

PREVALENCE OF DRUG/SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND ITS PERCEIVED EFFECTS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OSUN STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the frequency of drug/substance abuse and its perceived effects among secondary school students in Osun State. A total of three hundred (300) randomly selected students from the three political divides of the State participated in the study. Data were analysed, using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The finding revealed that the rate of drug/substance abuse was relatively high. Alcohol, cigarette, and cannabis/ Indian-hemp/ marijuana, were found to be the most commonly used drugs/substances. Besides, small shops (kiosks near schools), and bars (beer parlours), among others, were identified as major sources of access to drugs/substances. Furthermore, drug/substance abuse was identified as having the tendency to cause diseases, and leading students to devote little or no attention to schoolwork. There was no significant difference between males' and females' perceived effects of drug/substance abuse on the academic development of secondary school students. Based on the outlined findings, recommendations were made that stakeholders in secondary education should obstruct avenues in nearby school environments, through which students get easy access to commonly abused drugs/substances, engage in public sensitisation via educative programmes on radio/television, employ periodically organized school counselling programmes to discourage more students from this menace, and need for appropriate interagency authority to wade in with support services for students who are victims of drug/substance abuse.

Keywords: Prevalence; drug/substance Abuse, perception, peer influence, counselling

Introduction

Drug/substance abuse is a major public health problem all over the world. In fact, as part of recognition accorded this problem, the 26th of June was set aside by the United Nations as the global day against abuse and illicit drug trafficking. Also, drug abuse among children and young people has been identified by the United Nations Children and Education Fund (UNICEF, June 2003 Report) as one of the contributing problems of HIV/AIDS. In Nigeria, drug/substance abuse among

adolescents has become a seriously threatened health-related issue (NDLEA, 1997; Oshikoya & Alli, 2006; Ogunsola, Fajemisin, Aiyenuro, & Tunde, 2020). This development has thrown many adolescents into mental health-related problems, either temporarily or permanently. Thus, some of the youths who engaged in drug abuse have become mentally insane, and many have withdrawn from school, due to poor adjustment to school situations.

According to Fawa (2003), a drug refers to a substance applied to treat or prevent disease(s) in living organisms. The drug is capable of influencing the body functioning of the person involved in it. This, however, depends on the kind of drug involved, the volume used, and the circumstances surrounding its usage. Drug abuse, on the other hand, refers to the disproportionate and continual self-application of a drug, without recurring input from trained health professionals (Haladu, 2003). It also implies maladaptive or addictive use of drugs for a non-medical purpose (Manbe, 2008), and the use of a drug in a way that interferes with the health and social function of an individual (Abdulahi, 2009). In other words, it is the non-medical use of a drug, which interferes with the healthy and productive life of the users (Okoye, 2001; World Book Encyclopedia, 2004). It is also synonymous with arbitrary use or misuse of a drug with or without a prior medical diagnosis from a qualified physician.

Drug/substance abuse is a global phenomenon and Nigeria is not an exception. The Nigerian youths, like many countries of the world, are increasingly developing an addiction to psychoactive substances. Evidence from the literature showed that Nigeria ranked among the highest users of dangerous drugs including alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, and cocaine, to mention a few (Degenhardt, Chiu, Sampson, Kessler, Anthony, *et al.* 2008; Okafor, 2011). There has been a steady rise in the prevalence of this problem and its associated consequences, in the last three decades (Ihezue, 1988; Oshodi, Aina, & Onajole, 2010; Dewing, Pluddemann, Myers, & Parry, 2006). In comprehensive research conducted by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA, 2011), Nigerian youths were found among the high-risk group for drug trafficking and abuse. The results further indicated that friends and schoolmates accounted for about 90% of the source of influence to use and abuse various psychoactive substances.

More so, research outcomes have shown that adolescents have various reasons attached to the use of drugs/substances. Such reasons include relief from pain and problems, enhanced mood and feeling, wakefulness, self-confidence, psychomotor and athletics activities, and need for excitement (Linhadt, 2001). Other findings revealed that drug abuse has become part of the lives of many adolescents, which has contributed to their academic failure (McCrystal, Higgins & Percy, 2007). Abianwu (2005) found that cannabis was the most commonly used illicit drug, with the usage of 4% of the world population compared to 1% for all other drugs combined. Oshodi, Aina and Onajole (2010) reported that marijuana was the most commonly used substance followed by tobacco.

