PERCEIVED DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AS DETERMINANTS OF DRUG ABUSE AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

The study investigated demographic factors as determinants of drug abuse among secondary school students in Ogun State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design of ex-post type was adopted. Participants for the study were five-hundred (500) adolescent students randomly drawn from JSS 1- SSS1 students in five (5) secondary schools located in Abeokuta North Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. Their ages ranged between 10-17 years with a mean of 16.4 years. A self constructed questionnaire tagged Demographic Drug Abuse Scale (ADDAS) (r = .076) was employed to collect data for the study. Two research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Data were analysed using the Multiple Regression. The results revealed that age and gender were found to predict adolescent drug abuse, while education level does not. The paper concludes that school adolescents who become drug abusers are more likely to live in a social context that makes drug use easier. Recommendations were made for peer counselling and health education as part of the curriculum of secondary school education.

Introduction

Drug abuse is a global pandemic that cuts across regions, race, age, group and occupations. Drugs which exert their major effects on the brain and psychological functioning, resulting in such effect as sedation, stimulation or change of mood or change of behaviour, are called psychoactive substances and they possess habit-forming potentials. It is said to be abused when the intake at a particular period exceeds ethical prescription standard (Olowookere, 1998; Moronkola, 2001; and Ige, 2005). Consequently, Ejue (2000) opined that it usually involves either physiological or psychological dependence.

The study of National Survey on Drugs Use and Health in the United States of America (USA) revealed that in 2001, 35.1 million

Americans aged 12[+] equivalent of 14.9 percent of the population reported the use of illicit drugs. Consequently, 108.25 million Americans aged 12 and above, that is, 46 percent of the (USA) population, have used illicit drugs at least once in their life time (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA), 2003; National Institute on Drug Abuse, (NIDA, 1999).

In Nigeria, the situation is not different. Although study showed that there is inadequate data directly related to age, gender and family structure as predictors of drug abuse among adolescents, few research studies have provided convincing evidences that a sizeable proportion of drug abusers in Nigeria are students. Previous studies by National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA, 1991, 1992, 1997 and 1999) showed that students of both sexes are the most group at risk. The abuse of drugs which include alcohol, cannabis (Wee-Wee, India hemp, Marijuana), prescription drugs (stimulants and depressants) cocaine and heroin has torn many families apart, destroyed lives, corrupted the societal value, and prevented many youths from fulfilling their hopes and aspirations (Madubike and Nwagwu, 2001).

In a study which focused on drug abuse and learning environment in the United States, the Department of Education (1989) noted that drug abuse brings into the school environment such illegal activities connected to theft, prostitution and selling of drugs. Also, the (United Nations Officer for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNDCCP, 1992) reiterated that when many students in a class are under the influence of drugs or absent because of drug abuse, the progress of all (the) students is impeded *p. 40*. It is evident, therefore, that drug abuse can affect academic performance and self-discipline necessary for learning.

Several researchers (Obot, 1990; Olowookere, 1998; Ige 2005; Effion, Ejue and Effiong, 2005) examined the abuse of drugs that stimulate the Central Nervous System (CNS). According to them they are often taken for alertness, wakefulness, excitation and feeling of euphoria. The stimulants identified as abused in Nigeria include amphetamines: caffeine concentrates such as proplus tablets, kolanut, caffeine, etc among others. Obot (1990) and NDLEA (1999) noted that few people regard caffeine as drug, and it is only in recent years that scientist recognized the abuse potential of caffeine.

According to Odejide (1992), students refer to stimulants as pep or Superman pills. The specific reasons adduced for using such drugs were to get along with friends (64%), for boldness (58.2%), curiosity (just to find out), (50.4%), to stay awake during examination (38.6%), and 38.3% for relation to study calm.

Various researchers such as Amato and Booth (1996), Furstenberg and Teiter (1994), Oyewo (2002) compared adolescents from intact and single families and concluded that children from single parents are more likely to experience problem behaviours such as substance abuse, juvenile delinquency. Others include increased risk of early home leaving, early-unplanned pregnancy and teenage marriage (Fayombo 2000; Oyewo, 2002).

Having reviewed available relevant studies including internet on drug abuse among youths, findings revealed that most studies focused on pattern of drug abuse, problem of drug abuse and prevention and control. Scarcely, there exists any comprehensive study linking drug abuse of in-school students to demographic variables in Nigeria. In this respect, the research intends to fill this gap. Thus, this study contributes to existing knowledge of drug abuse among adolescents in Nigeria.

Research Hypotheses
1.   What is the composite contribution of identified demographic variables (age, gender and educational level) on adolescent drug abuse?
2.   What is the relative contribution of each demographic variable to adolescents' drug abuse?

Methodology
This study adopted the survey research design. The respondents for this study were made-up of five-hundred (500) JSS 1 – SS 3 students: (males = 270, females = 230) selected by stratified random sampling techniques from five secondary schools in Abeokuta, Ogun State. Their ages ranged from 10-17 years with a mean of 16.4 and a standard deviation of 8.3.

The two instruments used in this study was Demographic Drug Abuse Scale (ADDAS) developed by Oyewo (2009[a]). Section A part of the questionnaire required the respondents to supply their sex, age,

educational level, and religion. Section B-E measured various patterns of drug abuse among cohorts. The four point response rating scale of strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1) was adopted. The test re-test reliability of the scale when administered among 90 JSS 1- SSS 1 students that did not form part of the study in Abeokuta, Ogun State was r-0.76 with an interval of two weeks.

The researchers and two research assistants personally administered the questionnaire items on five hundred and fifty (550) randomly selected students from the post-primary schools which participated in the study with the help of class teachers in schools. The researchers explained the various sections of the questionnaires to the participants who were instructed not to leave any of the items unanswered. In this way, five hundred questionnaires were found suitable for the study. Data collected were analysed using the multiple regression.

