



Educational Policy: Compulsory and Periodical Testing of Tertiary Students to Reduce Narcotic Abuse in Nigeria

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Abstract

Abuse of drugs and alcohol as well as increased criminal activity poses serious challenges to the lives of most people, especially youths. Directly or indirectly, it creates a financial burden on the nation in terms of social costs, health care costs, crime and low productivity. Eliminating or reducing substance use among students involves three methods- as a deterrent, as a means of drug detection and preventing spillover effects on other students who might observe and be influenced by the activities of their peers. This study investigated compulsory and periodical testing of tertiary students to reduce narcotic abuse. The result from this study was gathered from 249 participants in the study. Descriptive survey was adopted in the study and the data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The result of the study revealed that compulsory and periodical testing of tertiary students as a means to reduce narcotic abuse in Nigeria.

Keywords: Educational policy, compulsory and periodical testing, tertiary students, narcotic abuse

1 Introduction

In May 2021, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, (NDLEA), proposed the conduct of drug tests on students of tertiary institutions, recruits of security agencies and political appointees. The rationale behind this is that the increased use of drug activities is largely responsible for the growing rate of crime such as kidnapping, terrorism, insurgency, cultism, insurgency and gangsterism in Nigeria. The objective of testing of students is for early detection of their status to determine the type of intervention to utilize (The Guardian, 2021).

The abuse of drugs and alcohol as well as increased criminal activity poses serious challenges to the lives of most people, especially youths. Directly or indirectly, it creates a financial burden on the nation in terms of social costs, health care costs, crime and low productivity. Eliminating or reducing substance use among students involves three methods- as a deterrent, as a means of drug detection and preventing spillover effects on other students who might observe and be influenced by the activities of their peers (DuPont, Merlo, Arria and Shea, 2014). The freedom experienced by tertiary students upon gaining admissions enables them to take up all sorts of habits including experimentation of drugs and alcohol. The indulgence of students in drugs is attributed to factors such as anxiety, stress, social pressure and curiosity; and the inability to properly control this habit often leads to addiction.

There are negative consequences associated with the use of substances, and this includes poor academic performance, risky sexual behaviours and delinquency. In addressing this negative behavior of drug abuse, programs such as school-based mandatory-random student drug testing (MRSDT) is often utilized. This program involves both students and their parents giving their consents to the random drug testing of students as a condition for participation in extracurricular activities. The program is designed as a prevention strategy with the objective of identifying and referring students with substance use problems to counseling services and deterring students from engaging in substance use (National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, 2010).

In the United Kingdom and Switzerland, the military utilized this strategy of random drug tests for decades as a means of preventing the use of drugs and other substances, which resulted to a 90% drop in the early 1980s. The drug testing program has a further advantage of enabling students maintain their confidence level and bolster school attendance, through the provision of tangible assistance to those who test positive. However, concerns have been raised that the implementation of drug testing program among tertiary students may cause students to change their drug behaviors to avoid detection, through using drugs that are not tested for. In view of this, this paper examines the extent to which including the compulsory and periodical testing of Tertiary students would reduce narcotic abuse in Nigeria.

2 Statement of research problem

The use and misuse of drugs is a global problem which is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore as it is directly linked to the growing rate of crime. Majority of people who misuse drugs have been reported to be students (Kaynak et al., 2013). Piacentini and Banister (2009) attributed this worrisome situation to factors such as the increasing culture of intoxication among youths. This study therefore aims at examining the determinants of narcotics use among tertiary students in Nigeria. It further extent to which formulating and implementing drug testing policies would to reduce narcotics abuse among students.

3 Research objectives

1. To determine the factors influencing narcotic abuse among tertiary students
2. The extent to which compulsory and periodical testing of students would reduce narcotic abuse among tertiary students.

4 Research questions

1. What are the factors influencing narcotic abuse among tertiary students?
2. To what extent would the compulsory and periodical testing of students reduce narcotic abuse among tertiary students?

