

INVOLVEMENT OF YOUTHS IN SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN ALIMOSHO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Substance abuse among youth has become a real problem, ravaging globally. The youths feel that drugs enhance their performance in all spheres of life. This study, therefore, examined the involvement of the youths in substance abuse. A random selection of a sample of 100 Junior Secondary School students was taken from four secondary schools in the Alimosho Local Government area of Lagos State. A self-developed questionnaire was used for the gathering of data and it had a reliability value of 0.81 using the test re-test reliability method. Data gathered were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Based on the research question generated, it was found that the involvement level of youths in substance abuse was high. In addition, there was a significant difference between substance abuse and the socio-economic status of youths. There is a significant difference in the level of involvement of youths in substance abuse based on gender. It was recommended that the government, at various levels, should establish drug education and counselling programmes for youths, among others.

Keywords: Substance abuse, substance, under-aged, adolescent, drug addiction, counselling strategies

Introduction

Youths are getting involved in the use of one drug or the other to relieve themselves from one perceived and unrealistic problem or the other, in their daily encounter either as a result of ignorance, peer influence, or absolute freedom. That is why Gray and Squeglia (2018) described adolescence as “a critical biological, psychological, and social developmental stage, involving heightened risk for substance use and associated adverse consequences”. Substance abuse or drug abuse (consumption of alcohol, tobacco, and other harmful drugs) is a global phenomenon and it warrants the observation, and thoughtfulness and has posed challenges for public health institutions and the society at large (Kristjansson, Mann, Sigfusson, Thorisdottir, Allegrante, & Sigfusdottir (2020). Wilkson, Fleming, Halpern, Herring, and Harris (2018) informed that drug or substance abuse is

introduced during adolescence and reaches its peak in young adulthood, and the pattern of substance use frequently starts with alcohol and tobacco consumption before or early high school and intensify to illegal substance use during high school. Kobulsky, Yoon, Bright, Lee, and Nam (2018) point out negative consequences of substance abuse to include accidental injury and death, unemployment, physical and psychological health, and strained interpersonal relationship. The World Health Organisation (WHO) reported that in 2008 alone, between 155-250 million people around the world were estimated to have taken or engaged in substance abuse and 2-6 youths die every year which the causes of their death were attributed to drug use. In addition, The United Nations (2012) conveyed that somewhere in the range of 162 and 324 million individuals, adding up between 3.5% and 7.0% of the worldwide populace, were assessed to have utilised illegal drugs. The commitment of young people to substance use is extremely widespread today. Substance use is considered to be obsessive, on occasion wild, drug hankering, looking for, and utilise that continue even despite incredibly adverse results. Fals-Stewart and Kennedy (2005) noted that drug-chasing becomes impulsive in enormous parts of the world because of the impacts of prolonged drug use on brain working and comportment for many individuals, illicit drug use becomes persistent, with relapses conceivable even after extensive stretches of self-control. Sometimes, criminal or against the social way of behaving happens when the individual is affected by the drug, and long haul character changes in people might happen also. Notwithstanding conceivable physical, social, and mental harm, the utilisation of certain drugs may likewise prompt criminal punishments, albeit these changes generally rely upon the neighbourhood jurisdiction.

The study conducted by Sarfo (2020) revealed substance use that under-aged or adolescents are identified with such as alcohol, cigarette, tramadol, cocaine, heroin, and marijuana were predominant nonetheless low amongst the participants. Others include cannabis, barbiturates, benzodiazepines, methaqualone, opioids, and some replaced amphetamines. In Nigeria, for instance, the drugs are called several names. Among such names are Eja, Ganja, Igbo, and Marijuana. Other drugs that are abused are efferdrin, codeine, and all sorts of alcoholic drinks: ogogoro, dry gins, and Nescafe. Shin & Miller-Day (2017) noted that the specific cause for substance misuse is uncertain, with the two transcendent speculations being: one or the other a hereditary attitude that is gained from others or a propensity that if addiction develops, displays itself as a constant incapacitating illness. Nevertheless, some overwhelming factors are contributory to substance use by the under-aged, such as peer group, socio-economic status, gender, curiosity, need for extra energy for daily activities, parenting monitoring, parenting substance use, and genetics among others. This study is limited to the gender and socio-economic status of adolescents on substance use.

