. Necessary comments and revisions were made based on the feedback received.

## 2.5 Data Collection Method and Analysis

The questionnaire was self-administered to the students, who were given ample time to complete and return it. Data analysis was conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 (Chicago: SSPS Inc.). Measures such as mean, standard error of the mean, variance, and standard deviation were used to analyze the data and present the results in percentages for easier interpretation.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 Respondents Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of our respondents are presented in the tales below:

**Table 1. The age of respondents in secondary schools in Benin-City, Edo State**

| Age | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|
| 11-13 years | 3 | 1.5 |
| 14-16 years | 152 | 77.9 |
| 17-19 years | 40 | 20.5 |
| **Total** | **195** | **100** |

**Table 2. Sex of the respondents in secondary schools in Benin-City, Edo State**

| Sex | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 103 | 52.8 |
| Female | 92 | 47.2 |
| **Total** | **195** | **100** |

### 3.2 Respondents Educational Background and Substance Abuse Response

The tables below show the educational background and substance abuse response of the respondents.

**Table 3. The nature of the secondary schools in Benin-City, Edo State**

| Nature of School | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Boys | 57 | 29.2 |
| Girls | 20 | 10.3 |
| Mixed | 118 | 60.5 |
| **Total** | **195** | **100.0** |

**Table 4. Category of the secondary schools**

| Category of school | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Boarding | 3 | 1.5 |
| Day | 191 | 97.9 |
| Day and boarding | 1 | 0.5 |
| **Total** | **195** | **100.0** |

**Table 5. Respondents who live with their parents**

| Response | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|----------|-----------|-------------|
| No | 20` | 10.3 |
| Yes | 174 | 89.2 |
| **Total** | **194** | **100.0** |

The Table 5 results above reveal the numbers of respondents who lives with their parents and those who doesn't live with their parents.

**Table 6. The religion of the respondents**

| Religion | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|----------|-----------|-------------|
| Christianity | 177` | 90.8 |
| Islam | 16 | 8.2 |
| Traditional | 1 | 0.5 |
| Others | 1 | 0.5 |
| **Total** | **195** | **100** |

**Table 7. Respondents exposure to substance abuse education**

| Response | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|----------|-----------|-------------|
| No | 9 | 4.6 |
| Yes | 186 | 95.4 |
| **Total** | **195** | **100** |

**Table 8. Respondents exposure to substance abuse education in school**

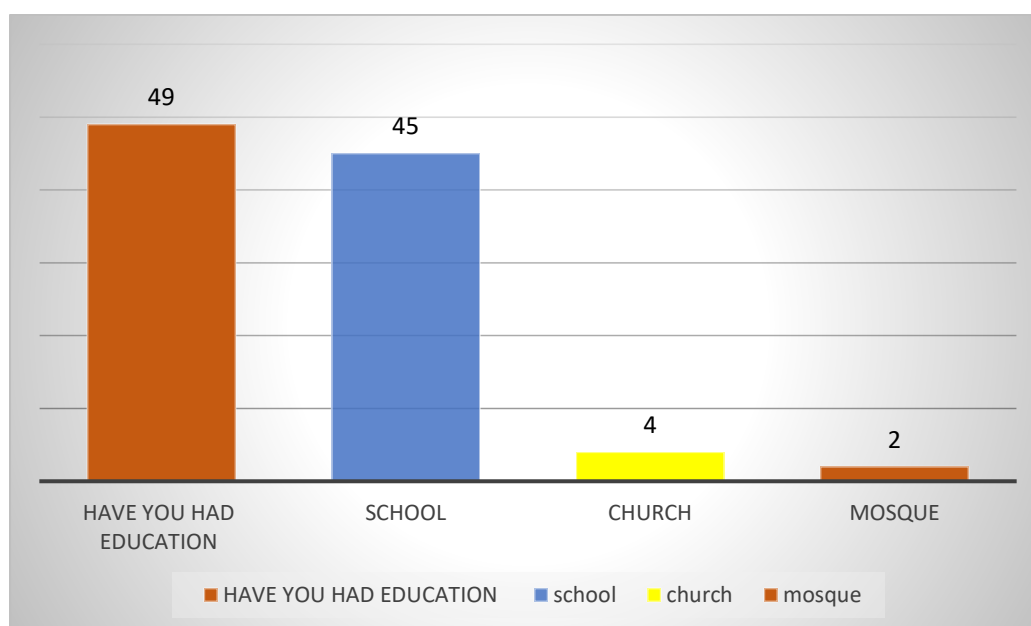| Response | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|----------|-----------|-------------|
| No | 21 | 10.2 |
| Yes | 174 | 89.8 |
| **Total** | **195** | **100** |



