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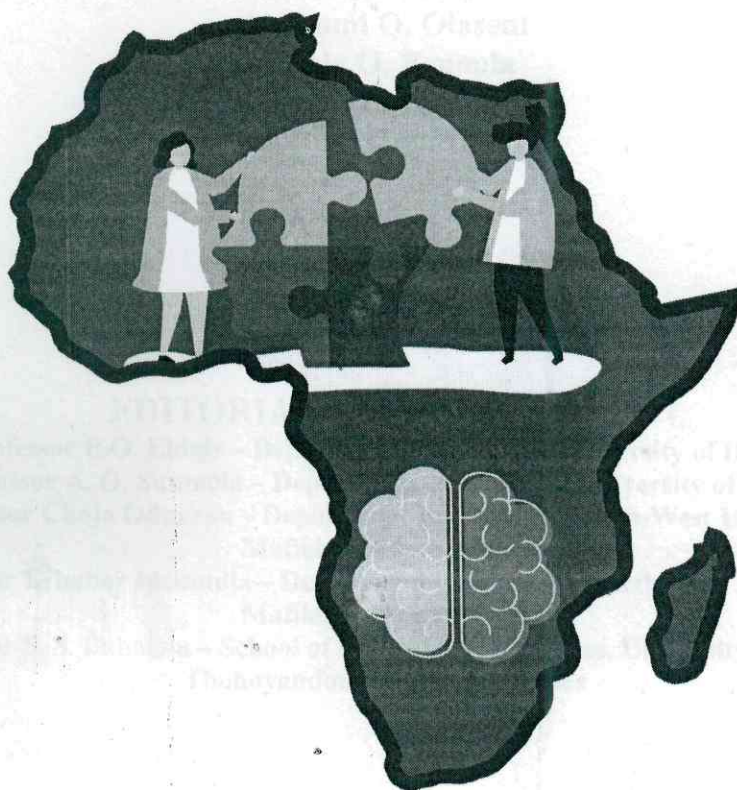
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Psychoactive Substance Use among Students in Some Selected Public Secondary Schools in Ilorin, Kwara State

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Abstract

This study investigated the use of psychoactive substance among secondary school students in public schools. It focused on the prevalence of use, reasons for use, and perceived effect of psychoactive substance use among the students. The study adopted a survey design using structured questionnaire to obtain quantitative data from sample size of one hundred and fifty (150) senior secondary school students randomly selected from public (government-established) secondary schools within Ilorin metropolis. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistic such as frequency table and simple percentage, with the aid of statistical package for social science (SPSS), version 20. The study found among other things high prevalence of substance use among the secondary school students, with 54.0% and 41.3% reported lifetime and current use, respectively. Alcohol was found to be the most commonly used substance among lifetime and current users (76.5% and 74.2% respectively). The major reason reported for lifetime substance was based on curiosity and desire to experiment (71.6%), while the reported major reason for current substance was to be bold and strong (79.0%). The perceived effects of psychoactive use were found to include: running away from home (58.7%), addiction and more cravings for substances (54.0%), and poor academic performance (52.0%), among others. The study concludes based on the findings that psychoactive substance use is prevalent among secondary school students, especially in public schools, therefore, measures should be devised in curbing this menace. The study recommends, among others, that parents should adequately monitor their children and know the type of friends they associate with; children (students) themselves should shun association that can have negative influence on their behaviour; intensive sensitisation and anti-drug abuse advocacy should be championed in the community as well as in schools.

Keywords: drug abuse, prevalence of psychoactive substance use, psychoactive substance, secondary school students,

Introduction

World Health Organisation (WHO) defines psychoactive substances, as substances that, when taken in or administered into one's system, affect mental processes. The global use of psychoactive substances, such as alcohol and tobacco, and as well as other illicit substances is growing rapidly. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC), it is estimated that 1 in 20 adults, or a quarter of a billion people between the ages of 15 and 64 years, used at least one drug in 2014. Over 29 million people who use drugs are estimated to suffer from drug use disorders. With an estimated 207,400 drug-related deaths in 2014, corresponding to 43.5 deaths per million people aged 15-64 (UNDOC, 2016). Similarly, it has been reported that cannabis remains, globally, the most commonly used psychoactive substance under international control (UNODC 2015; WHO 2016).

The harmful use of alcohol and psychoactive substances has been reported to contribute to the global health burden. Maroba and Partel (2013) observe that alcohol and tobacco use contribute to the development of chronic health problems.

