A SURVEY OF AND FACTOR INFLUENCING USE OF SUBSTANCE OF ABUSE AMONGST UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN A NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY, DELTA STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Medications are said to be abused or misused when taken inappropriately. Addiction and crime are two major consequences of drug abuse. The present study aimed at investigating types and prevalence of medications/drugs abuse among students of Delta State University. Multi-stage systematic sampling technique was used to administer questionnaire to consented students. Four departments were randomly selected from each of the five faculties. Questionnaire was then administered to every 30th student in each department. Results from this study showed that 51% of the respondents were males while 49% were females. A greater proportion of the respondents were between the ages of 21 – 25 years. In the course of the study, 33.3% of the respondents admitted to using drugs for non-medical purposes. Coffee (53.3%) and alcohol (48.6%) were the most abused substances. It is worthy of note that codeine (20%), tramadol (15.7%), marijuana (13.8%), cocaine (5.7%), amphetamine (3.3%) and morphine (2.4%) were also abused by the respondents. Results were presented as frequency and percentages. Of the users, a greater percentage often abused marijuana, cocaine, tramadol, morphine and codeine. Curiosity, peer-influence, frustration and sex drive were the main factors observed as the basis for drug abuse. The present study showed that drug abuse is prevalent in the institution with coffee and alcohol as the most abused. Worthy of note is the abuse of illicit drugs like morphine, cocaine, marijuana and amphetamine. Peer influence, curiosity and enhancement of sexual performance were highlighted as reasons/factors for abuse of drugs. There is a need for early intervention that targets high school and tertiary institution students. There is also a need to enforce the law forbidding the sales of prescription medicines at local medicine retails where licensed practitioners like pharmacy are not present.

KEYWORDS: **Medicine; Drug Abuse; Students; University; Prescription.**

INTRODUCTION

Medications are said to be abused or misused when taken inappropriately [1]. Not only are they sometimes taken without consultation with health professionals, they are also appropriated for use outside the recommended purposes [2]. At the other extreme are substances that are considered illicit and their use is illegal. Easy accessibility is a major factor in the increasing global problem of medicine/drug abuse [3]. Africa and indeed Nigeria has its fair share of this menace. Report showed that several youths had experimented with drugs at a point in time [4].

Recent survey revealed the disturbing trend of teenagers and adolescents top the chart of the age groups in the grip of this life sapping menace [5]. Sadly, Nigeria is not left out of these all-engulfing flames. The report puts the estimated drug use in Nigeria at 14.4 % (14.3 milli8on people). This was observed to be highest in 25-39 years age group. A worrisome 10.6 million people used marijuana. This followed by opiods (4.6 million), cough syrups (2.4 million), tranquilizers/sedatives (481 thousand), ecstasy (340 thousand), solvents/inhalants (300

thousand), amphetamine/prescription stimulants (238 thousand) and cocaine (92 thousand) in decreasing order. Overall, 20 % of the users were dependent of the substance /drug including disorders following drug use. Nearly all the drug users engaged in polydrug use- concurrent or simultaneous abuse of more than one drug/substance. The south-south geopolitical zone of the country came next to the south-west in the highest prevalence (16.6%) in drugs/substance abuse with 2.2 million users.

Addiction and crime are two major consequences of drug abuse [6]. Without intervention, the health of such users deteriorates with time [7]. The cognition and social life of such an individual is also adversely affected. Cult activities in institutions have been traced to drug abuse [8]. Peer influence and sheer curiosity have been fingered as major reasons for drug abuse by youth. Going by the reported high prevalence in drug abuse in South-south Nigeria [5], the present study aimed at investigating types and prevalence of medications/drugs abuse among students of Delta State University. This became necessary because the University is not only located South-south Nigeria but also have mixed population of students mainly from this region. This reflects the current prevalence among the young adults.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Approval for this study was granted by the Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences Ethical Review Board (BMSDELR/PRT/009678/1820). The study was carried out in the main campus of Delta State University Abraka Delta State; one of the campuses of the multiple-campuses of the University. The study population included students from six faculties including Basic Medical Sciences, Social Sciences, Arts, Pharmacy, Education and Arts. Multi-stage systematic sampling technique was used to administer slightly modified questionnaire [8] to consented students. Four departments were randomly selected from each of the five faculties. Questionnaire was then administered to every 30th student in each department; amounting to a total sample size of 630. Results are presented as frequency and percentages.

