

PREVALENCE AND CAUSES OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG FEMALES IN GOMBE METROPOLIS, GOMBE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Substance abuse, until recently, was believed to be a predominantly male phenomenon. Only in the last few decades, attention has shifted to female drug use and its repercussions on the females. The aim of the present study was to assess the prevalence and causes of substance abuse among females in Gombe Metropolis. A sample size of 385 was used for the study. This includes three hundred and seventy-five females aged 19-35 years and ten key informants drawn using multi-stage cluster and purposive sampling techniques for quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The quantitative data were collected using questionnaire, while the qualitative data were generated using in-depth interview (IDI). The quantitative data collected were analyzed using simple frequencies and percentages with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 software; while the qualitative data generated were analyzed using content analysis to support and compliment the quantitative data. The findings revealed that females are engaging in substance abuse including prescriptive drugs, such as benyline cough syrup, analgesics, etc., and that majority of the abusers were aware of the adverse effects of substance abuse but were continuing the same. The study revealed that the causes of substance abuse among females include peer pressure, frustration and emotional stress, curiosity about the substance, academic stress and failure in love matters. The study proffered recommendations, among others, that the police and NDLEA officials should partner with religious and community leaders to effectively stem the tide of substance abuse in the Nigerian society.

Key words: Drug abuse, health education, curiosity, peer pressure, academic and emotional stress.

1.0 Introduction

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2005) World Drug Report, substance abuse is a major universal health problem. It exposes the individuals to major socio-economic and health problems, and serves as a predisposing factor for crime in a society.

Until recently, substance abuse, which is the abuse of psychoactive materials that exert their major effects on the brain resulting in sedation, stimulation or change in the mood of a person was believed to be a predominantly male phenomenon. Only in the last few decades, attention has shifted to female drug use and its repercussions on the females.

The need to effectively curtail the menace of drug abuse in the Nigerian society led to the establishment of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in January, 1990 by the then Ibrahim Babangida administration (Nyameh, Yakubu, Teru and Titus, 2013). Dankani (2012) posits that a significant number of females are abusing cough syrup, noting that 85% of the abusers are aware of the adverse effect of the abuse of cough syrup on mental disorder, life expectancy of the individual as well as deviant and criminal behaviours in a society.

The prevalence and consequences of substance abuse among females in Nigerian society including Gombe Metropolis of Gombe State should be a matter of concern to all stakeholders, such as governments, scholars, parents, teachers, non-governmental organizations and all other relevant agencies to mount strategies for curtailing the new trend. It is against the above background that this paper investigates the prevalence and causes of substance abuse among females in Gombe Metropolis of Gombe state, Nigeria. The paper is divided into five parts. The first part is the introduction, and statement of the problem. The second part consists of the literature review and theoretical framework. The third part contains materials and methods used for the study, while the fourth part consists of the findings and discussion. The final part is the conclusion and recommendations.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Over the years, substance abuse was dominated by males. UNODC data for the year 2007 show that substance abuse is more common among males (94.2%) than females (5.8%). The females are the cornerstone of any society. They constitute a significant part of the productive sector, as they play a crucial role in the socialization process of their offspring and other young members of their family and society. Unfortunately, a significant number of females, who are supposed to play a key role in their family and the society are now jeopardizing their lives as a result of substance abuse. They tend to abuse drugs, such as cough syrup, codeine, analgesics, alcohol with ignorance of the adverse effect on their individual wellbeing (Oshodin, 2004). Thus, substance abuse has become an issue of concern in Gombe Metropolis, as it has become a widespread phenomenon posing serious threat on the individuals and the society. It is in the light of the above that the study specifically investigates the factors influencing substance abuse among females; examines whether the abusers are aware of the adverse effects of substance abuse; and the type of substance abuse among females in Gombe Metropolis.