Short and long-term harms are associated with using psychoactive substances. The main harmful effects resulting from substance use include chronic health effects such as liver cirrhosis and a host of other chronic illnesses (as associated with alcohol), and lung cancer, emphysema, etc. (as associated with tobacco/cigarette). In addition, substance user or abuser can contract HIV and hepatitis B and C virus through sharing of needles for heroin injection (WHO, 2004; 2016). Aside the harm to the individual users, alcohol and substance use may have health, social and economic effects on the family, community and even the social cycles of the users (Rossow, Felix, Keating, & Mccambridge, 2016).

In Nigeria, it has been found that one in seven persons aged 15-64 years had used a drug (other than tobacco and alcohol) in the past year. The past year prevalence of any drug use is estimated at 14.4 per cent (range 14.0 per cent - 14.8 per cent), corresponding to 14.3 million people aged 15-64 years who had used a psychoactive substance in the past year for non-medical purposes (UNDOC, 2018).

Furthermore, past empirical studies have linked parental use of psychoactive substance as a predictor of use by children (Handley & Chassin 2013; Taremian, Yaghubi, Pairavi, Hosseini, Zafar, & Moloodi, 2018). Some studies have also linked peer influence to substance use (Oluoha, Duru, Okafor, Diwe, Iwu, Aguocha, Ohale & Nwaigbo 2017; Taremian et al 2018). Adekeye, Adeusi, Chenube, Ahmadu and Sholarin (2015) found a strong connection between age and substance use.

There are evidences of prevalence of substance use among youths and adolescents in Nigeria. As observed by Ekpenyong & Aakpege (2014), risky alcohol use among students has become a serious public health issue in Nigeria.

Study by Adekeye et al (2015) on assessment of alcohol and substance use among undergraduates in selected private universities in Southwest Nigeria found cigarette smoking (81%) and alcohol (72%) use to have the highest prevalence rate among the students. They found no-significant contribution of parental use and peer influence on student's use of alcohol. However, age was found to be a strong predictor of students' use of alcohol and other substances.

Awosusi and Adegboyega (2015) investigated alcohol consumption and tobacco use among secondary school students in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Their study also assessed the students' awareness of the health effects of alcohol consumption and tobacco use. However, they found a low prevalence of alcohol and tobacco use among the students, their study revealed that respondents knew that diseases of the lungs (90.2%), liver disease (88.8%) and cardiovascular disease (87.1%) could result from usage of alcohol and tobacco.

In addition, Gana, Idris, Sabitu, Oche, Abubakar, and Nguku (2018) assessed the prevalence and perception of out of school adolescents on cigarette smoking in Birnin Kebbi metropolis of Kebbi State. They found that the proportion of respondents who had ever smoked cigarettes was 32.2% while 20.8% currently smoke. Most of the respondents (84.1%) perceived that cigarette smoking was harmful, 17.3% of those who reported having ever smoked started smoking before the age of 10 years. Gana et al (2018) found that the prevalence of cigarette smoking was statistically significantly higher among the 15-19 year olds when compared to the 10-14 year olds and also among the males when compared to females. Majority of all the respondents (84.1%) had the perception that cigarette smoking was harmful.

Oluoha et al (2017) investigated socio-demographic determinants of psychoactive substance use among students of tertiary institutions in Imo State, Nigeria. They found high prevalence of lifetime and current use of stimulants (45.3% and 29.1% respectively). Tobacco was found to be the most common stimulant used both in the past (50.3%) and currently (48.0%). They also found peer group influence on the use of psychoactive substances by students (Oluoha et al 2017).

Idowu, Aremu, Olumide and Ogunlaja (2016) investigated substance abuse among students in selected secondary schools in Oyo state. They found that 40.0% of the students had positive attitude to substance abuse. About 21.7% had ever consumed alcoholic drinks, while tramadol was the most commonly abused substance apart from alcohol. Most (35.5%) of the substance abusers had belief that the substance could enhance their academic performance (Idowu et al, 2016).

Ogunsola and Fatusi (2016) reported high prevalence of lifetime substance use among in-school adolescents in Osun State. They found that about two-thirds of respondents had used substances in both rural (65.7%) and urban areas (66.0%) respectively.

Adekeye et al (2015) reported that most of the youths they studied engaged in drinking of alcohol and other related substances because they wanted to be bold and strong (88%); they wanted to enjoy life (71 %) and because of curiosity to know how it feels (65%).