The above reasons notwithstanding, drug abuse has been found to have serious adverse effects on the health and academic development of students. According to Dankano and Garba (2017), drug abuse has resulted in the poor performance of secondary school students in public examinations and consequent dropout rates across the globe (Ogunsola *et al.* 2020). Healthwise, the users' health is grossly affected and its counterproductive effects can predispose abusers to crimes and infectious diseases (Centre for Disease Control, 2000).

The future development of any community is tied to the character of members of the younger

generation in that particular enclave or locality. A popular saying goes thus: “The youth are the leaders of tomorrow”. This implies that the youth are capable of ideas and visions to aid better achievements for their community. However, only responsible youth can bring about desirable development.

Drug/substance abuse has become a way of life for many adolescents in recent times, with attendant effects on their academic performance (Dankano & Garba, 2017; Ogunsola et al. 2020). In Osun State, some eighty-four adolescents were found engaging in drug/substance abuse, in 2009, while many are still undetected (Osun State NDLEA, 2010). The more this trend persists, the higher the tendency for poor academic performance among students; and increased disruptive/ criminal inclinations within and outside the school environment. Thus, there is a need for more empirical investigation into the factors responsible for the persistent increase in drug/substance abuse among school-going adolescents in Osun State.

Therefore, this study aimed to examine the prevalence of drug/substance abuse and its associated effects among school-going adolescents in Osun State. It also sought to identify major sources of access to commonly used drugs/substances among students in Osun State. The study hoped to suggest possible ways of curbing and preventing drug/substance abuse among this vulnerable but very significant group of people in our society.

Research Questions

The thrust of this study is guided by the following under listed research questions:

- i. What is the frequency of drug/substance abuse among secondary school students in Osun State?
- ii. What are the commonly used drugs/substances among secondary school students in Osun State?
- iii. What are the major sources of drug/substance abuse among secondary school students in Osun State?
- iv. What are the generally perceived effects of drug/substance abuse among secondary school students in Osun State?
- v. Is there a significant difference in the perceived effects of drug/substance abuse between male and female secondary school students in Osun State?

Methods

Participants

The target population of this research were adolescents in public secondary schools across the three Senatorial Districts of Osun State. One public secondary school was selected from each of the three political divides, and one hundred students were randomly selected from each of the schools. Altogether, a total of three hundred students constituted the sample size of this study.

Instrument

This research used a validated self-designed questionnaire titled: “Prevalence of drug/substance abuse among secondary school students” for data collection. The instrument consisted of two main sections (demographic information of respondents and item sections). In Section B, there are three sub-sections with the following labels: Commonly used drugs among the secondary school students (seven items), Major sources of the commonly abused drugs/substances (six items), and the

perceived effects of drug/substance abuse on the academic development of secondary school students in Osun State (seven items). Altogether, twenty items made up the instrument. The items were measured on a 5-point Likert-like scale, in which “1” equals “Strongly Disagree” and “5” equals “Strongly Agree”.

Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was pilot-tested to ascertain its psychometric properties. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability statistics showed that the three variables of the instrument have reliability estimates of 0.78, 0.75 and 0.72 respectively. These values were satisfactory because they fulfilled the acceptable requirement of 0.7 recommended by scholars in research methodology (Pallant, 2007, Field 2015). This means that, to a greater extent, the items of this instrument have some degree of consistency in the internal dimension of constructs they were designed to measure.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected by visiting each of the selected schools to administer the instrument to the participants. 100 copies of the questionnaire were administered in each place with the aid of one trained research assistant.

Data Analysis and Results

Descriptive Analysis of the Participants

This study drew participants from secondary schools in three senatorial divides of Osun State. They included both male and female students with an average age of 15 years old. These participants caught across different levels of study (SS1, SS2 and SS3 classes). Table 1 presents the participants' demographic variables and usable responses from the survey.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Participants' Demographic Characteristics

S/No	DEMOGRAPHIC	GROUPS	Sample Size	
			N = 300	(%)
1.	GENDER	MALE	150	50.0
		FEMALE	150	50.0
		TOTAL	300	100
2.	SCHOOL	Osun West	100	33.3
		Osun East	100	33.3
		Osun Central	100	33.3
		TOTAL	300	100
3.	AGE	11 – 13YRS	80	26.7
		14 – 16YRS	130	43.3
		17YRS & Above	90	30.0
		TOTAL	300	100
4.	CLASS	SS1	100	33.3
		SS2	100	33.3
		SS3	100	33.3
		TOTAL	480	100
5.	RATE OF DRUG USE Have you ever used drugs other than for medical purposes?	YES	73	24.6
		NO	227	75.4
		TOTAL	300	100

As shown in Tab. 1 above, the participants of this study comprised an equal percentage of male and female students; with a larger per cent (43.3) falling in the 14-16 years age category. They were evenly represented across the three-class categories in the three selected schools (33.3% each). The majority of the participants (75.4%) declined that they have not abused or misused drugs/substances before; while almost one-quarter (24.6%) agreed that they have abused it at one time or the other.

