PREVALENCE AND PATTERN OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONGST SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN A RURAL COMMUNITY IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA.

Erah F.O* and Otobhiale B.I

Department of Community Medicine, Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital, Irrua, Edo State, Nigeria

Background: Students in secondary schools are in their youthful age, prone to peer pressure and can easily resorts to social vices such as illicit drug use. Since youths are the bedrock of the society, curtailing these social vices will keep the community healthy.

Aim: To determine the prevalence and pattern of substance abuse among secondary school students in Irrua with a view to minimizing the effects of substance abuse among them.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 164 secondary school students in Irrua. Cochrane formular for descriptive cross sectional study was used to determine the sample size of 164. The Data collection was by interviewer-administered questionnaires focusing on prevalence, types of substance commonly abused and the factors responsible for substance abuse. Participants were selected and all secondary school students in the study area were included in the study but multistage sampling technique was used to select the participants. Prevalence was determined by getting the percentage of the respondents who were involved in illicit drug use. Data were analysed with the aid of IBM-SPSS version 21.0. Results were presented in tables, frequency and charts.

Results: All the 164 secondary students selected for the study participated; giving a response rate of 100%. About two-third (66.5%) of the respondents were within the age group of 10-15 years. 58.5% of them were females and most (96.3%) of them were Christians. Most of the respondents' parents (87.2%) were married. And of the total number of respondents, 140(85.4%) resides with their parents while 11.6%, 2.4%, and 0.6% of them resides with a guardian, extended family member and siblings respectively. A few 17(10.4%) of the respondents abuse drugs and the drugs commonly abused include Cigar 23.5%, alcohol 41.2%, marijuana11.8%,, Cigarette 17.6%, and heroin 5.9%. Reasons for substance abuse as narrated by respondents include: Peer pressure 41.2%, depression 5.9% and coping mechanism 41.2%. Other reasons given include curiosity 5.9%, and influence of media 5.9%.

Conclusion: The prevalence of substance abuse among the secondary school students studied was 10.4% and substances commonly abused among them include Cigar 23.5%, alcohol 41.2%, marijuana 11.8%, cigarette 17.6% and Heroin 5.9%. Factors responsible for substance abuse as revealed by respondents include: Peer pressure, depression, copping mechanism, curiosity and influence from the media.

Key words: Prevalence, substance abuse, secondary school students, Pattern

INTRODUCTION

Psychoactive substance use can lead to dependence syndrome - a cluster of behavioural, cognitive, and physiological phenomena that develop after repeated substance use and that typically include a strong desire to take the drug, difficulties in controlling its use, persisting in its use despite harmful consequences (Manbe DA.2008).The prevalence of health-risky behaviours associated with adolescent illicit drug use has attracted growing international recognition. Substance abuse remains a major health challenge all over the world. while substances abuse constitutes a major

sociological ill habit with adverse public health implications. Psychoactive substances could modify the perceptions, moods, behaviours and physical/psychological functions of such users (UN-DCCP-2002). Since majority of substance abuse among teenagers starts in the school, the school population is the best place for early detection and prevention of substance abuse in the adolescent population. Substance use is widespread in many African countries, including Nigeria with alcohol and tobacco acting as "gateway drugs" to life use of other substances (Adelekan ML.1997).Adolescence generally refers to individuals between the ages of 10-19 years. High rates of substance abuse in student populations have been reported (Baptista T *et al* 1994*).* Secondary school is unique in having the high number of teenagers who are seemingly battling with self-identity and peer pressure influence. These make them more vulnerable to undertaking even illicit actions[5.] 5Adolescents are faced with the huge task of establishing a sense of identity. At this age, they use drugs for new things. They use drugs for many reasons including curiosity, because it feels good, to reduce stress, or to feel grown up. Using alcohol and tobacco at a young age increase the risk of using other drugs later. The Nigerian National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has stated that substance abuse is a major problem in schools, colleges and universities in Nigeria (Leibsohn JM 1994) .Many of these students' behaviours are heavily tied to the peer culture, as students learn from and imitate the peers they like and admire. In one of the WHO's and the world heart foundation's data, posit that in Nigeria, 22.1% of school youth age between 12 to 17 years use tobacco. Causes of Drug or substance Abuse (Haladu, AA.2017) include experimental curiosity, peer group Influence, lack of parental supervision, personality problems due to socio-economic conditions: Adolescents with personality problems, and availability of the drugs. The objective of this study is to determine the prevalence of substance abuse, types of substances commonly abused and the factors responsible for the abuse of these substances.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive cross-sectional study design was utilized for this study done among secondary school students in both private and public schools in a rural community in Edo state. The Cochrane formula for descriptive cross sectional study was used to determine the minimum required sample of 164 for the study(Cochrane G.(1977). A multistage sampling technique was employed in selecting respondents in the various wards and Schools in the study area with each sampling stage requiring a sampling method. One School was selected (by simple random sampling) in each of the 6 wards in Irrua community making a total of six schools. In each of the school selected, the number of required students for the study was determined using proportional allocation to size. That is, the total number of students in a particular school divided by the total population of students in all the schools multiplied by the sample size. In each school selected, the target participants were selected by systematic sampling technique. The inclusion criteria was any student in the secondary schools selected and agrees to participate in the study while those who refused to participate and those absent from school at the time of the study were excluded from the study. Data were collected with the aid of an interviewer-administered questionnaire and analysed with the aid of IBM-SPSS version 21.0 software. The questionnaire was in four sections: sociodemographic characteristics, prevalence of substance abuse, factors responsible for drug abuse and drugs commonly abused. Some of the questions asked include: Do you take any hard drug? If yes, what are the hard drugs you take? How often do you take them? Why do you take these drugs? Prevalence was determined by the number of students who were involved in drug abuse divided by the total number of students who participated in the study multiplied by 100. Results were presented in tables, frequencies and charts.

