



Mental Health and Substance Abuse: An In-Depth Analysis of the Damaging Effect on Students in Colleges of Education in Anambra State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The need to curb high rate of drug and substance abuse among students in colleges of education necessitated this study. The study carried out an in-depth analysis of the damaging effect of drug and substance abuse on mental health of students in Colleges of Education in Anambra State, Nigeria. Three research questions guided the study. It adopted survey research design with a population of 1,232 second-year students, 11 HODs, and 11 guidance and counseling lecturers from two public colleges of education in Anambra State. Multi-stage sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 303 respondents. Closed and open-ended questionnaires validated by experts in the field of business education and measurement and evaluation were used for data collection. The reliability of the instruments were established using test-retest method and data collected were calculated using Pearson product moment correlation formula which yielded coefficient index of .98. Data collected were analyzed using frequency and percentages, and presented in graphs, tables and charts using SPSS version 25.0. Findings established that most students are driven into taking drugs by peer pressure. Poor performance is the greatest effect of drug abuse among drug taking students. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that drug and substance abuse is a multi-faceted phenomenon within colleges of education in Anambra State, Nigeria. It was recommended among others that; administrators of colleges of education should develop, implement and regularly review, in consultation with the school community and governing council, a school behavioural code which is consistent with the drug abuse policies.

Key Words: *Drug, Drug Abuse, Mental Health, Colleges of Education*

Introduction

Concern over the growing number of adolescents abusing substances that are illegal is spreading throughout the globe these days. Due to its enduring trend among adolescents, it is now a global public health hazard affecting many different nations, continents, and areas. With an estimated 120 million users of hard drugs including cocaine, heroin, and other synthetic narcotics, substance misuse is pervasive throughout the world (Global Burden of Disease Study, 2013). Opioid use disorders contributed to 127,000 deaths in 2013, compared to 53,000 in 1990 due to drug use disorders. The two conditions that cause the greatest number of deaths are amphetamine use disorder (3,800 deaths) and cocaine use disorder (4,300 deaths). Thirteen thousand more people died as a result of alcohol use disorders.

In Nigeria, the National Agency for Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) as cited by Haladu (2003) noted that stimulants, hallucinogens, opioids, sedatives, miscellaneous, and tranquilizers are the most often abused chemicals. They work directly on the central nervous system, altering the sensory processing unit in the brain. Sedatives are the most often used and misused medications, owing to the widespread perception that they ease tension and anxiety. Some of them assist consumers sleep, relieve tension, relax, or forget about their worries. They get their energy from valium, alcohol, and chloroform. Miscellaneous is another category of drug that involves a collection of volatile inhalants that provide users euphoria, emotional instability, and a persistent distortion of reality. Its sources are chemicals, glues, spot removers, tube repair, scents, and a variety of other materials.

The prevalence of drug addiction in among students in educational institutions is one of the most important problems in Nigeria. Among the highest drugs abused by students in Nigeria are cigarette, brewed alcohol, locally brewed alcohol, kolanutapsirin and cananbbis (Essien, 2010). Drugs have the ability to change how the brain, emotions, and behaviour work. Persistent abuse of substance has been ascertained to be having debilitating effect on adolescent students. As noted by Mba (2008) and Sambo (2008) respectively, chronic use of substance can sometimes cause serious irreversible damage to students' physical and psychological development. Physical problems include; liver cirrhosis, pancreatic, peptic ulcer, tuberculosis, hypertension, neurological disorder; while social problems comprised broken homes, increased crime rate, sexual offences, homicide and so on. It could also lead to stimulation of

heart and narrowing of blood vessels, hypertension, headache, loss of appetite and nausea, aggravate or causes sinusitis, bronchitis, cancer, strokes, heart attack and eventually lead to death.

The challenge with the use of these drugs becomes evident with the rising spate of HIV/AIDS incidences among young people in Nigeria (Fawole, Ogunkan & Adegoke, 2011). The use of alcohol and cigarette predisposes students to sexual risk behaviour (Imaledo, Peter-Kio and Asuquo, 2012). The prevalence of alcohol and drug use is seen less among day students whose parents are involved in their monitoring, and as against students residing on campus, hence, bringing to the fore the role of parents in curbing drug abuse. Drug use and abuse have been found to affect academic performance and mental health of students (Akindutire & Adegboyega, 2012), cause physiological and psychiatric disturbances (Mba, 2008), and have been perceived by students to result in poor physical health, poor finance, emotional problems, memory impairment, risk factor for most chronic diseases, problems with family relationships and so forth (Oshodi, Aina & Onajole, 2010). Students continue to use and abuse drugs because they are unaware of the harmful effects of drug abuse (Oshodi, Aina & Onajole, 2010).