Various studies have been on the influence of gender on substance abuse amongst secondary school students (Obogo & Njoku, 2017; Oshodi, Ania & Onajole, 2008; Idowu, Aremu, Olumide, & Ogunlaja, 2018; Agu, Nwankwo, Obi Sydney-Agbor & Mgbenkemdi 2013). Obogo and Njoku's (2017) research investigated the effects of gender, depression and substance abuse on secondary school students. The gender and substance abuse component in the research discovered a noteworthy difference in the manner male and female students abuse drugs. The rate of drug abuse in males with a mean of 3.58 is higher than in females with 3.22. In related research in South West Nigeria, Idowu, Aremu, Olumide, and Ogunlaja (2018) also reported a predominantly higher rate of substance abuse among male students than the females. On the contrary, research conducted by Leonard, Gwadz, Ritchie, Linick, Cleland, Elliott, & Grethel, (2015) in the United States of America

reported no significant gender difference in substance abuse. The female students use drugs just like their male counterparts. The result of the study could be due to cultural, racial, or geographical differences.

There is a rising awareness of the association between socio-economic status (SES) and substance abuse among youngsters (Charitonidi, Studer, Gaume, Gmel, Daeppen, & Bertholet, 2016). There appear to be varied results when different indicators are considered for SES. For instance, children with high SES, such as parental education and higher earnings are linked with high substance abuse (Humensky, 2010), when compared to those with low SES, are associated with less substance abuse. In a cross-cultural study in Iran, Ranjbaran, Mohammadshahi, Mani, and Karimy (2018) reported that male students from low SES and large family members were more prone to substance abuse. The study identified variables such as addiction in close friends, the poor economic situation in the families, and family size as risk factors for substance abuse. Whereas, Charitonidi, Studer, Gaume, Gmel, Daeppen, and Bertholet (2016) reported that higher socio-economic status was related to more alcohol and other unlawful substance use, while lower socio-economic status was associated with more tobacco use.

Different theories have been propounded to give reasons why people engage in substance abuse. Thus, this study was anchored on the Social Learning theory. Social learning theory strongly emphasises that our interaction with other people will lead to the development of many habits, which collectively make up our personalities (Deaton, 2015). Social learning theory attributes changes in behaviour to the observation of the social learning theory. Though many studies have been conducted on substance abuse in Nigeria, the menace of this social problem is still rearing its ugly head among the under-aged. The purpose of this research was to evaluate the level of involvement of the youth in substance and imitation that is, learning through watching the behaviour of another person. The impact of gender and socio-economic status which this study focuses on have a direct connection with abuse in the study location. For this purpose, the following research question and hypotheses were generated:

Research question: What is the level of involvement of youths in substance abuse?

Hypotheses:

H01: There is no significant difference in the level of involvement of male and female youths in substance abuse.

H02: There is no significant difference in the level of involvement of youths in substance abuse based on socio-economic status.

Methodology

A survey design was advocated for this study to gain facts and insight on substance use among youths. The population of the research comprised all the junior secondary school students in Alimoso Local Government of Lagos State. A random selection of sample for this study consisted of 100 Junior Secondary School students (50 male, 50 females) taken from four schools in Alimosho Local Government Area (LGA) of Lagos State. The age-range of the participants was between 9 and 19 with a mean age of 13.5 years. The LGA was chosen because it is the largest Local Government in Lagos State and also in terms of class size, the number of students per class, gender, and different socioeconomic status.