On the effect of substance use, Adekeye et al (2015) reported decline in academic performance (51%) and addiction to substance (that is, craving for substances) (58%) to be among the effect of substance use on the students. Also, Awosusi and Adegboyega (2015) submit that alcohol inhibits neural and cerebral functioning, impairs thinking, memory and decision-making.

Based on the above backdrop, however, the present study did further empirical study on prevalent, predictors, effect an pattern of psychoactive substance use among students in some selected public secondary schools in Ilorin metropolis.

Research Questions

1. How prevalent is psychoactive substance use among secondary school students in public schools?
2. What are the reasons given by the students for first (lifetime) and current psychoactive substance use?
3. What are the perceived effects of psychoactive substance use as perceived by the students?

Objectives of the study

1. To determine the prevalence of psychoactive substance use among students of government-owned secondary schools.
2. To identify the reasons for first time and current psychoactive substance use among the students.
3. To ascertain the students' perception of the effects of psychoactive substance use.

Methods

The study adopted a **survey** research design, which involved the use of structured questionnaire to obtain quantitative data from the respondents.

Cluster and random **sampling** techniques were employed in the selection of senior classes (SS1 – SS3) from two government-owned secondary schools, from where 150 participants were randomly selected. The research setting was government-owned secondary school. However, two of such secondary schools were selected based on their popularity, and mixed students population composition as public school.

Of the **participants**, 83 (representing 55.3 percent) were males, while 67 (constituting 44.7 percent) were females. Their age ranges from 12 and 19 years (but majority of the participants, 56.7 percent, were between 12 and 15 years). Those who were Yoruba among them constituted 44.7 percent, Igbo (17.3 percent), Hausa (6.0 percent), Fulani (11.3 percent), and other ethnic backgrounds constituted 20.7 percent. In addition, data on whom the participants often interact or stay with after school include friends (34.7 percent), mother (19.3 percent), adults in the neighbourhood (14.7 percent), father (12.7 percent), relatives (5.3 percent), siblings (3.3 percent), guardian (6.0 percent), and others (4.0 percent).

The **instrument** of data collection was structured questionnaire. Having obtained approvals from the respective school authority to carry out the research in the selected schools (but with a condition that the identities of both the participants and the schools would be kept anonymously), the questionnaires were administered to consented participants. The administration of the research instrument (questionnaire) followed a classroom format (that is, making the selected participants in each class to sit down on their seats). Any of the participants was allowed to seek clarification on any question they found "too difficult" to interpret.

Method of data analysis was descriptive statistics, such as frequency distribution tables and simple percentages. The analysis was processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20.

Results

This section presents analysis of the data collected towards achieving the research objectives, as well as the discussion of major findings of the study.

Research Question 1: *How prevalent is psychoactive substance use among secondary school students?*

Table 1: Distribution of respondents based on past and current use of psychoactive substances

Use of Substances	Frequency	Percentage
Ever used substances		
Yes	81	54.0
No	69	46.0
Total	150	100
Current use of substances		
Yes	62	41.3
No	88	58.7
Total	150	100

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2019

The above table reveals that more than half of the respondents, 54.0 percent (81) reported ever used one psychoactive substance or another (lifetime use), while 46.0 percent (69) have not. Current use of psychoactive substances indicated that 41.3 percent (62) reported use a week to the study, while 58.7 percent (88) have no report of current use.

Table 2: Types of psychoactive substances commonly used in a lifetime experience

Type of substances used	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
Cigarette/tobacco	55	67.9	2 nd
Alcohol	62	76.5	1 st
Codeine/tramadol	53	65.4	3 rd
Indian Hemp (marijuana)	26	32.1	6 th
Energy drinks	49	60.5	4 th
Coffee/Kola nut	44	54.3	5 th
Inhalants (solution, gum, gas, petrol)	11	13.6	7 th
Others	5	6.2	8 th

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2019

Table 2 reveals commonly used psychoactive substances by respondents who reported to have ever used substances. It can be seen that 67.9 percent (55) said that they used cigarette/tobacco, 76.5 percent (62) reported that they used alcohol; 65.4 percent (53) said they used codeine/tramadol; 32.1 percent (26) said they used Indian hemp (marijuana); 60.5 percent (49) reported using energy drinks; 54.3 percent (44) indicated that they use coffee/Kola nut; 13.6 percent (11) said they use inhalants (such as fuel, solutions, gum, gas, soakaway etc.); and 6.2 percent (5) reported using other psychoactive substances.