Surprisingly, Kobiowu (2010) found no relationship between drug abuse and academic performance. In fact, from Kobiowu's study, while 35(19%) of drug abusers showed high performance, 30 (17%) of non-drug abusers showed low performance while 52(23%) of drug abusers showed low performance and 63(41%) of non-drug abusers showed low performance. These findings are surprising and raise one major question "does drug use enhance academic performance? Shehu and Idris (2018) findings, answered this by not concurring with Kobiowu's (2010) findings which found that students who were non-smokers performed better than smokers.

One could be misled into arguing that while Kobiowu (2010) used university students, Shehu and Idris (2018) sampled secondary school students hence the difference. However, such arguments might end up highlighting unnecessarily the point that drug abusers were found not to struggle academically more than non abusers that is no statistically significant relationship between drug abuse and academic performance and since there is no academic implication (not that there must necessarily be), it might encourage substance use and abuse. It is against this background that the researcher carried out an in-depth analysis of the damaging effect of drug and substance abuse on mental health of students in Colleges of Education in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Unlawful drug utilization is harmful to the adolescents and the general public, generating violations, spreading sicknesses such as AIDS, STDs and Staphylococcus among others. Many adolescents are engaged in the utilization of unlawful medications since they need to lessen normal weights around them, to conceal for their low self-esteem. It symbolizes a dissent against set principles. The capture by police, NDLEA and the news reports uncovered that unlawful drug utilization is on the expansion in Nigeria. In spite of the impact of many concerned bodies to check this danger, many adolescents still peddle these drugs as if they are innocuous. They give them motto, for example, "for enormity", "for taste" and so forth which frequently bait silly students into substance and liquor abuse and long haul impacts of the abuse of drug on themselves, their families and the general public on the loose.

Healthy living which includes freedom from illicit and non-prescribed drugs is an indispensable means through which physical, mental and social well-being of individuals are enhanced. This has been ascertained to be beneficial in terms of health promotion and disease prevention. In spite of the benefits that are accrued to appropriate use of drugs as well as freedom from consumption of illicit drugs; empirical studies have established that, there is a consistent rapid rise in the number of cases of drug abuse among youth in Nigeria. In addition, preliminary investigation conducted by the researcher revealed that there is a prevalence of substance abuse among adolescents in Anambra State. Some students use drugs that are not prescribed by physicians while others use illicit drugs, join secret cult and this may lead to poor academic achievement. Drug abuse poses challenges and pressures that can affect concentration and temperament in students and thereby lure them to engage in social vices and other ill behaviours during lessons rather than studying hard to pass. In order to solve the problems associated with drug abuse, previous studies concentrated on different categories of people like drivers and artisans, while some focused more on both in and out-of-school adolescents; with little emphasis on factors determining substance abuse among in-school adolescents, particularly in Colleges of Education, Anambra State. Against this backdrop, this study specifically examined (1) influence of demographic variables on the prevalence of drug and substance abuse among students in colleges of education, Anambra State (2) causes of drugs and substance abuse among students in colleges of education, Anambra State and (3) effects of drugs and substance abuse on students and their education in colleges of education, Anambra State, Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What is the influence of demographic variables on the prevalence of drug and substance abuse among students in Colleges of Education in Anambra State, Nigeria?
2. What are the causes of drugs and substance abuse among students in Colleges of Education in Anambra State, Nigeria?
3. What are the effects of drugs and substance abuse on students and their education in Colleges of Education, Anambra State, Nigeria?