5 Literature Review

In recent times, more schools are beginning to test for drug use because they believe that if students are aware that they might be tested, they will say no to drugs. Regrettably, what these schools do not realise is that drug testing is not the solution to their drug problems because for one thing, there is no tangible evidence that compulsory and periodical drug testing deters drug use among students and does not address the reasons why they turn to drugs in the first instance.

People who advocate for drug testing in schools do so because they believe that it can significantly reduce drug taking, discourage use, provide proof where use is suspected, assist former users to keep abstaining, reassure parents/guardians that efforts are being made and when expulsion is being considered, acts as final proof.

Narcotics can be defined as drugs that act pharmacologically to change the intellectual and physical status of a person, induce sleep, reduce pain (analgesia), and alter mood or behaviour (e.g., euphoria). Common examples include morphine, codeine, oxycodone, and hydrocodone (Hackney, 2018).

Effects of narcotic use among students include impairment of critical thinking and memory functions, increases one's risk for psychosis, depression and anxiety (Sweeney, 2019).

There have been arguments against drug testing in schools, particularly random drug testing. Athletes get tested for the use of performance-enhancing drugs, which many would argue is a rational reason for drug testing, so that no player has an advantage over another. Besides this, other issues with drug testing students (LaRock, 2019), regardless of whether or not they are athletes include:

- i. It is considered unconstitutional as students have the right to privacy.
- ii. What students do outside the school does not concern the school and their budget can be put to better use than testing students.

- iii. There might be an addiction problem for a consistent drug user and such person should be helped rather than punished.
- iv. Every student deserves an education irrespective of the circumstance and denying a student an education could be even worse for them, as education is most times the only way out.

Consequences of Drug Testing

Sometimes, pushing too much for a drug-free tertiary institution can have the opposite result. Students should be trusted to make the right decisions for themselves, and it is essential that students stay in school because it is their best chance of having a successful future. They may delve deeper into drug use if they are drug tested and punished. Hence, schools should avoid testing their students for drug use (with the exception of athletes) because punishment is not always the best course of action when a student uses drugs. Instead, they should be taught about the effects of drugs, and what they can do to handle the situation responsibly and safely if the opportunity arises (LaRock, 2019).

In Nigeria, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has decided to seek the approval of the government to conduct drug tests on tertiary institutions' new students as they have linked the rapid growth of nefarious drug activities to the upsurge in crimes like insurgency, kidnapping, terrorism, cultism, rape, political thuggery and other defects tormenting the country (NAN, 2021).

6 Previous studies

Adeyemo et al., (2016) sought to determine the prevalence of drug abuse among students in a tertiary institution in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from a sample size of 800 students. Results indicated that most of the respondents were youths within the age group of 20-25; 46.6% of them had taken drugs for non-medical purposes at least.

Ajayi and Somefun (2020) examined the prevalence, correlation and frequency of recreational drug use among young adults from two universities in Nigeria. They examined the influence of factors at the individual and family level on recreational drug use such as codeine cough syrups and tramadol among adolescents and young adults. Results showed that 24.5% of students had ever used drugs for recreational purposes with 17.5% being current users. Other factors like living in the same household as one's mother, adequate family support, and frequent attendance of religious fellowships were significantly associated with a lower likelihood of recreational drug use.

7 Theoretical framework: Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

This theory was first developed by Martin Fishbein in the late 1960s and Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) revised and expanded it in the decades that followed. It focuses on the intention of a person to behave a certain way. An intention is the possibility that someone will behave in a particular way in particular situations, whether or not they actually do. This model indicated that attitude was a major factor in predicting behavioral intention. There are three basic components in TRA which are behavioural intention, attitude and subjective norm. Behavioural intention is seen as the main determinant of behaviour and to better understand it, this theory looks at the attitude of the person towards that behaviour and also the subjective standards of people or groups who can influence those attitudes.

