

Awareness of factors responsible for, and social implications of, drug abuse among secondary school students in a semi-urban area in Nigeria

Authors

*Oyebode Oluwaseyi Dosunmu¹, Opeyemi Mary Odesanmi^{2,3}

Affiliations

¹Department of Clinical Pharmacy and Pharmacy Administration, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

²Department of Clinical Nursing, University College Hospital, Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

³Department of Nursing, Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

Corresponding Author

*Oyebode Oluwaseyi Dosunmu

E-mail: pharmaseyist@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Globally, the negative effects of drug abuse have been a public health concern and Nigeria is not left out. However, studies on awareness of factors responsible for, and social implications, of drug abuse among students in semi-urban and rural areas is scarce. Therefore, the study aims to seek awareness of secondary school students on factors responsible for drug abuse and the social implications of drug abuse. The study

is a cross-sectional survey of secondary school students in two selected secondary schools in Ipetumodu, Osun State, Nigeria. Simple random sampling was employed for selecting the participating schools and convenience sampling for respondents' selection in the participating schools. Ninety-four out of one hundred and two selected respondents returned the administered validated semi-structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics was used for analysing the data obtained. The results revealed stress (61.7%), peer pressure (59.6%), anxiety (57.4%), experimental curiosity (53.2%), and self-esteem boosting (51.1%) garnered the highest positive responses as factors responsible for drug abuse. The drugs of abuse being readily available (38.3%) had the least positive responses. Students failing exams (85.1%) and students' work/performance affected (84.0%) garnered the highest positive responses for the social implications of drug abuse. All risk factors for drug abuse received almost the same positive responses (74 – 77%). The students show a near-indistinguishable awareness of the factors responsible for drug abuse. They are well aware of the social implications and risks associated with drug abuse. Poor performance, health risks, and addiction are among the identified implications and risks associated with drug abuse. An educational intervention is recommended for creating awareness of factors responsible for drug abuse.

Keywords: *Awareness, factors, social implications, drug abuse, semi-urban area*

INTRODUCTION

Globally, drug abuse is a major public health concern (Lo *et al.*, 2020). In Nigeria, youth and adolescent abuse of drugs is one of the most disturbing public health concerns (Adeyemo *et al.*, 2016). Students in schools have experienced, and are experiencing, mental health problems as a result of drug abuse. Some are enrolled in mental health programmes temporarily or for a long. Some become insane and experience school dropouts. Engaging in crimes, secret cults' activities and ritual killings are the other untoward effects.

In drug abuse, the drug is being used for reasons that are not related to medical use intentionally (Manish *et al.*, 2020). This later results in interference with the abuser's health and social function. In early times, Nigerians failed to discourage the use of substances like alcohol, tobacco, kola nuts, and cocoa leaves, among others (Dibia *et al.*, 2020). They regarded their use for pleasure and pain relief as appropriate till excess is consumed and failed to realize their abuse of the substances.

Many factors are responsible for drug abuse among secondary students. These include socio-demographic (Syed *et al.*, 2022), peer influence (Henneberger *et al.*, 2021), family dynamics (Ahmed *et al.*, 2022), availability and accessibility of drugs (Layman *et al.*, 2022), and stressful events and psychological factors (Folk *et al.*, 2021) among others.

Socio-demographic factors that have been attributed to drug abuse among secondary students include gender, family type and class level (Saidu, 2024). Male students are more likely to engage in drug abuse than female students (Saidu, 2024). Students from monogamous family has been found to less likely to engage in drug abuse (Saidu, 2024). Also, the higher the class level, the more the tendency for students to engage in drug abuse (Saidu, 2024).

Availability and accessibility of drugs being abused can contribute to the abuse of such drugs among students. A study by Ikoh *et al.* (2019) in Nassarawa State revealed easy access to these drugs as an influential factor for students' engagement in drug abuse. Peer pressure was also reported by Abubakar *et al.* (2021) to be a key influential factor of drug abuse in Sokoto State.

The social implications of drug abuse include negative impact on academic performance (Semba, 2022) like poor grades, absenteeism, low concentration and dropping out of school. There is reported impact on health and well-being (Obekpa *et al.*, 2021) like mental health disorders, addiction and dependency and risky behavior. Also, there is reported negative impact on social relationships like conflict with family members and involvement in crime and violence (Obekpa, 2021).

Studies have reported on awareness and social implications of drug abuse among secondary school students in Nigeria. A

typical example is the study by Ogochukwu et al. (2022). It was reported that most of the students were conscious of drug abuse and more than half had good knowledge of drug abuse.