Method

The survey research design was adopted in the study. It was carried out in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study's population consisted of 1,232 second-year students, 11 departmental heads, and 11 guidance and counseling lecturers from two public colleges of education in Anambra State: Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe and Federal College of Education (Technical) in Umunze. The stratified random sampling technique using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for sample determination was utilized to select 291 second year students, and the random sampling technique was employed to choose six departmental heads and six guidance and counseling lecturers from the two institutions. Questionnaires designed using closed and open-ended questions were used to collect data for the study. Section A of questionnaire sought demographic information about the respondents such as parental income and school location while section B contained items on effects of alcohol and substance abuse on students. The instruments were validated using the opinions of three experts from the field of business education and measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was established using test-retest method and data collected were calculated using Pearson product moment correlation formula and reliability coefficient of .98 was obtained. The researcher administered the questionnaire to the respondents in their institutions with the help of two researcher assistants adequately briefed on the modalities for administration and collection of the questionnaires. Data collected were analyzed with frequency and percentages. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. Information generated was presented in the form of graphs, tables and charts.

Ethical Consideration

The respondents' consent was sought before administering the questionnaires. The researcher assured the respondents of confidentiality on the information given on the questionnaires. The information given by the respondents was not to be used for any other purpose other than education research.

Table 1: Influence of Parents Sources of Income on the Prevalence of Drug and Substance Abuse among Students

The analysis data in Table 1 show that students whose parents are low income earners are likely to engage in drugs as shown by 38%. This is because their basic needs like food, shelter and clothing might not be met therefore leading them to abuse drugs due to frustrations. On the other hand, those whose parents are high income earners might not engage so much in drugs due to their basic needs having been made. This is represented by 16.8%. The findings imply that Drug and Substance Abuse is a major societal problem and cuts across all levels of income of parents with those of low economic status highly affected by the vice.

Table 1.

	Frequency	Percentage
High Income	45	16.8
Average income	53	19.8
Low income	102	38.0
No income	68	25.4
Total	268	100

Table 2: Influence of School Administration on the Prevalence of Drug and Substance Abuse among Students

The analysis on figure 1 shows that high handedness leads to drug abuse which stands at 50%, lack of freedom at (22%), harsh treatment at (17%) and laxity at (11%). Perhaps this is due to the fact that the students in schools are at the peak of their adolescence therefore may tend to be rebellious if not handled with care. The college managements need to understand this and embrace dialogue to identify the learners' problems in order to help them stay away from drugs.

Figure 1: Influence of School Administration on Drug and Substance Abuse among Students

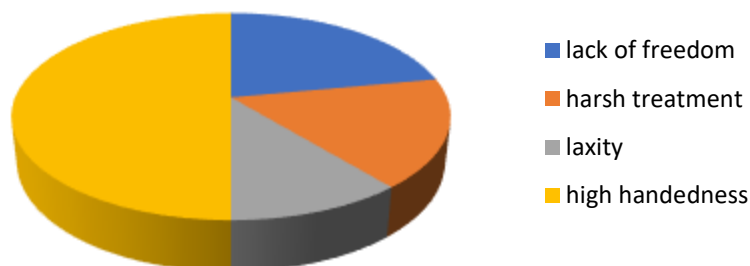


Table 3: Teachers’ responses on Causes of Drug and Substance Abuse among Students

As shown in figure 2, teachers reported peer pressure (38%) as the main cause of drug and substance abuse among students. Other factors cited included curiosity (25%), availability of drugs (23%) and the belief among students that they will pass exams (14%) engage in drugs. This implies that peer pressure among other factors continue to influence students with irreparable damages such as addiction to dangerous drugs.

Figure 2: Causes of Drug and Substance Abuse for Students as observed by Teachers

