Students' perceptions of the causes and influence of drug abuse on their learning behaviour in public secondary schools, North-Centre Nigeria

[1]Muhammad AUT.

Niger State College of Nursing Sciences, School of Nursing, PMB 50, Bida, Niger State, Nigeria.

Corresponding author:

Muhammad AUT., Niger State College of Nursing Sciences, School of Nursing, PMB 50, Bida, Niger State, Nigeria. E-mail:

usmantanimu74@gmail.com

Abstract

Background: Drug abuse among youths in Nigeria has become a national concern because it has serious impacts on their academic performances and future leadership potentials. Most of the studies in Nigeria youths related to drugs of abuse were among undergraduates and rarely in secondary schools. The study contributed to fill this gap by assessing students' perception of the causes and influence of drug abuse on their learning behaviour.

Methodology:

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to collect information from 6 public secondary schools in Bida, Niger-State, Nigeria. Data were collected through respondents filling the researchers self-developed questionnaire entitled "Students' Perceived Causes and Influence of Substance Abuse" (SPCISA).

Results: This study found that majority of the respondents defined drug abuse as the use of drugs without prescription (87.6%) and/or the unusual use of prescribed medications (59.9%). Some of them identified perceived causes of using drug abuse to include poor parental influence (25.1%), peer pressure (25.1%) and the ready availability of drugs of abuse (32.7%). They also note some of the consequences as reducing their understanding of class lessons (69.9%), disobeying schools' rules and regulations (25.1%), missing classes frequently (14.9%) and behaving irrationally (32.5%).

Conclusion: This study concluded that respondents had better understanding of what drug abuse is, some understanding of the perceived causes and subsequent consequences. It was suggested that there is need for more addiction prevention education in addition to policy makers taking appropriate measure to reduce availability of drugs of abuse.

Keywords: Drug abuse; Students' perception of causes; Public secondary school; Bida.

Introduction

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has stated that drug abuse is a major problem in Nigerian schools.[1] For instance more than 5% of the school population in Lagos state, Nigeria had taken a psychoactive drug once in their lives.[2]

Such rise in Nigerian students use of psychoactive substance had been attributed to industrialization, urbanization, increased exposure to Western life style, unhealthy family background, high social class, peer-group influence, desire to remain awake at night, pressure to succeed in academic work, self-reported poor mental health, and easy accessibility to drugs of abuse.[3,4]

Despite National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and other organization-based interventions, drug abuse is on the rise with over 40% of students abusing various types of drugs.[5] This has become a national concern because it has serious impacts on socio-economic and intellectual advancement of Nigeria.[6,7] Given the availability of current studies on the academic consequences from increasing use of drugs of abuse among Nigerian tertiary students, it is important to establish same among secondary school students. Hence, this study determined students' understanding of the perceived causes of drug abuse, their identification of the commonly abused drugs and the consequences of using on their learning behaviour.

Methodology

Place of study and Procedure

This study was limited to public secondary school students in Bida, the headquarter of Bida Local Government Area of Niger State, Nigeria.[9] Students from junior secondary school 3 and the senior secondary students 1, 2 and 3, as well as the school counsellors from six public secondary schools were involved in this study. The six schools were designated A to F. Schools A and D represented mixed gender schools with population of 470 and 700 respectively; schools B and C represented boys only school with population of 850 and 500 respectively; and schools E and F represented girls only schools with population of 2200 and 330 respectively. Two weeks was utilized for this study. The first week was used for test retesting the questionnaire while the second week was required to collect data for the study.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The sample of this study was determined using Krejcie and Mogan[8] sample frame as given in Table 1, which recommended the appropriate sample for any given population. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample of the students.

Table 1: Showing Selected Schools and the Sample Size

S/No.	School levels	No. of students	Sample size
1	School A	470	214
2	School B	850	265
3	School C	500	217
4	School D	700	248
5	School E	2200	327
6	School F	330	181
	Total	5050	1452

Instrument for data collection

The instrument used for the study was a self-developed questionnaire entitled "Students' Perceived Causes and Influence of Substance Abuse" (SPCISA). The sets of questions in the questionnaire were designed to help determine the perceptions of secondary school students towards drug and substance abuse and how these will affect their learning behaviour.

The questionnaire is divided into two sections. Section 'A' demands for personal data of the respondents. Section 'B' consists of statements that were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale. Scores on this scale ranged from 1 to 5 and the respondents checked the box that best reflected their view on drugs and substance abuse. The questionnaires were distributed to all respondents sampled for the study.