8 Research Methodology

The paper adopted a descriptive survey method. Using purposive sampling, 3 tertiary institutions within Lagos were selected based on proximity to the researcher. Respondents were selected randomly, which comprised of 200 students and 50 lecturers from the three schools forming a sample size of 250 respondents. Data was collected by means of questionnaire, structure using a modified five Likert scale. The questionnaire had two sections: section A which focused on demographic information, while section B focused on the questions formulated. The questionnaires were distributed with the aid of research assistant and retrieved on the spot. The data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The benchmark for decision making was 2.5 and above; below which the item was rejected.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussions**Demographic data****Table 1. Demographic data of the respondents**

Demographics	Perimeter	Students (n=203)		Lecturers(n=46)	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	100	49.3	27	58.7
	Female	103	50.7	18	41.3
Age	15-20 years	167	82.3	-	-
	21-30 years	33	16.3	7	15.2
	31-40 years	3	1.5	28	60.9
	41 years and above	-	-	11	23.9
Highest educational qualification	Undergraduates	155	76.4	-	-
	OND/Technical/NCE	38	18.7	-	-
	B.Sc/ B.A./HND or Equivalent	10	5.0	-	-
	Master's Degree	-	-	25.1	54.6
	PhD	-	-	20.9	45.4

Field survey (2021)

The table above indicates the demographic information of the respondents which comprises both lecturers and students. As indicated in the 203 students participated in the study alongside 46 lecturers. This gave rise to 249 participants in the study. This implies that about 99.8% of the distributed questionnaire distributed were retrieved and used for this study. According to the result in the Table, 49.3% and 58.7% were male students and lecturers who participated in the study respectively; while the female constitutes 50.7% and 41.3% respectively. The ages of the respondents varies between 15-20 through above 41 years. Whereas the ages of the students who participated in the study were more within 15 years through 30 years while the ages of the lecturers were more between 30 and above. The respondents had different levels of educational attainment. While the lecturers had masters (54.6%) and PhD (45.4%), the students selected undergraduates (76.4%) with exception of few with OND/Diploma certificates (18.7%) and BSc/BA/HND (5%).

RQ1: What are the factors influencing narcotic abuse among tertiary students?**Table 2: Showing the factors influencing narcotic abuse among tertiary students**

Statements	Mean*	Stdev
Stress	4.00	0.87
Curiosity	4.16	0.75
Peer pressure	4.15	0.72
Curiosity	3.51	1.21
Social anxiety	3.89	0.90
youthful lifestyle	4.02	0.91
Experimentation	3.88	1.04
Inadequate knowledge of the harmful consequences of drug use	2.86	1.01
Affordability and availability of substances	4.25	0.86
Tension release	2.77	1.14
Overall Means and standard deviation	3.75	0.94

* 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree

Source: Research Data computation (2021)

Table 2 above presents the participants' opinions on the factors influencing narcotic abuse among tertiary students. Data collected from both students and lectures support all the items listed in the table above has their mean scores above 2.5 which indicate that they are all accepted as factors influencing narcotic abuse among tertiary institution with overall means and standard deviations of 3.75 and 0.94 respectively. Thus, we conclude that the following are responsible for students' abuse of Narcotic drugs in tertiary institution: Stress, Curiosity, Peer pressure, Social anxiety, youthful lifestyle, Experimentation, Inadequate knowledge of the harmful consequences of drug use, Affordability and availability of substances, and finally, Tension release. This result is consistent with earlier studies such as Adeyemo et al., (2016) and Ajayi and Somefun (2020) respectively. Their studies revealed the prevalence of drugs abuse among tertiary institution students and at same identified some of the reasons for drugs abuse including peer pressure, bad gangs, stress, and frustrations, among others.

RQ2: To what extent would the compulsory and periodical testing of students reduce narcotic abuse among tertiary students?