R/Qus. One: How prevalent is drug/substance abuse among secondary school students in Osun State?

The outcome of data analysis on the frequency of drug use for a purpose other than medical (displayed at the bottom of table 1 above) revealed that although a vast majority of respondents (75.4%) declined using drugs/substances for reasons other than medical, yet a reasonable per cent (almost 25%) admitted to taking and using drugs for purposes different from medical. This suggests that level of drug/substance abuse is still relatively high in the population.

R/Qus Two: What are the commonly used drugs among secondary school students in Osun State?

To find out the drugs commonly used by secondary school students in Osun State, descriptive statistical analyses (via frequency count, percentage analysis and measure of dispersion) were conducted. The outcomes of the analysis are presented in tab. 2 below.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of the Commonly used Drugs among Secondary School Students in Osun State

Variables	Disagreed		Undecided		Agreed		\bar{X}	SD
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Narcotic drug and Amphetamines	233	78.2	14	4.7	51	17.2	2.0	1.3
Cannabis/ Indian Hemp/ Marijuana	207	69.5	29	9.7	63	20.8	2.3	1.3
Opium, Cocaine	202	67.8	55	18.5	41	13.8	2.1	1.1
Alcohol and Cigarette	167	56.0	39	13.1	92	30.9	2.6	1.3
Glue and Petrol sniffing	212	71.1	37	12.4	49	16.5	2.1	1.2
Nicotine and Caffeine	215	72.1	33	11.1	50	16.8	2.1	1.2
Heroin and Lysergic acid	211	70.8	42	14.1	45	15.1	2.1	1.2

The outcome of data analysis on the prevalence of drug/substance abuse (Table 2) revealed that drug and substance abuse was not too rampant among the population of this study. The majority of the participants disagreed that most of the drugs/substances listed were not commonly used by students. For instance, the majority of the respondents (78.2%, 72.1%, 71.1%, and 70.8% respectively) indicated that narcotics and Amphetamines, Nicotine and Caffeine, Glue and Petrol sniffing, Heroin and Lysergic acid were not commonly abused by students. Although, some reasonable numbers (30.9% and 20.8%) agreed that the most commonly abused drugs/substances were Alcohol and cigarettes, Cannabis/Indian Hemp/Marijuana, respectively. Hence, it is deducible from the above facts that although the majority of secondary school students in Osun State were not addicted to drug/substance abuse, nonetheless, some of them used it.

R/Qus. Three: What are the major sources of commonly abused drugs/substances among secondary school students in Osun State?

Descriptive statistical analyses (via frequency count, percentage analysis and measure of dispersion) were conducted to determine the major sources of commonly abused drugs/substances among secondary school students in Osun State. The outcomes of the analyses are displayed in the table. 3 below.

Table 3: Data Analysis on Sources of Commonly Abused Drugs/Substances among Secondary School Students in Osun State

Variables	Disagreed		Undecided		Agreed		\bar{X}	SD
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Slum peddlers	86	28.5	29	9.7	184	61.8	3.6	1.4
Small shops (Kiosks near schools)	49	16.4	41	13.8	208	70.0	3.9	1.1
School workers	59	19.8	49	16.4	190	63.7	3.7	1.2
Street Touts	65	21.8	49	16.4	184	61.8	3.6	1.2
Bars (beer parlours)	52	17.4	35	11.7	211	70.8	3.9	1.3

The outcome of data analysis for research question three, as displayed in table 3, revealed that a greater percentage of the participants felt that almost all the sources identified were utilised as avenues through which students get and use drugs/substances in the study area. The key sources included: Bars (71%), Small shops e.g., Kiosks near schools (70%), School workers (63.7%), Slum peddlers and Street touts (61.8% respectively). These results suggest that students have multiple accesses to drugs/substance abuse. Hence, multi-dimensional approaches are required to tackle the menace headlong.

Research Question Four: What are the perceived effects of drug/substance abuse among secondary school students in Osun State?

To establish the perceived effects of drug/substance abuse among secondary school students in Osun State, descriptive statistical analyses (via frequency count, percentage analysis and measure of dispersion) were conducted. The outcomes of the analysis are presented in table 4 below.