Validity of the instrument

The instrument was validated using face and content validity. The instrument was given to two (2) colleagues and two (2) experts in the field of study to examine the relevance of items on the questionnaire to topic of study. The language, content and structure of the questionnaire were critically examined and possible corrections made where necessary, after which

the instrument was validated using Content Validity Index (CVI) with the formula:

$$CVI = \frac{\text{Number of items to be correct}}{\text{Total number of items presented}} = \frac{34}{40} \quad 0.85$$

The content validity index value was determined to be 0.875. This value is greater than the standard value of 0.7. Hence, the questionnaire is said to be valid and suitable for this study.

Reliability of the instrument

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient reliability value was computed to be 0.955.

Data analysis

The responses from the questionnaire were coded and checked for completeness. Thereafter, data were analysed using frequency and percentage. The analysis was done with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0.

Results and Discussion

Socio-demographic distribution of participants

A total of 967 questionnaires out of 1452 representing 66.6% were returned, analysed and reported. Out of the analysed data, 24 (2.5%) of the respondents did not fill other aspects of the questionnaire apart from age and gender. Table 2 below presents the demographic data of respondents that participated in the study. In terms of gender 775 (80.1%) of the respondents were males, 665 (67.7%) were with 10-17 years, 751 (77.7%) identified themselves as Muslims and 655 (67.7%) were not married students. These distributions are typical of a northern Nigeria setting where majority were Muslims[9] with those going to formal education settings being males who often started late usually after completing Quranic education.

Table 2: Socio-demographic distribution of respondents

variable		Frequency	Percentage(%)
Age	10-17	116	12.0
	18-25	655	67.7
	26-30	100	10.3
	Above 30	96	10.0
Gender	Male	775	80.1
	Female	192	19.9
Religion	Islam	751	77.7
	Christianity	120	12.4
	Others	72	7.4
Marital status	Single	643	67.7
	Married	300	32.2

Students' Perception of Drugs Abuse in Secondary Schools

Table 3: Frequency distribution of understanding drug abuse as the use of drugs without prescription

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	291	30.1
Agree	556	57.5
Disagree	96	9.9
Total	943	100.0

The results presented in Table 3 show that 847 (87.6%) of the students understood drug abuse as the use of drugs without prescription. This widespread understanding might be related to Khantzian's view of drug users as those with deficient ego function by using a drug as an "ego solvent", which acts on parts of the self that are cut off from consciousness by defence mechanisms.[10] It might further be related to the belief that drug dependent individuals generally experience more psychiatric distress than non-drug dependent individuals, and this arose from the gradual incorporation of the drug effects and the need to sustain these effects into the defensive structure-building activity of the ego itself.[10]

Table 4: Drug abuse identified as the unusual use of prescribed drugs

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	216	22.3
Agree	364	37.6
Neutral	123	12.7
Disagree	72	7.4
Strongly disagree	168	17.4
Total	943	100.0

The results presented in Table 4 shows that more than half of the respondents (59.9%) were also with the understanding that drug abuse is the unusual use of prescribed drugs. This finding indicated that most of the respondents see drug abuse not only as the consumption of drug without prescription but also as the inappropriate intake of prescribed drugs.

Table 5: Understanding that drug abuse makes an individual to think better in Class

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Strongly agree	72	7.4
Agree	24	2.5
Neutral	74	7.7
Disagree	168	17.4
Strongly disagree	605	62.6
Total	943	100.0

The results presented in Table 5 show that 96 (9.9%) of the students were in the erroneous belief that drug abuse makes an individual to think well in class, while 74 (7.7%) were neutral. This implied that more than two-third of the students

(80.0%) of the respondents had better understanding how drug of abuse can impair an individual to think better in class.

Table 6: Understanding that using drug abuse makes reading easier

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	51	5.3
Agree	74	7.7
Neutral	98	10.1
Disagree	144	14.9
Strongly disagree	576	59.6
Total	943	100.0

Table 6 shows that majority of the students (74.5%) disagrees that reading becomes much easier when they take drugs.

