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SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND TREATMENT AMONG STUDENTS IN AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Substance abuse is a rising social problem in Nigeria and has continued to be the major risk behaviour among students in many parts of the country with consequent physical and mental health problems. This study assesses substance abuse and treatment among students of a faith-based institution of higher learning in Nigeria. The study aims at knowing the most abused substance in the study population, how participants got involved in substance abuse, why they are involved in it, the effects, and the most effective substance abuse treatment employed for rehabilitation in the study population. A total of 40 consenting participants were involved in the study while primary data was gathered through questionnaire administration. Indian hemp was the substance mostly abused by the study population closely followed by Alcohol (40.0%), tobacco smoking (25.0%), Cocaine (25.0%), Coffee (10.0%), Codeine (10.0%), Tranquilizer (10.0%) and Inhalants (10.0%) in that order. A total of (55.0%) of the participants got involved in substance abuse out of curiosity while (25.0%) learnt it from their peers. Among the participants, (40.0%) abused substances because it makes them feel high and bold while (25.0%) wanted to socialise among their peers. Psycho-social treatment was found to be most effective treatment plan employed in the study population ahead of moral and medical treatment plans. The study recommends that social work departments be created in all schools in Nigeria at all level to attend to the welfare needs of students especially in behavioural problems such as substance abuse and addiction.

KEY TERMS: Indian hemp, tobacco smoking, alcohol, curiosity, psycho-social treatment, social work, Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Substance abuse treatment is the procedure of providing one or more planned and structured interventions to people that are addicted to and or dependent on psychoactive substances in order to manage substance-induced problems while also improving their physical, mental and social functioning (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2003). Substance abuse treatment involves a broad range of services such as, assessments diagnosis of substance use disorders and related problems, treatment planning, pharmacotherapy, counselling and behavioural therapy, medical, psychiatric, psychological, social, legal and other support services, after care plans and follow-up for persons with substance abuse problems (UNODC, 2003& National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2009). This however varies in different settings and situations as they are employed to suit the background and needs of the beneficiaries.

While, the World Health Organization (2016) defines substance abuse as a destructive and risky use of psychoactive substance such as alcohol and illicit drugs, a number of studies conducted on substance abuse revealed that students constitute the high-risk group in the use and abuse of drugs. Research conducted by Atoyebi and Atoyebi (2013) has established that a growing population of young people in Nigeria are getting more involved in substance abuse daily. According to Sumaina (2016), about 40% of young adults in the country are involved in substance abuse in several locations in Nigeria. Substances such as cocaine, heroin, alcohol, marijuana, tobacco have however been revealed as the most common drugs abused by this category of people (Amosu, Ige & Ajala, 2010).

More worrisome is the continued increase in the use of alcohol and other substances such as Indian hemp, nicotine, ecstasy and other amphetamines among students in tertiary institutions in the country which seem to be gaining momentum every day (Adekeye, Adeusi, Chenube, Ahmadu, & Sholarin, 2015). Unfortunately, several of these abused substances have been proven to be the gateway to other more powerful drugs like heroin and cocaine (UNODC, 1988). Research has however shown that many of these substances are injurious and can cause physical damage to human bodies (Amsu, Ige & Ajala, 2010). Smoking tobacco for example has been found to cause 90% of lung cancer, 30% of all cancers, and 80% of other chronic lung diseases (Shokunbi, 1990).

While many young people that abuse substances erroneously believe that substance abuse arguably improve their enactment by positioning them in good mood, the attendant problems constitute a major threat not only to the well-being of the users, but also to the society at large (Ajala, 2009). Some studies have however shown that students abuse substances for reasons such as, to make them feel like adults, get excited, socialise, to experience pleasure, alter their state of consciousness, enhance good feelings and cope with stress of life (Weil, 1973; Lief, 1975; Odejide, 1994 & Odejide, 1997). A cross sectional study conducted by Akintudire and Adegboyega (2012) among undergraduates in an institution of higher learning in Ekiti State, South-west Nigeria discovered that, alcohol, tobacco use and marijuana are the most prevalent in that order while similar study conducted by Adekeye et al (2015) among undergraduates in selected private universities in South-West Nigeria also confirmed that, tobacco smoking and alcohol use had the highest prevalence in that order.

Although, many of the substances abused by students are found in almost every location in Nigeria such as in motor parks, street corners, joints on campuses, uncompleted buildings, under flyovers. A survey conducted by Abudu (2008) and Oshodi, Aina and Onajole (2010) suggests that substances are of common site in many locations in southwest Nigeria. Statistics have also established that even though the northwest has the highest statistics of substance abuse victims with about 37.47%, southwest Nigeria has been rated second with 17.32% (Akannam, 2008). Consequently, a number of studies may have been piloted on substance abuse among students in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, studies on substance abuse among students in faith-based institutions of higher learning in the country are dearth. Besides, very few studies focus on rehabilitation of such abusers. It is against this background that this study is conducted.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the numerous consequences of substance abuse to humans and the society at large, it is quite disturbing that abuse of alcohol and other substances such as cannabis, nicotine, ecstasy and other amphetamines among students in tertiary institutions has continued to gain momentum every day (Adekeye et al, 2015). But while many students that abuse substances wrongly believe that substances abuse enhance their performance by altering their mood, the accompanying problems constitute a major threat to the well-being of the users and the society at large (Ajala, 2009).