2.0 Literature Review

Substance abuse is the misuse of pharmacological drugs and use of psychoactive materials that exert their major effects on the brain resulting in sedation, stimulation or change in mood of an individual and modifies perception, cognition and general body metabolism (Haruna, Namadi, Dunkrah, Zamfara, and Dangiwa, 2018; Balogun, 2006; Odejide, 2000). Thus, a substance is being abused if it is deliberately used to induce physiological or psychological effects for a goal other than for therapeutic purpose (Obiechina and Isiguzo, 2016). It includes both chemicals and drugs, such as non-prescribed cough mixture, gasoline, glue, codeine, among others (Obiechina and Isiguzo, 2016; Oliha, 2014). Many Nigerians, including those in the study area (now including females aged between 19 to 35 years), ignorantly depend on one form of substance or the other for their various daily activities including socio-emotional, educational, political, moral, etc. This causes cancer, injury to the brain, diminishing the life expectancy, death, chronic pain and other mental health problems (Oliha, 2014). Chronic use of substance like codeine, benyline could lead to physical dependence, rape, assault, murder and other deviant and criminal behaviours (Omadihwoefe, 2010; Oshodin, 2004).

3.0 Theoretical Framework

Differential Association Theory of Sutherland and Cressey (1960) could be used to explain the phenomenon of substance abuse among females in Gombe Metropolis. The theory shows how and otherwise obedient person through stages of successive events begins to engage in abnormal or anti-social behaviours including substance abuse. It shows how abnormal behaviour is learnt in the same way normal behaviour is learnt but not necessarily biological and psychological defects. In recent times many females are pulling into substance abuse by those they associate with. It is learned from males and/or females) already involved in the practice. Also, media, such as movies, television, and internet network could influence females to engaging in substance abuse. However, there is no scientific fact to prove the extent to which these media have facilitated the genesis of females of Gombe Metropolis in engaging in substance abuse. Some females, who may not have access to the media could engage in substance abuse through the habits of copying the act from their friends and associates. Also, defect in socialization process, as a result of broken home may increase the prevalence of females in the act of substance abuse, since some parents tend to be responsible for their children's behaviours.

3.1 Materials and Methods

Gombe Metropolis is a commercial and administrative capital of Gombe State in North – Eastern part of Nigeria. The Metropolis is a cosmopolitan area consisting of Fulani, Hausa, Tera, Tangale, Bolawa, Waja, Igbo, Yoruba, and Kanuri tribes, who are mainly Muslims and Christians. As in most parts of northern Nigeria, the Hausa/Fulani language is widely spoken in Gombe Metropolis of Gombe State. The population of Gombe Metropolis is 168, 000 (NPC, 2007). The study is a survey research design with both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection.

A total sample size of 385 suggested by Research Advisors (2006) as the appropriate sample size for similar population with a confidence of 95% and margin error of 5.0% was used for the study. This includes three hundred and seventy-five females aged 19-35 years to obtain quantitative data and ten informants for qualitative data. The data for the study were collected using questionnaire and in-depth interview (IDI), respectively. The questionnaire items were designed in English and administered by trained female research assistants recruited for the data collection exercise. The female research assistants were supervised by the researchers to generate information from the respondents.

Multi-stage cluster and purposive sampling techniques were used for the study. At the first stage, the residential areas in Gombe Metropolis were identified. In the second state, simple random sampling (lottery technique) was used to select five residential areas in Gombe Metropolis. These residential areas include *Jekada-fari*, *Tumfure*, *Federal Low-cost*, *BCGA* and *Tudun Wada*. At the third stage, seventy-five females were purposively selected from households (one female per household) in each of the five residential areas making a total of three hundred and seventy-five females for questionnaire administration. In case no female was willing to give information on the research topic in a household, the trained female research assistants moved to the next household until the required sample size for the quantitative data was realized.

Snowball sampling technique was used to conduct the in-depth interviews with four Ward leaders (*Mai Ungwua*) and four religious leaders of both Christianity and Islam in the area and two Police officers making ten (10), as the minimum number of informants for IDI to generate qualitative data (Creswell, 2014). This is because the in-depth interviews do not only give the informant opportunity to express his/her self on the questions posed, but the social

interchange between researcher(s) and the informant give more insights on the study (Kothari, 2004).

