

Relationship between Drug Abuse and Deviant Behaviour among Undergraduate Students of University of Lagos, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between drug abuse and deviant behaviour among undergraduate students of the University of Lagos. A Sample of 100 undergraduate students was randomly selected from the Faculties of Education, Science, Engineering, Business Administration and the College of Medicine. Three hypotheses were tested while data were generated using a structured questionnaire. Pearson Product Moment correlation statistic was used to analyze the data. Results showed no significant relationship between drug abuse and each of truancy, cultism and high risk sexual behaviour among undergraduate students of the University of Lagos, Nigeria.

Keywords: Drug abuse, deviant behavior, sexual behaviour and truancy.

Introduction

The problem of drug abuse among university students in Nigeria is a recognized phenomenon (Idowu, 1987,1992;Adelekan, Abiodun & Ogunremi, 1992). The alarming rate of this problem is such that it may be regarded as one of the greatest malaise in contemporary Nigerian society (NDLEA, 1993). Consequently, drug abusers are known to demonstrate various forms of deviant behaviour and organized crimes including truancy, cultism, examination misconduct and high risk sexual behavior, among others.

According to Goode (1973), a drug may be defined as any licit or illicit substance that when swallowed, smoked, sniffed or injected influences the function and operation of the body and mind. For Folawiyo (1988), it is any substance other than food, which by its chemical nature, affects the structure and function of a living organism. The definition given by Dorothy & Daniel, in Abdullahi (2006:7) incorporates the above definitions and asserts that adrug is any chemical substance that by its chemical nature affects the structure and functions of a living organism. This includes virtually all types of materials and substances including food, ingested, inhaled or injected into the body.From these definitions, it is obvious that heroin, cocaine, marijuana, barbiturates, amphetamine, alcohol, coffee and cigarettes are classified as drugs.

Drug abuse refers to the misuse or wrong use of drugs which have adverse effects on the central nervous system, mind, mood, behaviour and personality of the individual (Dewan, 2002). According to Smith (1988), it is the use of any drug to the point where it interferes with an individual's health or with his economic or social adjustment. Omolade (2003) opines that drug abuse involves self-administration of drug in a manner that deviates from the approved medical and social patterns within a given culture.

Drug abuse was previously used synonymously with such terms as habituation and addiction but in recent time contemporary scholars in the fields of medicine, psychiatry and health education have discarded such traditional terms and endorsed the term drug dependence which the World Health Organization (1998:36) defines as a state of psychic or physical dependence, or both, on a drug arising in a person following administration of that drug on a periodic or continuous basis.

Factors Determining Drug Abuse among Undergraduate Students.

Peer group influence. Most University students are young adults below the age of 24 years. They are therefore susceptible to the influence of peers (Falaye, 2001; Enang, 2007). Consequently, some of them start smoking, taking alcohol, and eventually advance to the use of hard drugs like marijuana, heroin and cocaine (Osarenren, 2002).

Lack of Self-Confidence. Usually many male students take drugs to boost their self-confidence in a bid to approach their female counterparts for amorous relationship (Erikson, in Falaye, 2001; Freud, 1953).

Reduction of Stress and Frustration. Some students take drugs when they are under stress or feel frustrated. Such ugly situations may arise from the death of a loved one, a quarrel between the student and his/her parents leading to the teenager fleeing from home, or maltreatment by a stepmother (Ndu, Brown & Topp 2009).

Academic Rigour. Some University students find it difficult to combine their academic programme with other social activities (Makinde, 2004). Consequently, many of them resort to the use of drugs either to study late into the night or relieve tension. The use of drugs is particularly common during examinations (Samuel, Johnson & John, 1985).

Curiosity and Search for Excitement. Some University students take drugs because of curiosity and desire for adventure. Thus, curiosity leads to experimentation with drugs (Ndu, Brown & Topp 2009). Repeated experiments lead to excitement. Because these drugs give a feeling of excitement, such students find it difficult to do without them

Effects of Drug Abuse among Undergraduate Students

The following are some of the effects of drug abuse among University students in Nigeria:

Truancy and Absenteeism. According to Osarenren (2002), truancy is when students stay away from school or academic activities regularly without permission while absenteeism is when there is a high rate of absence from school or academic activities when regular attendance is required. These problems are indications of adolescent rebellion, self-assertion, perceived poor academic achievement or maladjustment which are traceable to drug abuse (Falaye & Gesinde, 2003; Falaye & Adebayo, 2002).

Cultism. When University students are into drugs, they further seek membership of secret societies which are rampant on University campuses in Nigeria. Researchers have shown that many cult members are into drugs (Atere, 2003; Raufu, 2003; Okirika, 2000; Oniyama & Oniyama, 2000; Okpetu & Dittimiya, 2000).

Armed Robbery and Organized Crimes. Drug abuse gives students a false sense of security and self-confidence. As a result, these adolescents take to different types of crime including kidnapping, rape and armed robbery.

Prostitution and High Risk Sexual Behaviour. When female University students are dependent on drugs, they may also take to prostitution as a means of making easy money to live above their economic means. Male students who are on drugs are also known to be gigolos or engage in gay relationships with older wealthy men while the female may have multiple sexual partners with whom they engage in lesbianism and unprotected sex. According to Samuel et al (1985), such students usually desire the most expensive and fashionable clothing, perfumes and cars but do not have the means to secure them. Prostitution and other high risk sexual behaviour therefore, provide the avenue for cheap money.

Hostility. Drug abusers often experience emotional instability. Consequently, they may become hostile to family, friends, colleagues, lecturers constituted authority and every one about them.