**Fig. 1. Level of education and level of awareness of substance abuse amongst secondary school students in Benin-City, Edo State**

**Table 9. Respondents exposure of secondary school students in Benin-City to substance abuse**

| Respondents | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|
| No | 178 | 91.3 |
| Yes | 17 | 8.7 |
| **Total** | **195** | **100** |

**Table 10. Exposure of secondary school students in Benin-City to substance abuse education in school**

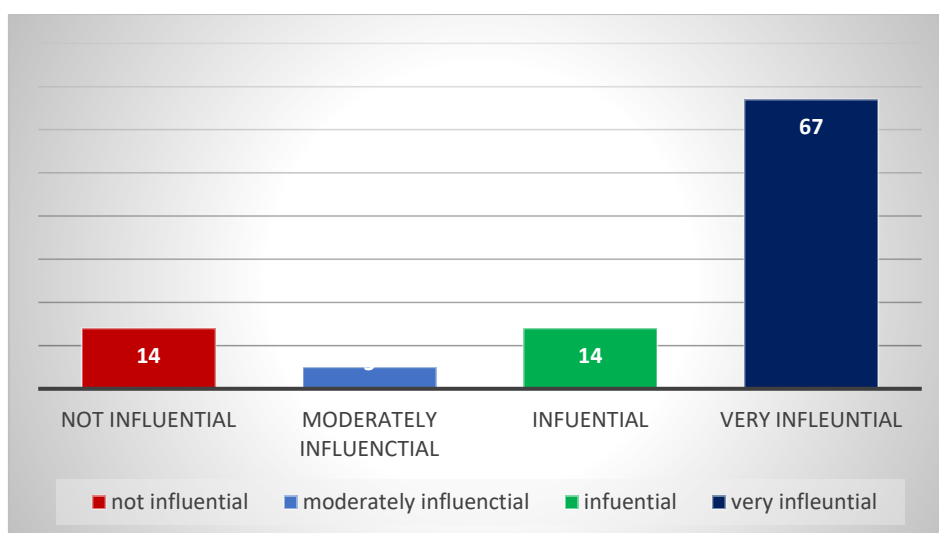| Respondent | Frequency | Percent (%) |
|---|---|---|
| No | 189 | 96.9 |
| Yes | 6 | 3.1 |
| **Total** | **195** | **100** |



**Fig. 2. The influence of peer pressure on secondary school Students in Benin-City, Edo state**
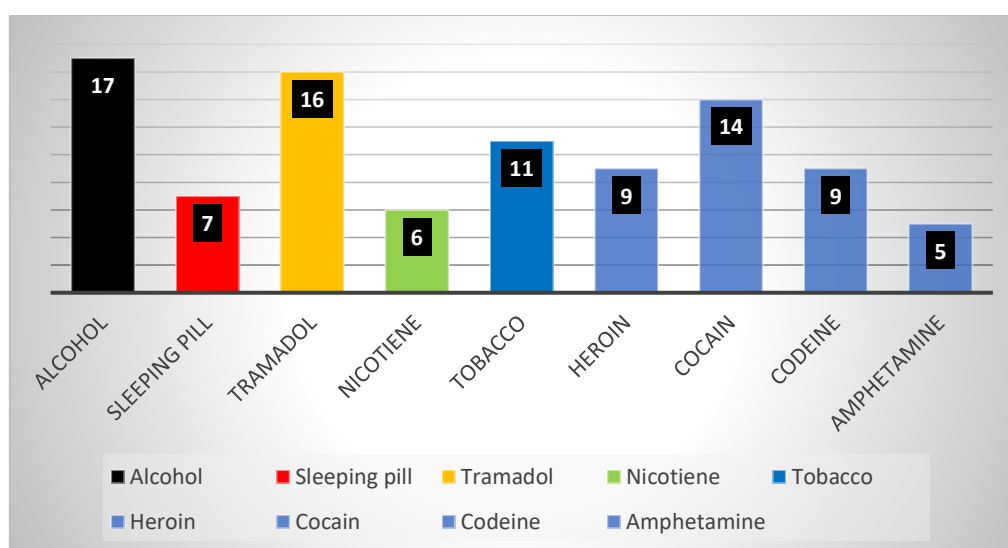


**Fig. 3. Level of commonly abused drugs among secondary school students in Benin-City, Edo State**

### 3.3 Statistical Analysis Report Based on Respondents Response

The tables below present the statistical analysis of awareness levels regarding substance abuse among senior secondary school students in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. Descriptive statistics are utilized to examine factors, effects, side effects, and reasons for student involvement in substance abuse within the study area as shown below:

**Table 11. Descriptive Statistics of factors that make secondary school students engage substance abuse in Benin-City, Edo State**

| Variables | N | Range | Mean | | Std. Deviation | Variance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Statistic |
| 1. To keep respondent awake to as to read more | 195 | 3 | 2.50 | .092 | 1.278 | 1.633 |
| 2. Stress at home e.g. lack of school fees | 195 | 3 | 2.52 | .084 | 1.177 | 1.385 |
| 3. Influence of mass media | 195 | 3 | 2.61 | .091 | 1.277 | 1.631 |
| 4. Availability of drugs e.g. availability of money to buy | 195 | 3 | 2.64 | .084 | 1.178 | 1.387 |
| 5. School Failure | 189 | 3 | 2.75 | .088 | 1.210 | 1.464 |
| 6. Family Background e.g. parent also drink | 195 | 3 | 2.86 | .087 | 1.210 | 1.464 |
| 7. Frustration at home e.g. family break up, conflict with parents | 193 | 3 | 3.03 | .085 | 1.179 | 1.390 |
| 8. Peer Pressure | 195 | 3 | 3.32 | .078 | 1.090 | 1.189 |

**Table 12. Descriptive Statistics of effects of substance abuse among secondary school students in Benin-City, Edo State**

| Variables | N | Mean | | Std. Deviation | Variance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Statistic |
| 1. Strained relationship with other students | 195 | 2.44 | .095 | 1.332 | 1.773 |
| 2. Truancy | 195 | 2.50 | .095 | 1.333 | 1.777 |
| 3. Lack of Interest in Extra curriculum Activities | 195 | 2.56 | .093 | 1.304 | 1.701 |
| 4. Low concentration span | 191 | 2.58 | .099 | 1.362 | 1.855 |
| 5. Declining grades | 195 | 2.62 | .098 | 1.366 | 1.867 |
| 6. Theft | 195 | 2.75 | .094 | 1.309 | 1.712 |
| 7. Bullying | 195 | 2.78 | .091 | 1.266 | 1.603 |
| 8. School Drop Out | 195 | 2.85 | .095 | 1.333 | 1.777 |
| 9. Lack of Interest in studying | 194 | 2.90 | .089 | 1.242 | 1.544 |

**Table 13. Descriptive Statistics of side effects of substance abuse on secondary school students in Benin-City, Edo State**

| Variables | N | Range | Mean | | Std. Deviation | Variance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Statistic |
| 1. Chest pains | 194 | 3 | 2.16 | .093 | 1.297 | 1.682 |
| 2. Nervousness | 195 | 3 | 2.26 | .092 | 1.279 | 1.635 |
| 3. Anxiety | 195 | 3 | 2.29 | .095 | 1.321 | 1.744 |
| 4. Confused | 195 | 3 | 2.37 | .096 | 1.339 | 1.792 |
| 5. Headache | 195 | 3 | 2.38 | .095 | 1.320 | 1.743 |

| Variables | N | Range | Mean | | Std. Deviation | Variance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Statistic |
| 6. Loss of appetite | 195 | 3 | 2.39 | .095 | 1.329 | 1.766 |
| 7. Vomiting | 195 | 3 | 2.42 | .095 | 1.330 | 1.770 |
| 8. Lack of Co-ordination | 195 | 3 | 2.42 | .096 | 1.338 | 1.791 |
| 9. Red eyes | 192 | 3 | 2.48 | .097 | 1.346 | 1.811 |
| 10. Sleepy | 194 | 3 | 2.52 | .095 | 1.328 | 1.764 |

**Table 14. Descriptive Statistics of reasons for substance abuse by secondary school students in Benin-City, Edo State**