Table 4: Data Analysis on Perceived Effects of Drug/substance abuse among Secondary School Students in Osun State

Variables	Disagreed		Undecided		Agreed		\bar{X}	SD
	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Drugs are main causes of violence, rampages, and riots	81	27.2	22	7.4	195	65.5	3.6	1.4
It leads students to acts of indiscipline in school	51	17.1	45	15.1	202	67.8	3.7	1.2
It leads students to behave irresponsibly to school authority	78	26.2	53	17.8	167	56.1	3.4	1.3
Drugs are associated with diseases like laryngitis, pharyngitis, cough, etc	56	18.8	35	11.7	207	69.7	3.8	1.3

Drugs lead students to devote little or no attention to school works	66	22.1	31	10.4	201	67.4	3.7	1.3
It causes health problems associated with heart, kidney, liver, etc.	83	27.9	42	14.1	173	68.0	3.5	1.3

The outcomes of data analysis on the perceived effect of drug/substance abuse by secondary school students in Osun State revealed that a greater percentage of respondents agreed drug/substance abuse has some negative effects on the health and academic career of students. For instance, some 70%, 68%, 67%, and 67% of respondents respectively agreed that drugs are associated with diseases like laryngitis, pharyngitis, cough, and so on, causing health problems associated with heart, kidney, liver, etc., lead students to acts of indiscipline in school, and cause students to pay lip service to school works. Also, a greater percentage (65% and 56% respectively) believed that drugs are the main causes of violence, rampages, and riots; and lead students to behave irresponsibly toward school authorities. Thus, it is evident that although some students use drugs/substances abusively, many of them are conversant with the negative effects of this act.

R/Qus. Five: Is there a significant difference in the perceived effects of drug/substance abuse among secondary school students in Osun State based on gender?

To address the fifth research question, an independent t-test statistical analysis was conducted. The result of the analysis is presented in table 5 below.

Table 5: T-test Analysis of the Perceived Effect of Drug/substance Abuse between Male and Female Secondary School Students in Osun State

Variable	Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	T	df	p	95% Confidence Interval	
								Lower	Upper
Gender	Male	150	54.2	7.4	0.03	298	0.969	-2.16	2.25
	Female	150	54.1	7.7					

The t-test analysis was conducted to examine differences in the perceived effects of drug/substance abuse among secondary school students in Osun State (based on gender). The results (Table 5) showed no statistically significant difference in the mean scores for males ($M = 54.2$, $SD = 7.4$) compared with females ($M = 54.1$, $SD = 7.7$), $t(298) = 0.03$, $p = 0.969$. Thus, the result is inconclusive. This tends to suggest that regardless of the sex group of the secondary school students in Osun State, the perceived effects of drug/substance abuse were viewed similarly. That is, both males and females were not too different in the way they perceived the effect on health and the academic development process.

Discussion of Findings

The central objectives of this research included: Determining the prevalence of drug/substance abuse, the commonly used drugs and their sources, the perceived effect of drug/substance abuse among students, as well as differences in the perceived effect of drug/substance abuse based on student's gender. In line with the above objectives, the following findings were obtained and discussed.

Finding for the first research question revealed that drug/substance abuse was gradually becoming a rampant thing among the population of this study. Although a majority of the participants responded in disagreement to the question on whether they have used drugs/substances for reasons other than medical, a reasonable percent (almost one-quarter of the population) responded in affirmative to the question. The involvement of roughly 25% of respondents in an unwanted illicit activity is too significant to be ignored. This calls for urgent steps to nip this development in the bud before getting out of hand.

Secondly, our finding indicated that students' most commonly abused drugs/substances were Alcohol and cigarettes, as well as Cannabis/Indian Hemp/Marijuana. It is common knowledge that the items identified above are easy to come by in the local area and cheap. Hence, it is understood from the above that the majority of students who use and abuse drugs/substance, do so within the level of drugs/substances easily accessible in their environment.

The above result is in accord with previous studies. According to Oshodi *et al.* (2010), a resounding number of Nigerian students are drug dependent and their array of daily activities are tied to it. Such drugs include Tobacco, cocaine, Indian hemp, morphine, heroin, Alcohol, ephedrine, Madras, Caffeine, Glue, Barbiturates, and Amphetamines. Also, NAFDAC (2008) reported that the abuse of illicit drugs is forming a student subculture in Nigeria. Similarly, Dankano and Garba (2017) reported that the most commonly used and abused substances globally were cigarettes, cannabis and alcohol.