Results

Hypotheses 1

What is the composite contribution of identified demographic variables (age, gender and educational level) to adolescent drug abuse?

Table 1:   Regression Analysis of Joint of Demographic Variables on Drug Abuse among Adolescents

R = .153						
R-Square = .023						
Adjusted R-Square = .018						
Standard Error of						
Estimate = 6.4935						
Variables	**Sum of Squares**	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig**	**Remark**
Regression	*501.722*	*3*	*167.241*	*3.966*	*.008*	*Sig*
Residual	*20914.078*	*496*	*42.165*			
Total	*21415.800*	*499*				

Significant at F(3,496) = 3.966; p <0.05.

Table 1 above shows that the three independent variables (age, gender and educational level), when taken together on drug abuse yielded a coefficient of multiple regression R=.153 and an adjusted R^2 of .018.

This implies that 1.8% of the total variance in adolescent abuse drug of participants is accounted for by the combination of the three variables. The table also indicates that the analysis of variance of the multiple regression data produced F-ratio value significant at 0.05 alpha level ($F_{(3,496)}$ = 3.966; P <0.05) which depicts that the predictive capacity of the independent variables did not occur by chance.

Hypothesis 2
What is the relative contribution of each demographic variable of adolescents' drug abuse?

Table 2:   Relative Contribution of Independent Variables to prediction of Drug Abuse *among* Adolescents

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig	Remarks
Educational Level	*-1.025*	*.586*	*-.078*	*-1.751*	*.081*	*NS*
Gender	*1.047*	*.476*	*.110*	*2.202*	*.028*	*Sig*
Age	*-.757*	*.278*	*-.135*	*-2.724*	*.007*	*Sig*
Constant	*22.436*	*1.368*		*16.402*	*.000*	*Sig*

Significant at P <0.05

From the results of Table 2 above, each of the independent variables except educational level made significant individual contributions to the prediction of drug abuse. The result indicated that educational level had relative effect of (B= -1.025, t = -1.751, P>0.05), followed by gender (B – 1.047, t= 2.202; P < 0.05) and Age (B = -.757, t = 2.724, P <0.05). Though two of the variables made significant relative contribution to the prediction of adolescent drug abuse, gender is a more potent predictor.

Discussion

The results of multiple regression indicate that a combination of three demographic variables (educational level, gender and age) when taken together was effective in predicting drug abuse among adolescent. This is so because demographic variables made joint significant effect of R=.153 an adjusted R-square value of .018 which translates to a weak 1.8% total variability of drug abuse among in-school adolescent, implying that other factors accounted for 98.2%. Furthermore, the findings yielded F-ratio value of 3.966 which lends credence to the effectiveness of the three independent variables in predicting drug abuse. The study therefore shows that demographic variables impact on drug abuse.

Consequently, this result is in agreement with findings of (Odejide 1992; Obot, 1990; Ejeu, 2000; Ige, 2005; Effion, Ejue and Effiong, 2005) found out that the intake of cannabis, heroines, beer, palm wine, local and factory gin was significantly high among students. Some of the substances are considered as "beverages" used for excitation and feeling of euphoria. This possible explains this finding. As regards the contribution of the three variables, it could be referred from table 2 that gender is the better predictor of drug abuse behaviour among students. However, educational level (B =-1.025, =-1.715, P >0.05) negatively correlated with the dependable variable.

This result corroborates the findings of (Emafo, 1999; Effion, Ejue, Effong, 2005; Ige, 2005 and Oyewo, 2009[b]) on drug abuse among secondary schools in Nigeria. The researchers discovered that some drug uses are affected by gender differences. They establish that males are more likely to be involved in illicit drug use than females, and are thereby more likely to be heavy drinkers and heavy users of illicit drugs. Besides, young men are expected to be daring, risk-taking and rule breaking than young women (Emafo, 1999; SAMHSA, 2003). However, this result contradicts the findings of (Fabiyi 1984; Pela 1989; Adejumobi, 1991; Fayombo 2000; and Moronkola, 2001) that there was no significant difference in the knowledge of boys and girls on drug abuse.

Similarly, it was discovered that peer pressure was frequently mentioned factor of drug use and abuse. Often because of need to belong, susceptible individuals such as weak personalities accept the sub-cultural values and codes of behaviour of certain group that include

alcohol drink, cigarette and/cannabis smoking and other drugs (Igwe 1992; Ige 2005).

Conclusion and Recommendations
Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concluded that school-going students who become drug abusers live in a social context that makes drug abuse easier. Important contextual factors are the availability of the drugs, the community's norms regarding drug use, the degree to which drug laws are enforced and the ways in which they are presented in the mass media. Although, the efforts of the NDLEA and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) must be commended in the area of drug abuse, the Nigeria government needs to do more in this domain (Ige, 2005). All other factors being equal, adolescents who have easy access to drugs, and who are exposed to messages that tolerate or even encourage drug use are more likely to use and abuse drugs.

The following recommendations are made:

1.   Drug abuse should be made to form part of the curriculum of health education in primary and post-primary schools.
2.   Peer counselling, drug free members should be established in every secondary school in the federation.
3.   Guidance counsellors and social welfare practitioners should also be interested in the welfare of wards/children from single parents in order to determine the extent and nature of drug problem of these adolescents.
4.   The Parent-Teachers-Association (PTA) should hold regular meetings and discussions with students on the deleterious effect of drug abuse on the health of the individuals, the family and the society.
5.   It is imperative that parents should take keen interest to find out how their children spend their pocket money, while moderation should be applied in acceding to financial request of their children.
6.   There is dire need for the empowerment of agencies such as NDLEA and NAFDAC in their drive to function effectively in order to achieve their mandates.

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