According to Odejide (1977) students that abuse substances typically experience academic failure, distortion of the senses, dream like thinking, false confidence, hampered performance, illusions, hallucinations and delusions. Hitherto, abuse of substances students was limited to substances such as tobacco smoking, alcohol, caffeine, coffee, cola drinks and kola nuts, plant-derived substances such as Indian hemp, heroin cocaine, and cannabis but more of late is the, widespread use of amphetamine and related stimulants and controlled substances

such as synthetic pain medicines, sedative hypnotics or psycho stimulants like codeine, rophynol and tramadol (Chia, 2016).

Thus, several students under the influence of these dangerous substances are likely to suffer from mental disorder, drop out from school, become social miscreants popularly referred to as area boys and get involved in social vices such as cultism, social vices such as armed robbery, advanced free fraud, gang-rapping, murder and many more which they couldn't have done in their sane minds. In many cases, deviant or anti-social demeanour befalls may occur under the influence of a drug, and long-term behavioural changes in personalities may happen as well (Ksir & Ray, 2002).

Sadly, almost all kinds of psychoactive substances are accessible on the streets in Nigeria as a result of their spill over into the streets from drug traffickers who use Nigeria as a channel to transporting drugs from other locations in South East-Asia and South America to Europe and North America (Klein, 1994). A comparison with other third world countries as revealed by Degenhardt, Chiu, Sampson, Kessler, Anthony, Angermeyer, Bruffaerts, Girolamo, Gureje, Huang, Karam, Kostychenko, Lepine, Mora, Neumark, Ormel, Pinto-Meza, Posada-Villa, Stein, Takeshima, Wells (2008) reveals that Nigeria ranks among the highest users of substances such as alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, benzodiazepines, cocaine and opioids. Hence, the steady increase in the prevalence of substance abuse and its associated consequences over the years has been observed in several studies (Ihezue, 1988; Oshodi, Aina & Onajole, 2010).

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Social learning theory

The social learning theory was offered by Albert Bandura in 1963. The theory hypothesized that learning is a cognitive process which takes place in a social framework and transpire only through observation or direct instruction, even in the absence of motor reproduction or direct reinforcement (Bandura, 1963). Social learning theory advocates that, individuals imitate or copy modelled behaviour by personally observing others, the environment, and the mass media. It adopts that; learning is not only behavioural but a cognitive process which happens in a social situation.

Resting on these propositions in explaining the study, we can postulate that students in the study population are involved in substance abuse as a result of social learning through observation from peers, parents and their environments especially when rewards such as feeling of acceptance from peers is considered is in sight.

Social learning theory have been criticised for failing to consider individual's biological state at the expense of social situation (Jeffery, 1985).

Moral/ Spiritual Model of Addiction

Moral or spiritual model of addiction was suggested by See (2013) with central focus on the defective spirit and the inner choice of conscious. The model opines addiction as criminal therefore; there is the moral perspective of it being a sin. It further suggested that moral strength would have the required strength to stop the addiction and as such, religion plays a very important role in curbing addiction in order to be ethical and moral justified. It therefore means that, the stronger an individual's belief, the stronger the will to overcome or recover from addiction. Building on these suggestions, moral model/spiritual model would be the most effective treatment plan employed for curbing substance abuse and addictions among offenders in a faith-based institution such as that of the study population. Thus, it is expected that moral/spiritual model would be employed in the rehabilitation centre and would be instrumental to recovery among substance abusers in the study population. Critics such as Marino (2006) have nevertheless rejected the moral or spiritual model of addiction as a therapeutic model.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted among students in a Christian faith-based university in South-West Nigeria. Information was retrieved from students who had gone through rehabilitation treatment at the University for substance abuse Offences. A total of 40 consenting participants were comprised in the study. A two-staged sampling method including purposive and snowball methods were employed to retrieve data in the study through self-administered questionnaire which included of open and closed ended questions. Data was received in anonymity to gain access to participants and their confidence. It was presented in tables containing frequencies and simple percentages

RESULTS

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age group (years)		
< 25	28	70.0
≥ 25	12	30.0
Sex		
Male	40	100.0
Religion		
Christianity	40	100.0
Tribe		
Yoruba	24	60.0
Igbo	12	30.0
Others	4	10.0

Table 2: substances participants are involved in

Substance	Frequency	Percentage
Indian Hemp	18	45.0
Alcohol	16	40.0
Tobacco	10	25.0
Cocaine	10	25.0
Coffee	10	25.0
Codeine	10	25.0
Tranquilizers	2	5.0
Inhalants	2	5.0