Table 3: Currently used psychoactive substances among the respondents

Type of substances used	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
Cigarette/tobacco	27	43.5	4 th
Alcohol	46	74.2	1 st
Codeine/tramadol	32	51.6	3 rd
Indian Hemp (marijuana)	23	37.1	6 th
Energy drinks	35	56.5	2 nd
Coffee/Kola nut	24	38.7	5 th
Inhalants (solution, gum, gas, petrol)	7	11.3	7 th
Others	3	4.8	8 th

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2019

Table 3 reveals commonly used psychoactive substances by current users. Cigarette/tobacco was reportedly used by 43.5 percent (27); 74.2 percent (46) used alcohol; 51.6 percent (32) reported using codeine and tramadol, 37.1 percent (23) used Indian hemp (marijuana); 56.5 percent (35) reported using energy drinks, 48 (40%) used energy drinks, 38.7 percent (24) used coffee and kola nut, 11.3 percent (7) reportedly used inhalants (such as fuel, solution, gas etc.) and 4.8 percent (3) used other substances.

Research Question 2: *What are the reasons given by the students for first time and current psychoactive substance use?*

Table 4: Reasons for first time psychoactive substance use

Reasons for substance use	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
To cope with academic /school stress	27	33.3	5 th
Friends do it	44	54.0	2 nd
For fun (i.e. to enjoy life)	30	37.0	4 th
To be bold and strong	36	44.4	3 rd
Family members do it	21	25.9	7 th
Curiosity and desire to experiment	58	71.6	1 st
They are sold in the neighbourhood	25	30.9	6 th
Ignorance	20	24.7	8 th
Other reasons (e.g. betting, money reward accolades etc.)	9	11.1	9 th

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2019

Reasons given for first time substance use among the students show that 33.3 percent (27) of those who reported ever used psychoactive substances said they used it for coping against academic and school stresses; 54.0 percent (44) said because their friends use it; 37.0 percent (30) said they used it for fun (that is to enjoy life); 44.4 percent (36) reported that they used it to be bold and strong; 25.9 percent (21) said because their family members do it; 71.6 percent (58) said they used psychoactive substances because of curiosity and desire to experiment; 30.9 percent (25) said because substances are sold in the neighbourhoods; 24.7 percent (20) used it due to ignorance, while 11.1 percent (9) used it because of other reasons like betting, money reward, accolades etc.).

Table 5: Reasons for psychoactive substance use by current users

Reasons for using substance use	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
To cope with academic/school stress	40	64.5	3 rd
Friends do it	38	61.3	4 th
For fun (i.e. to enjoy life)	43	69.4	2 nd
To be bold and strong	49	79.0	1 st
Family members do it	11	17.7	7 th
Curiosity and desire to experiment	14	22.6	5 th
They are sold in the neighbourhood	7	11.3	8 th
Ignorance	4	6.5	9 th
Other reasons (e.g. betting, money reward etc.)	12	19.4	6 th

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2019

Table 5 reveals reasons given for current substance use among secondary school students. 64.5 percent (40) of those who reported current use of psychoactive substances said they used it for coping against academic and school stresses; 61.3 percent (38) said because their friends use it; 69.4 percent (43) said it was for fun (to enjoy life); 79.0 percent (49) reported that they used it to be bold and strong; 17.7 percent (11) said because their family members do it; 22.6 percent (14) said they used psychoactive substances because of curiosity and desire to experiment; 11.3 percent (7) said because substances are sold in the neighbourhoods; 6.5 percent (4) used it due

to ignorance, and 19.4 percent (12) used it because of other reasons like betting, money reward, accolades etc.).

Research question 3: *What are the perceived effects of psychoactive substance use among students?*

Table 6: Perceived effects of psychoactive substance use among secondary school students

Effects of alcohol	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
Poor academic performance	78	52.0	3 rd
Addiction/more cravings	81	54.0	2 nd
Getting into trouble with parents and teachers	70	46.7	6 th
It makes the user feel high	76	50.7	4 th
Running away from home	88	58.7	1 st
Pilfering/stealing	73	48.7	5 th
It leads to depression	47	31.3	9 th
Violent behaviour	59	39.3	7 th
Cause trouble in the neighbourhood	52	34.7	8 th

Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2019

Table 6 shows the perceived effects of psychoactive substance use among secondary school students. In this regard, 52.0 percent (78) said substance use lead to poor academic performance; 54.0 percent (81) said it leads to addiction and more cravings for substance use; 46.7 percent (70) reported that it leads to getting into trouble with parents and teachers; 50.7 percent (76) said it makes the user to feel high; 58.7 percent (88) indicated that substance use leads to running away from home; 48.7 percent (73) said it encourages stealing and pilfering; 31.3 percent (47) said it leads to depression; 39.3 percent (59) said it encourages violent behaviour; and 34.7 percent (52) it leads to the user to cause trouble in the neighbourhood.