Pertaining to the sources of access to drug/substance abuse, this study found that students have multiple accesses to drug and substance abuse. A greater percent of the participants agreed that almost all the sources identified were avenues through which students get and use drugs/substances. Such sources included: Bars (beer parlours), Small shops e.g., Kiosks near schools, School workers, Slum peddlers and Street touts. Hence, multi-dimensional approaches are required to tackle the menace headlong.

The above finding agrees with some extant reports. For instance, the school environment was reported to influence students to engage in drug use (Bond, Butler, Thomas, Carlin, Glover, Bowes & Patton 2007; Fletcher, Bonell, Sorhaindo & Strange, 2009).

Besides, drug/substance abuse was perceived by a greater number of respondents as having serious negative consequences on the health and academic development of students. Some of the perceived effects include its associated diseases like laryngitis, pharyngitis, cough, etc; health problems associated with heart, kidney, and liver; tendency to lead students to acts of indiscipline in school, paying lip service to school work, getting involved in violence, rampages, and riots; and leading students to behave irresponsibly to the school authority. Unlike in the previous study by Oshikoya and Alli (2006) wherein the level of awareness, knowledge and attitudes toward drug abuse was generally poor among students, the current study revealed that, even though some students use drugs/substances abusively, many of them are well conversant with the negative effects of this act.

The above findings are in tandem with previous studies. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2007) noted an alarming rate at which students get involved in substance abuse globally. This development is capable of serious loss in potential manpower and economic resources in the long

run. Research has also indicated that most social ills, including substance/drug abuse by students, have their origin in periods when students are attending school (Hong, George Tan., Gan, Peter, Abang, Hasbee, & Shahren, 2011). As they attained the adolescence stage, the tendency to experiment with drugs increases (Igwe, Ojinnaka, Ejiofor, Emechebe & Ibe, 2009). According to Dankano and Garba (2017), drug/substance abuse is fast responsible for the increased rate of poor performance of secondary school students in examinations and subsequent dropout rate. Hence, this scourge needs to be dealt with frontally.

Lastly, this study found no statistically significant difference in the perceived effect of drug/substance abuse among secondary school students based on gender. This result suggests that regardless of the sex group of secondary school students in Osun State, the perceived effects of drug/substance abuse were viewed similarly. This could be because, in recent times, students of different gender are increasingly indulging in drug/substance abuse. The consequences of this act usually do not discriminate between genders.

Summary

In summary, this study established that drug/substance abuse is fast becoming a rampant trend among the population of this study. Alcohol, cigarette, and cannabis/ Indian-hemp/ marijuana were found among the most commonly used drugs/substances. Also, the most identified sources of access to drugs/substance abuse were small shops (kiosks near schools), and bars (beer parlours). Drug/substance abuse was perceived as a threat to life, with a tendency to lead students to devote little or no attention to schoolwork. Last but not the least, a significant difference was not found in the male and female's perceived effect of drugs/substance abuse on academic development.

Conclusion

Drug/substance abuse is a global phenomenon causing a serious threat to the health and academic pursuit of youth all over the world. The problem is prevalent among adolescents who in most cases are ignorant of the negative implications of drug abuse. The majority of students who engaged in drug/substance abuse do so because of easy access to drugs/substances in a nearby school environment. Hence, this problem can be tackled headlong with the support of all stakeholders of secondary school education and well-entrenched guidance programme services in schools.

Recommendations

In line with the results discussed, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. The reason for the gradual rise in the use and abuse of drugs/substances could be attributed to the proliferation of commonly abused drugs/substances in shops and outlets very close to school environment. Hence, it is necessary for stakeholders in secondary education, especially the ministry of education, to ensure school environments are getting rid of this unwanted contamination. Apart from issuing a note of warning to owners of such shops to desist from the illicit trade, the school management authority can engage the service of standby security to monitor the movement of students in and around such areas.
2. Secondly, given that a reasonable number of students have knowledge and awareness of the potential effects of drug/substance abuse on an academic career, especially on a tendency to pay low attention to school work and its associated health challenges. Continuous public sensitization via radio/television educative programmes and the use of periodically organized school counselling programmes will go a long way in enlightening more students

to willingly abstain from drug/substance abuse.

3. Similarly, since there was no statistically significant difference in the perceived effect of drugs/substances abuse between male and female students, this suggests that a non-discriminatory approach could work out well, in an attempt to sensitize the student population in Osun State to the negative implications of drug/substance abuse on their academic development process.
4. The Ministry of Education should collaborate with National Campaign Against Drug Abuse (NACADA) to ensure the provision of support services to rejuvenate students with social-behavioural problems originating from drug abuse

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