Ethical Considerations:

Approval for this study was sort and obtained from the Ethics and Research committee of Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital, Irrua, Edo State. Permission to carry out the study was also obtained from the various schools were the study was carried out and individual informed consent obtained from the participants before the study was carried out.

RESULTS

Most (66.5%) of the respondents were within the age group 10 – 15 years, 58.5% were females and majority (96.3%) Christians. Most (56.7%) were Esan, while 24.4%, 7.9%, 4.3% and 4.3% were Bini, Yoruba, Ibo and Etsako respectively. Other ethnic group were Hausa 2(1.15%) and Urhobo 2(1.15%) respectively. Most (87.2%) of the respondent's parents were married. And of the total number of respondents, 140 (85.4%) resides with their parents, while 11.6%, 2.4% and 0.6% resides with a guardian, extended relatives and siblings respectively. See table 1.

Table 1: socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Frequency (n=164)	Percent (%)
Age group (Years)		
10 – 15	109	66.5
16 – 21	51	31.1
22 – 27	4	2.4
Sex		
Males	68	41.5
Females	96	58.5
Religion		
Christianity	158	96.3
Islam	6	3.7
Ethnic Group		
Esan	93	56.7
Bini	40	24.4
Ibo	13	7.9
Yoruba	7	4.3
Etsako	7	4.3
Others*	4	2.3
Class		
JSS1	37	22.6
JSS2	12	7.3
JSS3	18	11.0
SS1	34	20.7
SS2	29	17.7
SS3	34	20.7
Marital Status of Parents		
Married	143	87.2
Divorced	9	5.5
Widow/Widower	2	1.2
Single parent	10	6.1
Care givers		
Parents	140	85.4
Guardian other than parent	19	11.6
Siblings	1	0.6
Extended Relatives	4	2.4

*Hausa 2 (1.15%), Urhobo 2(1.15%)

Table 2: prevalence of substance/drug abuse

INVOLVEMENT WITH SUBSTANCE	RESPONSES	
	Yes (%)	**No (%)**
Abuse Drugs.	17 (10.4)	147 (89.6)
Frequency of drug abuse	**Frequency (n=17)**	**Percent (%)**
Every 2 to 3 days	3	17.6
Once a week	1	5.9
Every fourth night	1	5.9
Once a month	7	41.2
>once a month	5	29.4
*Type of drug abused	**n=17**	
	Yes (%)	**No (%)**
Alcohol	7 (41.18)	10 (58.82)
Marijuana	2 (11.76)	15 (88.24)
Cigarette	3 (17.65)	14 (82.35)
Heroin	1 (5.9%)	16 (94.12)
Cigar**	4(23.53)	13(76.47)

*multiple response
**powdered tobacco that is sniffed up the nostril rather than smoked

About one tenth of the students 17(10.4%) abuse drugs and the drugs commonly abused by the students include: Alcohol 7(41.18%), Marijuana 2(11.76%), Heroin 1(5.9%) and Tobacco 4(23.53%).