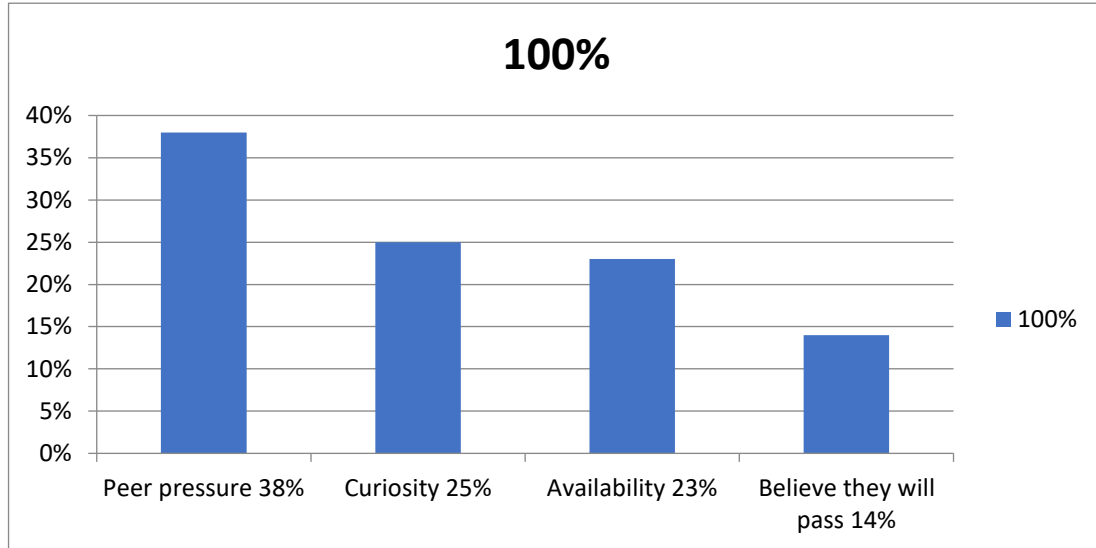


Table 4: Effects of Drug and Substance Abuse on Students and Their Education

The analysis in figure 3 shows that drugs when abused have different effects on the students. Poor performance (52%) was rated highly aggressive behavior (30%), withdrawal syndrome (10%) and violence (8%). Students who abuse drugs perform poorly in both local and national examinations. This impacts negatively as they may not continue to higher institutions of learning.

Figure 3: Effects of Drugs and Substance Abuse on Students and their Education

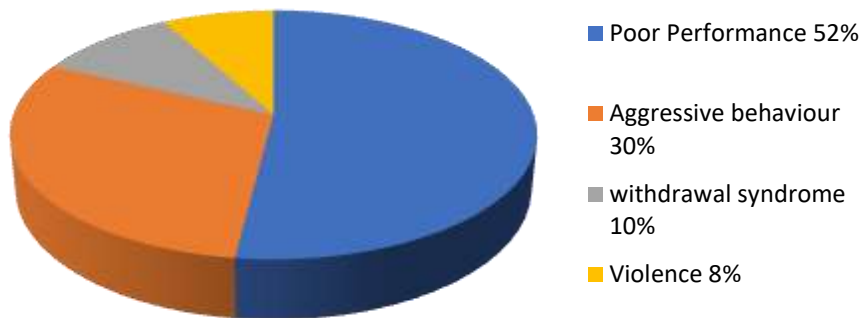
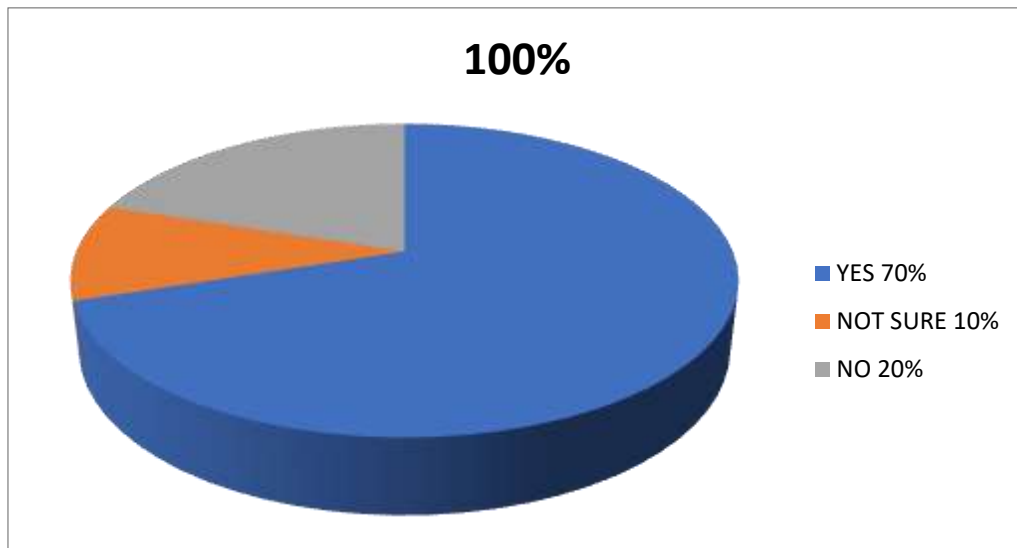


Table 5: Students’ Awareness of the Causes and Effects of Drug and Substance Abuse

Figure 4 shows that students were aware of the causes of drug abuse as represented by 70%, with 20% reporting no while 10% were not sure. This shows that the students were not ignorant but were aware of what the effects were.