A self-developed questionnaire by the researchers was used in gathering data. The questionnaire consisted of two sections or parts. The first part addressed the demographic information, including age, gender, and the class of the participants. The second section included a four Likert Type scale response mode of 20 items that ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The statements were validated by giving the initial draft to three experts in Counselling Psychology and Test and Measurement. The final draft of the questionnaire was pilot tested with a sample of 35 that were not part of the main study. A test re-test reliability of 0.81 for consistency was calculated to know if the instrument was reliable. The researchers sought the cooperation and permission of the heads of the chosen schools. The same process was followed to gain admittance to the class teachers who expedited meetings with the groups of students. The Junior Secondary School students were spoken to in an honest manner to get valued data from them about substance abuse. The participants were educated as regards the nature and purpose of the research prior to their participation in it. They were informed that their involvement in the research was voluntary and that they could opt out of the process at any stage with no punishment or loss of advantage. The participants were not forced or manipulated in any way to participate in the study.

Results

The questionnaire was administered to all the participants and it was scored according to the prescribed scoring method. The frequency tables and descriptive statistics were based on the demographic data that emerged from the questionnaire. The inferential statistics were regression and t-test analyses.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	50	50%
Female	50	50%
Total	100	100%

Table 1 indicates the total number of respondents as 100, out of which 50 were male and 50 were equally female. This implies even gender representation was considered in the selection of respondents for the study.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
9-12	35	35%
13-15	50	50%
16-19	15	15%
Total	100	100.0%

Table 2 indicate that the respondents' age falls between 9 and 19. In addition, the table revealed that 35% of the respondents were within the ages 9 and 12 while 50% were also within the ages 13 and 15 and the remaining 15% were within ages 16 and 19.

Table 3: Respondents Distribution by Class.

Class	Frequency	Percentage
JSS1	35	35%
JSS2	40	40%
JSS3	25	25%
Total	100	100

Table 3 depicts the classes of respondents and the number of representatives from each class. It also revealed that 35% each represents JSS1 class, 40% represents JSS2 class and 25% represent JSS3 class.

Research Question One: What is the level of involvement of youths in substance abuse?

To answer the research question, the response of youths to items on substance abuse were summed and subjected to percentage analysis. The minimum score, maximum score and range score of the respondents were 20, 80 and 60. The range was divided by the three levels of usage (high, moderate and low) and the cut-off was 20. Scores between 20 - 40, 41 – 60, and 61 - 80 were categorized as low, moderate, and high levels respectively. The result is presented in table 4.

Table 4: Level of youths' Involvement in Substance Abuse

Levels	Cut-off Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	61 – 80	58	58.0
Moderate	41 – 60	24	24
Low	20 – 40	18	18
Total		100	100.0

The result in Table 4 indicates that 58 (58%) of the respondents had a high involvement level in substance abuse, 24 (24%) with moderate involvement level in substance abuse while 18 (18%) had a low level of involvement of substance abuse. From the foregoing, it means that the involvement level of youths in substance abuse is high.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the male and female levels of involvement in substance abuse among the under-age students.

To test this hypothesis, the data collected from the respondents were analysed using Chi-square analysis to determine whether male and female youths differ in the level of involvement in substance abuse. The result of the analysis is presented in table 5.

Table 5: Summary of Chi-square Analysis on the Level of Involvement Based on Gender.

		LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT				df	X ² value	Sig.	Decision
		Low	Moderate	High	Total				
GENDER	Male	6	8	36	50	2	8.05	0.01	Significant
	Female	12	16	22	50				
Total		18	24	58	100				

The result in Table 5 shows that there is a significant difference between male and female in their level of involvement in substance abuse among youths. This is evident with the X²-calculated value of 8.05 and p-value of 0.01. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is not accepted which signifies that there is a significant difference between male and female in their level of involvement in substance abuse among youths.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the level of involvement in substance abuse among youths based on socio-economic status.

To test this hypothesis, the data collected from the respondents to the questionnaire were analysed using Chi-square analysis to determine whether youths differ in the level of awareness of substance abuse based on socio-economic status. The result of the analysis is presented in table 6.

Table 6: Summary of chi-square Analysis on the Level of Awareness Based on Socio-Economic Status.

		LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT				df	X ² value	Sig.	Decision
		Low	Moderate	High	Total				
SOCIO-STATUS	Low	5	2	7	14	4	3.79	0.02	Significant
	Average	3	5	10	18				
	High	10	17	41	68				
	Total	18	24	58	100				

The result in Table 6 shows that there is a significant difference in the level of involvement in substance abuse among youths based on their socio-economic status. This is evident with the X²-calculated value of 3.79 and p-value of 0.02. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is not accepted which signifies that there is a significant difference in the level of involvement in substance abuse among the youths based on socio-economic status.

Discussion on Findings

From the findings of the study, it was revealed that the level of involvement of youths in substance abuse is high. The result from this study is in line with those of Obongo & Njoku (2017) and Sarfo (2020). The rate at which youths engage in the consumption of drugs and other substances is freighting. The result that emerges from this study points to the fact above. The cosmopolitan nature and large population of the study area may be adduced to be one of the reasons for the high level of involvement. The youths' involvement level in substance use, may lead to school drop-out and engagement in different social crimes, which will affect their performance in school. Such will increase or decrease mentally or psychologically and endanger their lives in the future. Addicted students may find it difficult to comprehend during the teaching and learning process. Addiction to substances usually has a grievous implication on the victim.

Findings from Hypothesis One indicate that there is a significant difference between male and female attitudes in relation to substance abuse. The findings revealed that there is a dichotomy between the male and female consumption of substance abuse. The findings support the results of Agu et al. (2013) and Idowu et al. (2018) but contradicted the study of Leonard et al. (2015) which reported no significant gender difference. Possible reasons for male involvement than female include peer belongingness to feel among others, to get energised for physical and mental actions, to have the boldness to approach the opposite sex. The majority of males who are addicted to substance use react in an abnormal way such as engaging in social ill. Such a person indulges in different acts like shoplifting, cultism, theft, and raping, among others. They likely become school dropouts which will have consequences on their social life.

Table 6 revealed that there is a significant difference in the level of involvement in substance abuse **among youths based** on their socio-economic status. The high socio-economic status participants were high substance users than the others. This goes in line with the study of Charitonidi et al. (2016) and Humensky (2010) but is at variance with the study of Ranjbaran et al. (2018) which reported the poor economic situation in the families and family size as risk factors for substance abuse.

Conclusion

Based on the data analyses, the study evaluated the involvement of youths in substance abuse. An overview of the whole findings revealed that youths are well involved, and engage in substance abuse. Their level of involvement is indicated in the results of this study. As depicted in this study, female youths are also engaged in the act of substance abuse, though the percentage of the male is higher than the female. That is why male addicts with substances react in an abnormal way and a non-conformists among their peers. Furthermore, it also revealed the influence of socio-economic status on substance use of the youths whether from low, medium, or high socio-economic status.

Recommendations

Based on these outcomes the following were made as recommendations:

- i. Counselling should be promoted on curbing youths substance abuse in schools. Counselling strategies have proven to be much more dynamic and effective in curbing youth substance abuse. If the under-aged are properly counselled and guided, it will reduce the menace of substance abuse and drug addiction. Furthermore,
- ii. Teachers should be regularly exposed to some counselling principles, especially for adolescents, for proper behavioural modification. This process will perform serious magic in reducing involvement of addiction in drugs and other related social crimes.
- iii. The schools should help to inculcate in each student a positive self-concept, high self-esteem, self-identity, and implicit confidence so that majority of the youths will stay away from drug addiction. The schools should counsel the students regularly to alleviate fear and depression. Students should approach the counsellors for solutions and shun peer influence, especially on the use of drugs.
- iv. Parents should be good role models to their children.
- v. The Local government should establish counselling units or departments in their local council area against the use of drugs.
- vi. Federal and State governments should combine to have drug education programmes for adolescents.
- vii. The media should be encouraged to present programmes that will discourage the under-aged

from using and abusing substances.

- viii. National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) must intensify the anti-drug campaigns to have a drug-free society.

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