Fig1: Reasons for substance abuse
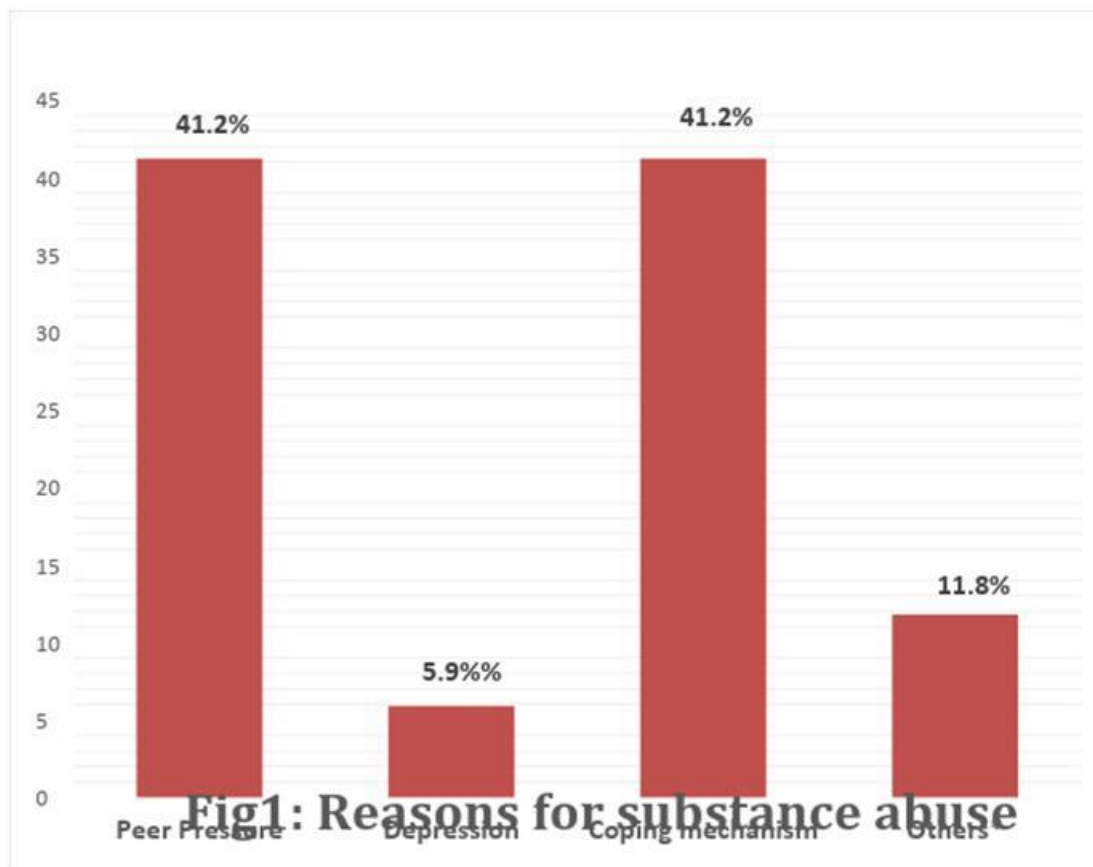
Of the 17 (10.4%) students who abuse drugs, 7 (41.2%) affirmed that peer pressure was the reason they abused drugs. 41.2% also claim that abusing drug was a coping mechanism while 5.9% abuse drug in order to avoid depression. Other reasons why students abuse drugs were curiosity 5.9% and influence of the media 5.9% respectively.

DISCUSSION

Majority of the respondents in this study (66.5%) were within the age group 10 - 15years. This age group falls within the adolescent age which is a high-risk group,(Nnaji FC.2000) as they are likely to abuse drugs, being subject to peer pressure, influence of the media and curiosity. In this study, only a few (10.4%) were found to abuse drugs and drugs commonly abused by them included alcohol 41.18%, Cigar 23.53%, Marijuana 11.8%, and Heroin 5.9%. This finding is similar to a study carried out in South West Nigeria in 2015 (Oliha JA.2014) as well as in Ekiti State, Nigeria (Adekeye O. et al 2015) where the study participants abuse alcohol (47.9%), Cigar (43.8%) and marijuana (20%). All those who smoke cigarette and marijuana were males (100%). This again supports the findings from a study carried out in South West Nigeria in 2015 (Oliha JA.2014) in which males were found to take cigarette, coffee and alcohol more than females. The male hormone which has a higher proportion of androgen tend to energise the man and give him a more daring and enthusiastic characteristics than the females. The implication of this is that this young adolescent are more likely to get involved in illicit behaviour such as rape, kidnapping and armed robbery. When efforts are geared towards minimizing the access of these young adolescents to hard drugs, the consumption will also reduce and that will help to reduce the incidence of crime in our society. All the tiers of government should as a matter of urgency regulate the sales of these illicit substances. That is not to say that NDLEA, the agency empowered with this responsibility is not doing its best, but there are still pockets of shops and hid outs where these hard drugs are sold to youngsters in the rural communities.

Findings from this study showed that peer pressure, depression, curiosity, media and coping mechanisms where the reasons why those that abuse drugs get involved. This was corroborated by a study done in 2014 where adolescents were introduced to drugs through different means (parents, adults and friends) and for different purposes, and during adolescence, the influence that parents and peers pressure have on adolescents varies (Olusola, I, and Adegboyega,

JA.2012). Adolescents who do not take drugs or drink alcohol tend to come from families who are less likely to use drugs and alcohol (Choo T.*et al* 2008)and peer associations are important determinants of adolescent smoking behavior (Drapela, LA *et al* 2006)

CONCLUSION

The prevalence of substance abuse among the secondary school students studied was 10.4% and substances commonly abused among them include Cigar 23.5%, alcohol 41.2%, marijuana 11.8%, cigarette 17.6% and Heroin 5.9%. Factors responsible for substance abuse as revealed by respondents include: Peer pressure, depression, copping mechanism, curiosity and influence from the media.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on findings from this study, the following recommendations are made:

- The Federal Government should incorporate drug abuse in the secondary school curriculum so as to enlighten the students of the dangers of drug abuse.
- The State and Local government should establish counseling centres for drug control.

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