Figure 4: Students' Awareness of the Causes and Effects of Drug and Substance Abuse

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study in Table 1 showed that drug and substance abuse is a major societal problem and cuts across all levels of income of parents with those of low economic status highly affected. The findings could be attributed to the fact that students with low economic status may face a range of stressors and difficulties, including financial constraints, limited access to educational resources, and potential challenges in meeting basic needs. In such circumstances, some students may turn to drugs and substances as a coping mechanism to alleviate stress, escape from their problems temporarily, or numb emotional distress. The lack of economic resources and opportunities may lead to a heightened vulnerability, making substance abuse a perceived means of managing life challenges. The findings of this study aligns with that of Baptiste-Roberts and Hossain (2018) which revealed that drug abuse is prevalent among students of low income background. Findings of the study also revealed that school administrators' high handedness majorly leads to students drug and substance abuse in colleges of education. This finding could be due to the fact that high-handed or authoritarian behaviour from school administrators could create a stressful and oppressive school environment. Students subjected to such an atmosphere may experience heightened stress, anxiety, and frustration. In an attempt to cope with these negative emotions, some students may turn to drugs or substances as a way to escape or self-medicate, contributing to substance abuse.

The findings of the study disclosed that teachers reported that peer pressure has major influence on the prevalence of drug and substance abuse among students in colleges of education in Anambra State, Nigeria. This finding concurs with that of Perez and Zawn (2022) which disclosed that peer pressure interacts with many other factors, including family pressure and support, to affect the overall likelihood of drug and substance use among students of tertiary institutions. Similarly, Muhia (2018) found that drug and substance abuse among students had a positive relationship with peer pressure. Normally, adolescents and young adults often have a strong desire for social acceptance and belonging. Peer pressure can influence individuals to conform to the behaviours and norms of their peer group to gain acceptance. Students may engage in substance use to align themselves with their peers and avoid feelings of exclusion or isolation.

The findings also revealed that drug and substance abuse has effect on students academic performance. The findings agree with the researcher's earlier perception that drug and substance abuse can have detrimental effects on cognitive functions, including memory, attention, and learning abilities. Substances such as alcohol, marijuana, and certain prescription drugs can impair concentration and interfere with the ability to process and retain information. As a result, students who engage in substance abuse may experience difficulties in focusing during classes, understanding complex concepts, and performing well in academic tasks. It was also disclosed that students were aware of the causes of drug and substance abuse. This finding collaborates with the findings of Idowu, Aremu, Olumide and Ogunlaja (2018) which revealed that students are aware of causes of drug and substance abuse. It could be that colleges of education in Anambra State often implement programmes and initiatives to educate students about the causes and consequences of drug and substance abuse. These educational efforts may include classroom discussions, guest lectures, workshops, and awareness campaigns. Students become aware of the causes of substance abuse through structured educational content that addresses the social, psychological, and environmental factors contributing to these behaviors.

Conclusion

The findings of the study concluded that drug and substance abuse is a multifaceted phenomenon within colleges of education in Anambra State. Consequently, it is imperative for a more in-depth exploration of this significant issue by a greater number of students. This emphasizes the necessity for

collaborative actions from various stakeholders, including lecturers, parents, educational officers, and government officials. Such joint efforts are crucial to combating this problem and enhancing the overall environment of schools for both the current and future generations.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher made the following recommendations;

- The ministry of education in conjunction with National Campaign against Drug Abuse (NACADA) should review curriculum with the aim of inculcating more values among the youth.
- Administrators of colleges of education should develop, implement and regularly review, in consultation with the school community and governing council, a school behavioural code which is consistent with the drug abuse policies.
- Parents and guardians should ensure that they are close to their children as much as possible and notify school staff of behavioural change in these children. They should inform school of health issues and any other matter of relevance.
- Administrators of colleges of education in Nigeria should establish and promote open communication channels within educational institutions to encourage students to share their concerns, questions, and experiences related to substance abuse. Creating a supportive environment where students feel comfortable discussing these issues with lecturers, counselors, or designated personnel can contribute to early intervention and prevention. This approach helps address misconceptions, provide guidance, and offer support to students who may be at risk or facing challenges related to substance abuse.

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