Discussion of Findings

Percentage distribution of the participants shows that male students, 83 (55.3 percent) constituted the majority of the respondents. This finding is consistent with Adekeye et al (2015) where more male than female participated in their study. It has also been found that more than half of the students in this study were between the ages of 12 and 15 years (representing 56.7 percent).

The present study found high prevalence of lifetime (54.0 percent) and current (41.3 percent) use of psychoactive substance among the students. Oluoha et al (2017) also reported high prevalence of lifetime and current stimulant use (45.3 percent and 29.1 percent, respectively). Adekeye et al (2015), reported current use of 43.0 percent. Ogunsola and Fatusi (2016) also reported high prevalence of lifetime substance use among school adolescents in rural area (65.7 percent) and 66.0 percent in urban centre, respectively.

The study has also found that, among those who reported ever use substance (lifetime use), alcohol (76.5 percent) (which is the overall most commonly used), cigarette/tobacco (67.9 percent) and codeine/tramadol (65.4 percent) and energy drinks (60.5 percent) were among the frequently used substances. On the other hand, it has also been found that alcohol (74.2 percent), energy drinks (56.5 percent), Codeine/tramadol (51.6 percent), and cigarette (43.5

percent) are some of the most commonly used substances as reported by the respondents who were current users of psychoactive substances. From these findings, it can be seen that alcohol remains the most commonly used substance in both lifetime and current experiences with substance use.

Furthermore, the study has found that the major reason for psychoactive substance use, among lifetime users (first timers), was given as curiosity and desire to experiment with substance (71.6 percent). However, the main reason given for current psychoactive substance use, was to be bold and strong (79.0 percent). Other reasons discovered among current users are: to catch fun (i.e. enjoy life) 69.4 percent; to cope with academic and school stresses (64.5 percent); and because friends do it (61.3 percent). Based on this finding, it can be seen that, overtime, the reason for psychoactive use varied. For instance, the reason given by lifetime (first time) users, which is curiosity and experimentation, couldn't have been out of place; because it is a general belief that young people are usually curious and like to take risk. In their study, Osahon and Oseh (2018) found that the two main reasons for substance use were peer pressure (40.3%) and to relieve stress (30.8%).

With regards to boldness as one of the reasons given for substance use (as found in the study), Adekeye et al (2015) observed that since the beginning of history, humans have searched for substances that would sustain and protect them and also act on the nervous system to produce pleasurable sensations. Also, buttressing the findings regarding reasons for substance use, it has been observed that drugs are believed to provide pleasure because they give inner peace and satisfaction, relax the muscles and heighten sensation (Cloninger, Sigvardsson & Bohman 1988; Santrock, 2005).

The perceived effects of psychoactive substance use, as found in the study, include: running away from home (58.7 percent), addiction, leading to more cravings for substances (54.0 percent), poor academic performance (52.0 percent), and feeling high (50.7 percent). As submitted by Tareman et al (2018), substance use may result in behavioural and academic problems, as well as mental health related disorders and communicable diseases.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The use of psychoactive substances is prevalent occurrence among secondary school students that requires urgent attention of all the stakeholders to curb. However, in this regards, the role of the family cannot be overemphasized, as the study revealed greater role of peer influence on the behavioural disposition of the students towards substance use. Based on the finding of the study, there is high interaction of the students with friends after the school hours. This has a serious implication on their substance use behaviour, because there would be less parental monitoring. There is need to intensify efforts in curbing substance use among secondary school students as failure to do this can portend danger to their future, as well as serious negative behavioural and health consequences.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended:

1. Parents should adequately monitor their children and know the type of friends they associate with.
2. Children themselves should shun association that can have negative influence on their behaviour.

3. Intensive campaign and sensitisation against drug abuse and be championed in the community as well as in schools. This can even lead to the formation of anti-drug abuse clubs in school.
4. Prosocial behaviour should be adequately rewarded in school; not just academic performance. It will discourage anti-social behavioural tendency.
5. Selling of alcohol and other illicit substances to underage and adolescents should be strictly prohibited.

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