Drug abuse among youths and adolescents in Nigeria is becoming rampant and needs intervention. It has been reported among secondary school students in urban areas in Nigeria. However, there have been few studies on it conducted in the sub-urban and rural areas. Therefore, the study aims to seek the awareness of secondary students in a sub-urban area on factors responsible for drug abuse and the social implications of drug abuse.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive survey among secondary school students in Ipetumodu was conducted. Data were obtained, through the use of a questionnaire, on awareness of factors responsible for drug abuse and social implications of drug abuse. Simple random sampling was used for the selection of participating secondary schools. Local Authority Secondary School, Ipetumodu, and Origbo Community Unity School, Ipetumodu were the selected Secondary Schools. The selected schools are in the semi-urban area. Students in the neighboring rural areas have access to them also. One hundred and twenty-one (121) students were the registered number of students in the senior secondary classes of the selected secondary schools. Origbo Community Unity School had sixty-seven (67) while

the Local Authority Secondary School had fifty-four (54) students. Students who were excluded from the study are students who are below 13 years of age and those absent on the day of the survey. The participating students were sampled using convenience sampling. Yamane's (1973) formula was used for calculating the sample size.

where

n = sample size

N = population

e = tolerable error

$$n = 121 / 1 + 121(0.05)^2$$

$$n = 93$$

To cater for attrition, 10% of the sample size was added.

$$\text{Questionnaire distributed} = 93 + (10\% \text{ of } 93) = 93 + 9.3 = 102$$

A semi-structured questionnaire was the research instrument used. Input from an expert in the field was sought to ascertain the relevancy of the contents and questions. The Local Inspector of Education Office, Ipetumodu, Ife North Local Government gave permission to conduct the study after requesting permission. Ethical principles were adhered to. The aim of the study was declared to the participants. Consent was obtained and confidentiality and privacy were ensured. Primary data was obtained from respondents using a questionnaire. The questionnaire was self-administered.

The researcher offered assistance by giving clarification on the filling of the questionnaire for participants who requested such. The returned filled questionnaires were vetted for correctness and accuracy. Data retrieved were sorted, given identification numbers, coded, and loaded into a computer. Data screening and cleaning followed. Descriptive

analysis, using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software (version 21), was done on the screened data to elicit necessary information. The responses to the factors responsible for, and awareness of social implications of, drug abuse were analyzed.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the responses of the ninety-four (94) respondents who returned the administered questionnaire.

Table 1: Factors Responsible for Drug Abuse

S/N	Variables	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not sure (%)	Total (%)
1.	Stress (Tired)	58 (61.7)	33 (35.1)	2 (2.1)	93 (98.9)
2.	Sleep deprivation need	43 (45.7)	37 (39.4)	10 (10.6)	90 (95.7)
3.	Peer pressure	56 (59.6)	32 (34.0)	4 (4.3)	92 (97.9)
4.	Family issues	44 (46.8)	43 (45.7)	4 (4.4)	91 (96.8)
5.	Anxiety/pressure relieving	54 (57.4)	36 (38.3)	2 (2.1)	92 (97.9)
6.	Self-esteem boosting	48 (51.1)	39 (41.5)	5 (5.3)	94 (100.0)
7.	Drug readily available	36 (38.3)	50 (53.2)	6 (6.4)	92 (97.9)
8.	Experimental curiosity	50 (53.2)	39 (41.5)	3 (3.2)	92 (97.9)
9.	Genetic disposition	43 (45.7)	45 (47.9)	4 (4.3)	92 (97.9)

Note: Some respondents give no response to few questions

Table 1 reveals that stress (62%), peer pressure (60%), anxiety (58%), and self-esteem boosting (51%) gathered the highest positive responses as factors responsible for drug abuse. The drugs being readily available (38%) have the least positive responses. This factor – drug being readily available – gathered more negative responses than the positive. There is a little margin between positive and negative responses to all the listed factors. ‘Family issues’ has almost the same number of responses for both positive and negative responses.

Tables 2 and 3 present the responses of the students to the awareness of the social implications of drug abuse and associated risk factors of drug abuse respectively.

Table 2: Awareness of Implications of Drug Abuse

S/N	Variables	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
1.	Drug abusers experience negative effect	71 (75.5)	19 (20.2)	90 (95.7)
2.	Drug abusers do have problems with close friends/family	78 (83.0)	12 (12.8)	90 (95.7)
3.	Students fail exam because of drug abuse	80 (85.1)	11 (11.7)	91 (96.8)
4.	Students lose money because of drug abuse	78 (83.0)	13 (13.8)	91 (96.8)
5.	Drug abusers face embarrassment because of drug abuse	77 (81.9)	14 (14.9)	91 (96.8)
6.	Drug abuse affect a student's performance negatively	79 (84.0)	12 (12.8)	91 (96.8)

Note: Some respondents give no response to few questions

In Table 2, it can be seen that most of the respondents have a good level of awareness of the social implications of drug abuse (75 – 82%) with students failing exams (85%) and student's performance (84%) affected garnering the highest positive (yes) responses.