| Variables | N | Range | Mean | | Std. Deviation | Variance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Statistic |
| 1. Respondent use drugs because of home problems | 195 | 4 | 1.95 | .108 | 1.504 | 2.261 |
| 2. Respondent use drugs to cope with stress | 195 | 4 | 1.96 | .107 | 1.492 | 2.225 |
| 3. Respondent take drugs because parents take | 195 | 4 | 2.05 | .113 | 1.574 | 2.477 |
| 4. Respondents take drugs to belong to friends | 195 | 4 | 2.07 | .118 | 1.647 | 2.712 |
| 5. Respondents take drugs to gain strength | 195 | 4 | 2.20 | .119 | 1.661 | 2.759 |
| 6. Respondent Friends Take drugs | 195 | 4 | 2.61 | .115 | 1.606 | 2.580 |
| 7. Perception of approval of drug using behaviors | 192 | 4 | 2.95 | .119 | 1.649 | 2.720 |
| 8. Infective Classroom teaching | 195 | 5 | 2.99 | .124 | 1.726 | 2.979 |
| 9. Poor communication between students and the administration | 195 | 4 | 3.03 | .115 | 1.600 | 2.561 |
| 10. Conflict between students and teachers | 195 | 4 | 3.14 | .116 | 1.627 | 2.646 |
| 11. Poor role modelling by teachers | 194 | 4 | 3.17 | .117 | 1.634 | 2.670 |
| 12. Failure in school academic performance | 195 | 4 | 3.59 | .111 | 1.545 | 2.387 |

## 4. DISCUSSION

From the results obtained in this research, the age distribution of respondents indicated that 20.5% were between 17-19 years old, 77.9% were between 14-16 years old, and 1.5% were between 11-13 years old according to Table 1. Additionally, 52.8% of respondents were male and 47.2% were female in Table 2. Table 3 results reveal the type of school attended by respondents, and 29.2% attended boys' schools, 10.3% attended girls' schools, and 60.5% attended co-educational schools. Among these schools, 1.5% were boarding schools, 97.9% were day schools, and 5% had both day and boarding facilities according to the results of Table 4. Furthermore, table 5 indicated that 10.3% of respondents did not live with their biological parents, while 89.2% did; while

Table 6 reveal that 90.8% practiced Christianity, 8.2% practiced Islam, 0.5% practiced traditional religions, and 0.5% practiced other religions.

Regarding substance abuse education, 4.6% of respondents had not been exposed to it, while 95.4% had which was shown in Table 7. Among those educated on substance abuse, 89.2% received this education in school (Table.8), 8.7% in church as revealed in Table 9, and 3.1% in the mosque. Based on this data, it is evident that most secondary school students (95.4%) are aware of substance abuse, with the majority being educated in schools. This highlights the critical role schools play in educating adolescents about substance abuse. The role of religious institutions in educating students about substance abuse is minimal. Despite being

learning platforms for adolescents, churches and mosques lag in this regard. The data indicates a high level of awareness of substance abuse among secondary school students in Benin City, suggesting that the issue is not due to a lack of awareness.

Therefore, further research is needed to understand why students engage in substance abuse. Findings of Ekpenyong [12], revealed that 37% of the students in Bayelsa State were abusing tobacco products. A report by NAFDAC [13] noted that the abuse of licit and illicit drugs is becoming students' way of life in Nigeria. Statistics of findings also revealed that one in every three secondary school students in Nigeria consumes alcohol. Another 8.3% smoke cigarettes while almost one in every ten (9.1%) chew Miraa. About 3% smoke bhang and use hard drugs like heroin, cocaine, mandrax and tranquilizers. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse [14] alcohol is the majorly abused psychoactive drug in the United States with approximately 90% of the students taking it before graduating from high school. Alcohol is the most highly abused drug in Nigeria with about 61% of the population consuming it [13]. The need for acceptance by peers, often stemming from self-esteem issues, leads students to engage in various activities, including substance abuse.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The research findings indicated that secondary school students are well informed about substance abuse with their awareness obtained mainly from the school. Furthermore, Peer-pressure plays a significant role in the reason secondary school students engage in substance abuse.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More awareness programme should be organized in religious settings to educate students on the subject of substance abuse to help them make informed decisions.
2. Parents who use drugs should be discrete, to avoid negative influence on their children.
3. Secondary school authorities should put in place severe disciplinary measures on students who engage in substance abuse.
4. Guidance and Counseling services should be provided in all religious settings

to make student understand themselves as well as minimize behaviours such as smoking and drug use. This means that all sections of the National Policy on Education concerned with counseling should be implemented without delay.
5. Guidance and Counseling programmes of secondary schools and religions should incorporate courses which deal with drug education. Campaigns designed to highlight the dangers of substance abuse should mounted by Federal and State Ministries Health.
6. Staff trainings should also be carried out most especially for educational teachers and counsellors to further be equipped with the knowledge of handling secondary school about substance abuse. According to Ehwarieme et al. [15], staff training leads to the eradication of staff lousy attitudes towards performance and productivity.
7. Just as there is a concerted effort to include sex education in the curriculum of secondary schools and religious settings, substance abuse education should also be considered.
8. Television and radio advertisements that encourage substance abuse should be discouraged.

## DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declares that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of manuscripts.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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