The quantitative data collected were analyzed using simple frequencies and percentages with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 software; while the qualitative data generated were analyzed using content analysis. The qualitative data were used to compliment and support the quantitative data.

3.2 Findings

The findings of the study are presented below:

Table 1: Types of Substance Commonly Abused Among Females

Types	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Codeine	72	19.0
Analgesics	63	17.1
Alcohol	38	10.1
Non Prescribed Cough Mixture (Benyline)	149	39.7
Glue & other inhalants	53	14.1
Total	375	100

Source: *Field Survey, 2018*

Table 1 reveals the types of substance commonly abused among females in Gombe Metropolis. Non-prescribed cough mixture (benyline) is the most commonly abused substance (39.7%), followed by codeine (19.0%), analgesics (17.1%), glue and other inhalants (14.1%) and alcohol (10.1%). This implies that non-prescribed cough mixture (Benyline) is the most commonly abused substance among the females residing in the study area.

Table 2: Frequent Usage of Substance Abuse

Usage	Frequency	Percentage
Once a month	116	30.9
Twice a month	50	13.3
3 - 4 times a month	63	16.8
Once a week	51	13.6
2 – 6 times a week	76	20.3
Everyday	19	5.1
Total	375	100

Source: *Field Survey, 2018*

Table 2 shows the frequent usage of substance abuse among the females sampled. About 31% of the respondents engage in substance abuse once a month, 13.3% twice a month, 16.8% 3-4 times a month and 13.6% engage in substance abuse once a week. However, 20.3% of them engage in substance abuse 2 – 6 times a week. Only a relatively smaller percentage of them (5.1%) engage in substance abuse every-day.

Table 3: Whether the Respondents are Aware of the Effects of Substance Abuse

Response	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Aware	368	98.1
Not aware	7	1.9
Total	375	100

Source: *Field Survey, 2018*

Table 3 shows whether the respondents are aware of the effects of substance abuse among females in Gombe Metropolis. The table indicates that 98.1% of the respondents are aware of the effect of the substance abuse, but continuing the act. This portends carelessness towards personal healthcare and lack of proper health education. A key informant during the in-depth interview (IDI) said:

Some of the females are aware of the effect of substance abuse but they do not care about it. One may wonder why somebody would engage in an act that poses a serious threat on her health. This is because such has been carried away by the act and/or the person has lackadaisical attitude towards self-health and general wellbeing. Although, there has been awareness campaign on the effect of substance abuse by government and her agencies, however, there is need for continuous sensitization programmes to curtail the trend of substance abuse (IDI with a male Police Officer, aged 43 years; 14/8/18).

Similarly, another informant during the IDI opined that:

Substance abuse used to be a social problem among males but the recent trend is that the females are now abusing prescriptive drugs, such as benyline cough syrup, codeine, and analgesics. One used to see it in films but is now real in Gombe Metropolis for females, even house wife abuse drugs with little or no concern about their effects (IDI with male Ward Leader, aged 37 years; 5/8/18).

A key informant during the in-depth interview said:

Substance abuse is an immoral act for both males and females. I don't know of any religion that supports the act. Why should any person take a drug outside its pharmaceutical prescription? It means such a person does not care about his/her normal and moral wellbeing since substance abuse can jeopardized one's life. Therefore, religious leader should intensify preaching against substance abuse, especially now that it is a fact involving the females in our community (IDI with a male Religious Leader, aged 46 years; 7/8/18).