Table 3: Awareness of Risks Associated with Drug Abuse

S/N	Variables	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not sure (%)	Total (%)
1.	Behavioural change	76 (80.9)	15 (16.0)	1 (1.1)	92 (97.9)
2.	Health risks	76 (80.9)	13 (13.8)	3 (3.2)	92 (97.9)
3.	Mental imbalance	77 (81.9)	11 (11.7)	3 (3.2)	91 (96.8)
4.	Addiction	74 (78.7)	14 (14.9)	4 (4.3)	92 (97.9)
5.	Loss self-control	77 (81.9)	11 (11.7)	4 (4.3)	92 (97.9)
7.	Poor performance	75 (79.8)	12 (12.8)	5 (5.4)	92 (97.9)

Note: Some respondents give no response to few questions

Table 3 reveals most of the respondents have an appreciable level of awareness (79 – 82%) of the risks associated with drug abuse. All risk factors received almost the same positive (yes) responses from the students.

DISCUSSION

Stress, peer pressure, anxiety, and self-esteem boosting gathered the highest positive responses as factors responsible for drug abuse. The drugs being readily available have the least positive responses. This factor – drug being readily available – gathered more negative responses than the positive. There is a little margin between positive and negative responses to all the listed factors. ‘Family issues’ has almost the same number of responses for both positive and negative responses.

In Table 2, it can be seen that most of the respondents have an awareness of the social implications of drug abuse with students failing exams and student’s performance affected garnering the highest positive (yes) responses. Also, Table 3 reveals most of the respondents have a good level of awareness of the risks associated with drug abuse. All risk factors received almost the same positive (yes) responses from the students.

The findings of this study reveal peer pressure, anxiety and self-esteem gathered highest positive responses as factors responsible for drug abuse. This is not unusual because students at the adolescent age are not immune to these factors. It supported the claim of Sokoto (2022) that friends are the most typical sources of substance abuse, Mustafa-Shaibu and Igbino-Ojo (2022) and Ezeogu (2022) that the majority of the students abuse drugs due to peer influence. The influence of peer, pressure from home and school may

bring about the tendency among students to desire to be highly regarded. This results in the tendency to boost their self-esteem. Therefore, the respondents’ view that experimental curiosity is a factor that can lead to drug abuse further gives credence to the findings of the study of Santibanez *et al.*, (2020) and Sokoto (2022) that experimenting with drugs during adolescence is common.

Though a previous study stated drug availability and accessibility as a key factor for drug abuse (Ikoh *et al.*, 2019), the finding of this study reveals drugs being readily available has the least (38%) positive responses. This view may result from most of the drugs being controlled drugs. Also, the location of the schools in the study may not permit the privilege of having access to these drugs, even for therapeutic purposes. This is because adequate health facilities are lacking in the locality. It can also be the reason why the factor gathered more negative responses than positive ones.

‘Family issues have almost the same number of responses for both positive and negative responses as a factor responsible for drug abuse. These issues include divorce or separation of husband and wife, family member(s) engaging in drug abuse and recognized physical abuse in the family, among others. Though the positive response is in alignment with Foo *et al.* (2015) and Ikoh *et al.* (2019) that family factors play an essential role in an individual’s drug abuse habits, there seems to be divided opinion among the students as evidenced in the almost same

positive and negative responses.

Most of the respondents having awareness of the social implications of drug abuse (76 – 85%) shows that the students know the danger inherent in drug abuse. They are aware that drug abuse can have a negative impact on their studies. This is evident from the responses gotten for students failing exams and student's performance being affected garnering the highest positive (yes) responses.

The students have an awareness of the risks associated with drug abuse. This can be strengthened by the fact that all risk factors received almost the same positive (yes) responses from the students. Their responses show that they are aware of the physical (e.g. health risk), emotional (e.g. embarrassment), and social risks (e.g. problem with family and friends) attached to drug abuse as these risks are contained in the variables for awareness of social implications of drug abuse. It affirms the report which reveals that drug abuse significantly predicts psychological health (Onisile, 2016). The responses obtained from the awareness of the students may validate the claim of Adeyemo et al. (2016) that drug abuse by adolescents is one of the most disturbing health-related phenomena around the world. The students may have experienced some of their age mates who have had such negative experiences.

The students' responses validate Ofili (2017) study on the knowledge and attitude to substance abuse where it was observed that most respondents had good knowledge of the consequences of substance abuse. Also, the findings of this study are in alignment with the report that drug abuse leads to poor academic performance (Mustafa-Shaibu and Igbinoba-Ojo, 2022, Onwuamaeze, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The secondary students of the sub-urban area have a near indistinguishable awareness of the factors responsible for drug abuse. They are well aware of the social implications and risks associated with the abuse of drug. Poor academic performance, health and well-being risks and addiction are among the identified implications and risks associated with drug abuse. An educational intervention among secondary school students in sub-urban and rural areas for creating awareness of the factors responsible for drug abuse is recommended.

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