Table 3: The extent to which compulsory and periodical testing of students reduce narcotic abuse among tertiary students

Statement	Mean*	Stdev
Enables students' status to be determined early to decide the form of intervention to deploy.	3.31	1.04
It would encourage other students to stop the habit, knowing that they can easily be detected by the authorities.	4.18	0.78
It would serve as a preventive measure	3.30	1.03
It would help them achieve as full recovery as possible from the disorder and become productive	4.22	0.68
Overall Means and standard deviation	3.75	0.88

* 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree

Source: Research Data computation (2021)

Having established that drugs abuse is common among students in tertiary institutions as well as identified some of the reasons for this. This research question is meant to ascertain the extent to which engaging in compulsory and periodical testing of students reduce narcotic abuse among tertiary students. The result indicated in the table above have an overall means scores and standard deviations of 3.75 and 0.88 respectively. Likewise the mean scores of the individual items in the table exceeded the benchmark of an average mean 2.5 which indicates that all the items in the table were all accepted. This shows that mandatory and periodical testing of students reduces narcotic abuse among tertiary students. This is so because compulsory and periodical testing will enables students' status to be determined early to decide the form of intervention to deploy. It would encourage other students to stop the habit, knowing that they can easily be detected by the authorities. Also, periodical testing would serve as a preventive measure as well as help them achieve as full recovery as possible from the disorder and become productive. This result therefore shows that both students and lecturers supports that mandatory and periodical testing of students reduces narcotic abuse among tertiary students. This result therefore supports the proposition by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, (NDLEA), in May 2021, who proposed the conduct of drug tests on students of tertiary institutions, recruits of security agencies and political appointees. The objective of testing of students is for early detection of their status to determine the type of intervention to utilize (The Guardian, 2021).

9 Conclusion and recommendations

The strength of every nation rests on their youths who are mainly students in tertiary institution. These students embodies individual with diverse talents and abilities capable of changing the nation for greater growth and development. However, when these youths are neglected and allowed to live on drugs, their future as well as that of the nation is affected negatively. Earlier studies such as Adeyemo et al. (2016) and Ajayi and Somefun (2020) revealed that the rate of narcotic drug abuse is higher among tertiary students. The result of this study revealed that one way to eliminate narcotic drug abuse among students is through compulsory and periodical testing. Although this proposition has earlier been made by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, (NDLEA) in May 2021, it has not been implemented in Nigerian institutions. For this reason, this study recommends that the immediate implementation of periodic testing among students to curtail Narcotic drug abuse among students in tertiary institutions be included in educational policy. Alongside, the study recommends public sensitization on the dangers of narcotic drug abuse to discourage its consumption among the study.

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Appendix**Questionnaire****Educational Policy: Compulsory and periodical testing of Tertiary students to reduce narcotic abuse in Nigeria****REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

Dear Respondent,

I am carrying out a study on “Educational Policy: Compulsory and periodical testing of Tertiary students to reduce narcotic abuse in Nigeria”, and you have been chosen to be part of the study. This questionnaire is only for academic purposes. Kindly select the response which applies to you and all information will be kept confidential

SECTION A

Gender: Male () Female ()

Age:

1. 15-20 ()
2. 21-30 ()
3. 31-40 ()
4. 41 and above ()

Education qualification

1. Undergraduates ()
2. OND/NCE ()
3. B.Sc./ HND ()
4. M. Sc./MBA ()
5. PhD ()

SECTION B:

Instructions: Please tick (√) as appropriate where

SA = Strongly Agree (SA), A = Agree, D = Disagree (D), SD = Strongly Disagree (SD)

Key: Strongly agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1).

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
RQ1	What are the factors influencing narcotic abuse among tertiary students?				
1	Stress				
2	Curiosity				
3	Peer pressure				
4	Curiosity				
5	Social anxiety				
6	youthful lifestyle				
7	Experimentation				
8	Inadequate knowledge of the harmful consequences of drug use				
9	Affordability and availability of substances				
10	Tension release				
RQ2	To what extent would the compulsory and periodical testing of students reduce narcotic abuse among tertiary students?				
11	Enables students' status to be determined early to decide the form of intervention to deploy.				
12	It would encourage other students to stop the habit, knowing that they can easily be detected by the authorities.				
13	It would serve as a preventive measure				
14	It would help them achieve as full recovery as possible from the disorder and become productive				