RESULT

Results from this study showed that 51% of the respondents were males while 49% were females

(Table 1). The bulk of the respondents were 100 (26.7%) and 200 (26.7%) levels students. A greater proportion of the respondents were between the ages of 21 – 25 years which was about 56.6%. A large percentage of the students were from the faculty of Education (24.8%) followed by Social science (23.3%) and Basic Medical Sciences (19.0%). On average, the respondents' monthly expenses were between N5, 000- N25, 000.

In the course of the study, 33.3% of the respondents admitted to using drugs for non-medical purposes while 38.1% attested to awareness of close relations using drugs without prescription (not in table).

Table 2 shows the commonly abused substances and the frequency of use. Coffee (53.3%) and alcohol (48.6%) were the most abused substances. It is worthy of note that codeine (20%), tramadol (15.7%), marijuana (13.8%), cocaine (5.7%), amphetamine (3.3%) and morphine (2.4%) were also abused by the respondents. Of the users, a greater percentage often abused marijuana, cocaine, tramadol, morphine and codeine.

Furthermore, 74.7% admitted to drug abuse less than 4 years before the study, 12.4% 5 years and 12.9% 6 years and above (not in table). Also, it was observed that drug abuse by the respondents started before gaining admission to the University.

Various reasons were adduced by the respondents for drug abuse and factors that influence the abuse of drugs (Table 3). Curiosity, peer-influence, frustration and sex drive were the main factors observed as the basis for drug abuse.

DISCUSSION

The report of United Nations office on Drugs and Crimes [9] showed a 56% increase above the estimated abuse of opioids. This poses a grave danger for the global drug abuse in general and the population at risk (the active age group) [10]. The observation in the present study that the greatest percentages of the respondents were between 21-25 (56.6%) is in agreement with that of Adeyemo *et al.* [8]. It could be inferred from the observation that the respondents developed the habit of drug abuse pre-enrolment in the University that it started at an earlier age. Odejide and Otieno [11,12] reported the onset of drug abuse to be 18 years. About 26.7% of the respondents were majorly first-year and second year-students; average of monthly expenses of N5,000-N25,000 for drug abuse. This further buttressed the inference that drug abuse predates admission into the University. The upper limit of the monthly expenses by the respondents is above the

national minimum wage (N18, 000). It could be inferred that an average respondent had access to some 'excess' cash and have the purchasing power for the drug of abuse. The UNODC report [9] showed the huge amount spent on purchase of drug of abuse. The observed higher percentage (51%) of the respondent being male suggests a gender-related drug abuse habit. This is similar to the observation of Enakpova [13]. The gender differences in drug abuse are said to have their foundation in the very first stage of drug involvement and the opportunity to use the drugs. However, Van et al., [14] opined that if allowed to use the drugs, male and female are equally likely to use them [14].

The reported 33% of respondents that have taken drugs for non-medical purposes in this study is mid-way between 29.6% reported by Maithya [15] and 43.9% reported by Adeyemo et al. [8]. According to Singh and Singh [16], 70 % of undergraduate students engaged in drug abuse. The observed trend of coffee (53.3%) and alcohol (48.6%) as the substance of abuse at the pinnacle is consistent with the findings of Singh and Singh (58.6% for alcohol), [16] and the observation of Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs [17] which put alcohol as the most abused substance by young adults. In the present study, the observation that only very few students abused cocaine (5.7%), amphetamine (3.3%) steroids (2.4%) and morphine (2.4%) is similar to the reports of Adeyemo et al. [8] and Adelekan [18]. They concluded that the abuse of cocaine was low amongst youths in rural area. The present study posits that the seemingly low abuse of these drugs could be due to difficult accessibility given that the drugs in question are not produced locally. In light of this, it is imported with concomitant high cost of purchase taking it out of the reach of an average student. Those who are addicted mat result to crime in order to be able to afford it.