Table 4: Causes of Substance Abuse among Females

Causes	Frequency	Percentage
Peer pressure	233	60.5
Broken homes	174	45.2
Frustration and emotional stress	215	55.8
Curiosity about the substance	202	52.5
Failure in love matters	213	55.3
Academic stress	180	46.8

**Multiple Response*

Source: *Field Survey, 2018*

Table 4 shows the causes of substance abuse among females. The table indicates majority of the females (60.5%) abuse substances as a result of peer pressure, frustration and emotional stress (55.8%), failure in love matters (55.3%), curiosity about the substance (52.5%), academic matters (46.8%) and due to broken homes (45.2%).

A key informant during the in-depth interview said:

There are many causes for the substance abuse, especially among females which is the new trend nowadays. Some people abuse drugs because of their peer influence, when their boyfriends disappointed them or because of their curiosity about the drug or substance (IDI with male Ward Leader, aged 62 years; 11/8/18).

Another key informant during the IDI said:

The main causes of substance abuse among females which is the evolving act now are the loss of moral values, failure in love relationship, frustration and emotional stress. Many females are into drug abuse because of people they associate with. More need to be done among stakeholders including government, parents, and religious leaders to effectively tackle the trend (IDI with male *Mai Angwa*, aged 67 years; 10/8/18).

4.0 Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that females are engaging in substance abuse including prescriptive drugs, such as benyline cough syrup, analgesics, etc. This is in line with Amosun, Ige and Ajala (2010) view that people including the females use drugs due to some reasons other than that of medical prescription which constitutes drug abuse. The findings revealed that majority of the females are aware of the dangers associated with the substance abuse. This is contrary to Oshodin (2004) finding that females are engaging in substance abuse with ignorance of the adverse effect on their individual wellbeing. The findings revealed that peer pressure, frustration and emotional stress, curiosity about the substance, broken homes, failure in love matters and academic stress are the major factors influencing substance abuse among the females in Gombe Metropolis. Thus, some females learnt the act of substance abuse as a result of the people they associate with, who are already involved in the act. This is supported by the Sutherland and Cressey (1960) Differential Association Theory that behaviour is learned and

personality can be explained in terms of aggregate effects of series of learning experiences, especially among close associates.

Curiosity about the substance was the cause of initiation for some of the substance abusers. However, majority of the female substance abusers were aware of the adverse effects of the substance they abused but were continuing the same. This showed carelessness towards self - health and lack of proper health education.

5.0 Conclusion

Substance abuse in Nigerian society is now a widespread phenomenon. It involves males and females; single or married and poses a serious threat not only on the individuals, who are into the act but the society as a whole. It is pertinent to note that the adverse effects of substance abuse are enormous. Continued use of substances could cause cancer, diminish life expectancy or even result to death, chronic pain and other health challenges. In spite of the adverse effects associated with substance abuse, a significant number of people, including females, are still engaging in substance abuse. This shows lack of health consciousness and proper health education among people. Based on the theoretical exposition in this paper, it is pertinent that substance abuse is a learnt behaviour; it could be learnt from those who are already in the act. Thus, substance abuse among females could be learn from their close associates and media including films. The new trend of substance abuse among females calls for concerted efforts by all stakeholders (including teachers, parents, education officers and other government agencies) to effectively curtail it so as to make the Nigerian society a better place for current generations and generations to come.

6.0 Recommendations

The following are the recommendations of the study.

1. Government through her agencies, such as the police, NDLEA and other security apparatus should rejuvenate and intensify the fight against substance abuse. They should partner with religious leaders and other stakeholders to effectively stem the tide of substance abuse in Nigerian society.
2. There should be joint patrol between the police and the NDLEA officials in the study area to arrest the sellers and users of illicit drugs to curtail the trend of substance abuse in the study area.
3. People should be very conscious about their personal health. They should be properly educated on health hazard of substance abuse.
4. The NDLEA should partner with religious organizations and other community-based organizations to have regular counselling sessions with members of the public in order to keep them away from engaging in substance abuse. This may provide insights to substance abusers and enable them to realize that substance abuse is an irresponsible act and as such must be avoided.
5. The females need to be kept busy with one form of job or the other to forsake idleness, since joblessness could result to abnormal behaviour, such as substance abuse among females.

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