Table 7: Distribution of the belief that student's level of concentration increases when they take some drugs

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Strongly agree	168	17.4
Agree	72	7.4
Neutral	125	12.9
Disagree	144	14.9
Strongly disagree	434	44.9
Total	943	100.0

As shown in Table 7, majority of the respondents 578 (59.8%) disagree that student's level of concentration increases when they take some drugs of abuse. This finding appeared to be in agreement with another Nigerian study that drug abuse do negatively impact academic performance.[7]

Perceived causes of drug abuse among secondary school students

Table 8: Participants who believed their parents abuse of drugs influenced their using

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	168	17.4
Agree	74	7.7
Neutral	99	10.2
Disagree	168	17.4
Strongly disagree	434	44.9
Total	943	100.0

Table 8 shows that 242 (25.1%) of the students were in agreement that their parents abuse drugs. Such parents are often bad influence and might raise their children to become drug users and addicts. This is in conformity with study that identified family factor among others as a risk to make children to start using drugs of abuse.[11]

Table 9: Those who belief that friends influenced the start of using drugs of abuse

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Strongly agree	168	17.4
Agree	74	7.7
Neutral	99	10.2
Disagree	168	17.4
Strongly disagree	434	44.9
Total	943	100.0

The result presented in Table 9 is similar to table 8 above in terms of the proportion of respondents 242 (25.1%) who believed that their use starts with peer influence from friends. This finding does agree with that of Haladu[12] which states that peer pressure plays a major role in influencing many adolescents into drug abuse.

Table 10: Respondents distribution of where they obtain drug of abuse as from most shops and chemist in their area

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Strongly agree	96	9.9
Agree	220	22.8
Neutral	219	22.6
Disagree	72	7.4
Strongly disagree	336	34.7
Total	943	100.0

Table 10 shows that about a third 316 (32.7%) of the respondents identified that the drugs they abuse were found and obtainable in most shops and chemist in their area. That about a third of respondents could obtain the drugs of abuse in neutral places like shop and chemist did support the findings of Haladu[16] that in most countries drugs of abuse have dropped in prices as supplies increased.

Consequences of Drug Abuse on their Learning Behaviours as Perceived by Students

Table 11: Respondents understanding of class topics following use of psychoactive substances

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	24	2.5
Agree	147	15.2
Neutral	96	9.9
Disagree	146	15.1
Strongly disagree	530	54.8
Total	943	100.0

The results presented in Table 11 above show that close to two-third 676 (69.9%) of respondents cannot understand better all topics taught after abusing drugs. This implied that abuse of drugs does not make students understand better information given in the class.

Table 12: Distribution of respondents who disobey school rules and regulations as a result of using drugs of abuse

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Strongly agree	123	12.7
Agree	120	12.4
Neutral	98	10.1
Disagree	146	15.1
Strongly disagree	432	44.7
Total	919	100.0

Among the 919 respondents who completely filled this aspect of the questionnaire s shown in table 12, less than a third 243 (25.1%) related using drugs of abuse to disobeying school rules and regulations. The spread of this scourge among the youths have current and future consequences like dropping out from school, cultism, social violence, internet frauds, gang formation, destructions of normal academic activities, armed robbery 419 syndrome, social miscreants (area boys and girls) lawlessness among youths, lack of respect for elders etc.[2,13]

Table 13: Respondents understanding in terms of drugs abuse and missing classes often

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agree	48	5.0
Agree	96	9.9
Neutral	173	17.9
Disagree	170	17.6
Strongly disagree	432	44.7
Total	919	100.0

Table 13 show that 144 (14.9%) of the respondents do miss classes because of using drugs of abuse. This suggested that students that abuse drugs do not often miss classes and this often comes with poor social adjustment and negative academic performances.[14]

Table 14: Respondents understanding of using drugs of abuse and behaving irrationally

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Strongly agree	120	12.4
Agree	194	20.1
Neutral	144	14.9
Disagree	101	10.4
Strongly disagree	360	37.2
Total	919	100.0

Table 14 shows that nearly a third 314 (32.5%) of the respondents were able to understand that using drugs of abuse made them to behave irrationally. This might be related to chronic use that can cause serious and sometimes irreversible damage to adolescent's physical and psychological development.[15]

Conclusions

This study concluded that respondents had better understanding of what drug abuse is i.e. the use of drugs without prescription and/or the unusual use of prescribed drugs. Their understanding of the perceived causes of using drug abuse (e.g. parental influence, peer pressure and the ready availability of drugs of abuse) also suggested that they have some level of drug abuse education. Finally their understanding of some of the consequences of abusing drugs was

relatively moderate suggesting the need for more addiction prevention education from teachers, neighbours and friends of indicated youth. Furthermore, policy makers should make policy that will let appropriate measures be taking to reduce drugs of abuse availability in the environment and communities.

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