It was reported that 50% of students in the United States engaged in the abuse of at least one illicit drug before graduating from high school [19]. This is in line with the observation in the present study that some respondents started engaging in drug abuse at the period they were in high school. The present study revealed that the major factor influencing drug consumption was peer group influence (15.2%) followed by curiosity (12.9%) and ability to increase sexual drive or to last long during sex (12.4%). It could be that young adults being sexually active experiment with drugs that could enhance sexual performance. The observation in the present study that poor parenting was not a major reason for drug abuse is contrary to the findings of Kiiru and Maithya [20]. Going by the results of this study, a large percentage of the respondents were from the nuclear family background which reflects close ward-parent relationship giving room for proper parenting. Lastly, the result that some respondents had access to drugs within the school environment implies that accessibility of drug within the school environment had an effect on drug abuse among Delta State University students.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study showed that drug abuse is prevalent in the institution with coffee and alcohol as the most abused. Worthy of note is the abuse of illicit drugs like morphine, cocaine, marijuana and amphetamine. Peer influence, curiosity and enhancement of sexual performance were highlighted as reasons/factors for abuse of drugs. There is a need for early intervention that targets high school and tertiary institution students. There is need to encourage students to develop prevention strategies for drug abuse by incorporating this into the curriculum. Counseling and rehabilitation programmes are also advocated. There is also a need to enforce the law forbidding the sales of prescription medicines at local medicine retails where licensed practitioners like pharmacy are not present. Further study that involves a higher number of participants and backwards tracking in time of onset of drug abuse will be beneficial.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest in the study.

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Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the students

	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	321	51%
Female	309	49%
Age		
16-20	198	31.4%
21-25	357	56.6%
26-30	63	10.0%
31-35	12	1.9%
Family setting		
Nuclear (monogamous)	465	73.8%
Nuclear (polygamous)	87	13.8%
Extended	78	12.4%
Religion		
Christianity	606	96.2%
Islamic	15	2.4%
Traditional	9	1.4%
Faculty		
Basic Medical Sciences	120	19.0%
Pharmacy	72	11.4%
Social science	147	23.3%
Education	156	24.8%
Science	90	14.3%
Arts	45	7.1%
Level		
100	168	26.7%
200	168	26.7%
300	147	23.3%
400	138	21.9%
500	9	1.4%
Monthly expenses (Naira)		
1,000-4,999	39	6.2%
5,000-9,999	156	24.8%
10,000-14,999	154	24.4%
15,000-19,999	72	11.4%
20,000-24,999	87	13.8%
25,000 and above	122	19.4%

Table 2: Commonly used substances/drugs and frequency of use

Substances/drugs	Yes (%)	Frequency Often	of use Occasional	No (%)
Coffee	336(53.3%)	267(42.3%)	69(11.0)	294(46.7%)
Alcohol	306(48.6%)	255(40.5%)	51(8.1%)	324(51.4%)
Cigarette	72(11.4%)	63(10.0%)	9(1.4%)	558(88.6%)
Marijuana (Weed)	87(13.8%)	75(11.9%)	12(1.9%)	543(86.2%)
Cocaine	36(5.7)	30(4.8%)	6(0.9%)	594(94.3%)
Tramadol	99(15.7%)	75(11.9.8%)	24(3.8%)	531(84.3%)
Tobacco	36(5.7)	27(4.3%)	9(1.4%)	594(94.3%)
Spirit	162(25.7%)	129(20.5%)	33(5.2%)	468(74.3%)
Codeine	126(20.0%)	78(12.4%)	48(7.6%)	504(80.0%)
Anabolic Steroids	15(2.4%)	6(0.96%)	9(1.44%)	615(97.6%)
Morphine	15(2.4%)	9(1.44%)	6(0.96%)	615(97.6%)
Amphetamine	21(3.3%)	3(0.5%)	18(2.8%)	609(96.7%)

Table 3: Reasons for taking and factors influencing the use of drugs/substances

Statement/factor	YES (%)	NO (%)
Take drugs to increase intelligence	42(6.7%)	588(93.3%)
Take drugs out of curiosity	81(12.9%)	549(87.1%)
Take drugs because can afford it	36(5.7%)	594(94.3%)
Poor teaching/parental example and upbringing influenced taking drugs	24(3.8%)	606(96.2%)
Take drugs because it is readily available	60(9.5%)	570(90.5%)
Peer group/peer pressure influenced taking drugs	96(15.2%)	534(84.8%)
Take drugs out of frustration	57(9.0%)	573(91.0%)
Take drugs to increase sexual drive or to last long during sex	78(12.4%)	552(87.6%)

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