Table 3: How Participants got involved with substance abuse

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Out of curiosity	22	55.0
Peer Influence	10	25.0
To alleviate worries	6	15.0
Out of Ignorance	4	10.0
Parental Influence	2	5.0
At Social Gathering	2	5.0

Table 4: Reasons participants are involved in substance use

Reasons for use	Frequency	Percentage
To Feel high and bold	16	40.0
To enable better thinking	10	25.0
To Socialise	10	25.0
To enable me read better	8	20.0
To be accepted by friends	4	10.0

Table 5: Effects of substance use on participants

Effect of substance	Frequency	Percentage
It makes me feel high	24	60.0
Helps me to lay aside my problem	10	25.0
It gets me in trouble	4	10.0
Improves my academic performance	4	10.0
Reduces my academic performance	4	10.0
Interfere with my sleep	4	10.0
Makes me feel Depressed	2	5.0

Table 6: Substance use treatment employed

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Mode of treatment given		
Psycho-social	40	100.0
Spiritual	30	75.0
Medical	20	50.0

Table 1: 70% of the participants are below the age of 25 years while 30% fall above the age of 25 years. All (100%) the participants are male while all (100%) are also Christians. (60%) of the participants are from the Yoruba tribe while (30%) are from the Igbo tribe and other tribe represent (30%) of the participants.

Table 2: (45%) of the participants abused Indian hemp. This was followed closely by Alcohol (40%) then Tobacco (25%), Cocaine (25%), Coffee (25%), Codeine (25%), Tranquilizers (5%) and Inhalants (5%).

Table 3: (55%) of participants abused substance due to curiosity (55%), (25%) were introduced to it by their friends, (15%) got into it to get away their worries, (10%) were involved in substance use as a result of ignorance, (5%) learnt it from their parents while (5%) were introduced to substance use in parties).

In Table 4, (40%) of the participants admitted substance use makes them high and bold, (25%) admitted that it makes them feel better, (25%) said they only use it to recreate, (20%) claimed that it makes them to read better while (10%) claimed that substance use helps them to socialise and acceptable by their friends.

In Table 5, (60%) of the participants confessed that substance use makes them to feel high. (25%) claimed that it makes them to overcome their problems, (10%) claimed that it gets them into trouble, (10%) claimed that it helps them to increase their grades while the same (10%) claimed that it reduces their academic performance. Also, (10%) of the participants confessed that substance use helps them to sleep very well while (5%) admitted that substance use depresses them.

In Table 6, it was revealed that (100%) were psych-social while (75%) were done spiritually while (50%) of the rehabilitation was medically done.

DISCUSSION

Result from the study conducted revealed that Indian hemp, alcohol and tobacco smoking in that order are the mostly abused substances among participants in the study population. This is related to results from previous study conducted by Akintudire and Adegboyega (2012) in which alcohol, tobacco use and marijuana are the most predominant substances abused. This also substantiates result from a study conducted by Adekeye et al (2015) that of (Ndom, Igbokwe & Ekeruo, 2012).

Results also indicated that, more than half of the participants in the study got involved in substance abuse due to curiosity. This validates the result of previous studies conducted by Paksi and Elekes (2004) and Hamisu, Ahmad and Lim (2014) nevertheless, it refutes results of previously studies conducted by Oshikoya and Alli (2006) and Geramian et al, (2012) in which students are predisposed to drug abuse through family, peer influence and parental divorce respectively.

Consequently, almost half of the participants in the study acknowledged that they are involved in substance abuse for the reason that it makes them feel high and bold which negates result of study earlier conducted by Adeyemo, Ohaeri, Okpala and Oghale (2016) in which bulk of the participants were involved in substance abuse in order to increase their intelligence.

Furthermore, psycho-social therapy was the most efficient form of treatment employed in the rehabilitation of participants in the study. This was far ahead of moral/spiritual therapy which drive the core value of the institution as a faith-based institution and upholding the discoveries from the previous study conducted by Azuike and Rapu (2011) whereas not in tandem with the moral/spiritual model of rehabilitation of drug addiction as put forward by See (2013).

The study has been able to assess substance abuse and treatment among students in a Christian faith-based institution of higher learning in South-west Nigeria. A total of 40 consenting participants were involved in the study. Result showed that, Indian hemp was the substance mostly abused by participants in the study while psycho-social treatment was the most effective form of treatment employed to curb addiction in the institution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that, parents should monitor their children closely and the company they keep and be wary of the values they pass to their children. In addition, it is recommended that the development of preventive drug education curriculum be infused into relevant school subjects at various levels of learning i.e. primary, secondary and tertiary to ensure that students are well informed of dangers inherent in substance abuse. Lastly, it is strongly recommended that social work department should be introduced to schools in Nigeria at all levels to keep track on student's behaviours and attend to their welfare needs where necessary especially in the area of substance abuse and addiction.

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