Personality Disorders. A personality disorder is a deviant behaviour (Makinde, 2004). Thus, personality disorders that are common among drug abusers are paranoid (secretive, stubborn, rigid); schizoid (socially withdrawn, poor social skills); narcissistic (self-centred, lacks empathy); histrionic (flirts about, attention-seeking); borderline (unable to maintain intimacy, unstable moods); and self-defeating (depressed, lonely, resists social contact, feels hopeless).

Examination Misconduct. University students who are into drugs experience different levels of personality disorders as highlighted above. As a result their involvement in cult and other related activities, truancy and absenteeism, poor study skills and poor memory, many of them resort to cheating during examination (Awa, 1983; Ogunyemi, 2003a; Olatoye&Afuwape, 2003; Ogunyemi, 2003b).

Statement of the Problem

It is generally observed that the majority of university undergraduates arrogate specific deadlines to their stay on campus and may want to maximize both the main and peripheral opportunities while it lasts knowing full well that the society still regards them as late adolescents or youths who could be excused for certain misdemeanors. Unfortunately, while passing out on record time is highly appreciated, passing through the university campus without allowing the university decorum to pass to pass through the undergraduates is quite sad and drug-dependent life-style is an index of this.

Having to adjust to the transitional period between the Secondary School-bell controlled system and the self-controlled life on campus may be quite problematic for some students hence the need to regulate life-style and study-habit by the use of some drugs thereby abusing them. Not knowing when to stop is self-defeating hence it falls into life-style giving the users the label “abusers”.

Equally disturbing is the desire to use drugs to combat real or imagined fear of failure either by boosting self-esteem/self-confidence or by underscoring focused determination to achieve academic goal on record time. This may be adopted as an escape mechanism from the draconian laws of “being advised to withdraw” or having an extension without cognizance of the pernicious effects of drug abuse.

More worrisome is the peculiar sociological and socio-economic problems that university students find themselves such as unbridled freedom, possession/control of too much money, poor role-models, too-much play-and –less-work syndrome, irrational ambition, doggedness and self-medication. All these are manifestations of deliberate indulgence in unrecompensed, unprescribed, unnecessary and excessive drug use to keep life going on the campus. These are the issues that spurred the researchers to attempt to investigate the relationship between drug abuse and deviant behavior among university undergraduates in the University of Lagos, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The primary objectives of the study were to:

1. Investigate if there is a significant relationship between drug abuse and truancy among undergraduate students
2. Determine if there is a significant relationship between drug abuse and cultism among undergraduate students.
3. Explore if there is a significant relationship between drug abuse and prostitution/sexual harassment among undergraduate students.

Research Questions

To facilitate the investigation of the problem, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Is there a significant relationship between drug abuse and truancy among undergraduate students?
2. Is there a significant relationship between drug abuse and cultism among undergraduate students?
3. Is there a significant relationship between drug abuse and high risk sexual behaviour among undergraduate students?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study

1. There is no significant relationship between drug abuse and truancy among undergraduates students.
2. There is no significant relationship between drug abuse and cultism among undergraduates students in University of Lagos.
3. There is no significant relationship between drug abuse and high risk sexual behaviour among undergraduate students.

Literature Review

In order to acquire a better understanding of drug, drug abuse and drug dependence, some knowledge of the psychological, pharmacological and social theories are relevant. This is fundamentally so because human behaviour is generally divided into those activities that are voluntary and therefore mediated by the brain and those that are learnt (Folawiyo, 19988). Both types of behaviours involve reflex areas that include a sensory, input path, control Centre, output path and effect.

According to psycho-analysts and behaviourists, the primary reinforcer for drug dependence is psychological. Particularly for Freud (1949 & 1953), such behaviour is reinforced by the instinctive drive or pleasure principle. Hence, the constant use of psychedelic drugs (like Marijuana) is directly reinforced by their soothing effect on the brain. Similarly, Skinner (1969) contends that this whole theory of psychological dependence is one of positive reinforcement. Experts in the field of pharmacognosy have a contrary opinion. They argue that the reinforcement potential of drugs is much greater from the pharmacological stand point than from the psychological. Folawiyo(1988), aptly expresses the argument that for a person to become dependent on a drug, he must have a drug experience. If the psychoactive effect of that experience is good or fills a need, some may become dependent to a degree. The greater the reinforcement potential from a psycho-pharmacologic standpoint, the more likely the drug use will be continued.

The position of Bandura (1977) is different from the above schools of thought. He avers that many non-pharmacological factors may act as reinforcers for continued drug use. These factors include peer pressure, rebellion against authority and observational learning. From this premise, it thus follows that drug dependence is reinforced by the acceptance or approval that the user gets rather than the psychological or pharmacological experience. Our present research believes that the views of these three schools of thought should be synchronized and considered as an organic whole.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational research design which utilized stratified random sampling technique to select twenty male and twenty female undergraduate students each from the Faculties of Education, Engineering, Science, Business Administration and the College of Medicine of the University of Lagos. The sample for the study therefore consisted of 200 (100 male and 100 female) undergraduate students of the University of Lagos aged between 17 and 29 years with mean age of 23.6 years.

A 20-item 4-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly agree, agree, disagree to strongly disagree designed by the researchers was used to elicit responses from the participants. The instrument was divided into three sections, A, B and C. Section A sought the bio data of the respondents. Section B contained items used to generate data on the drug abuse history of the respondents while Section C contained items that elicited information on the respondents' deviant behaviours such as involvement in cult activities, truancy and absenteeism, high risk sexual behavior and sundry issues. Positive items were scored 4, 3, 2, and 1 for strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively while the negative items were scored in reverse order.

A test retest procedure was used to determine the reliability of the instrument using a sample of 35 undergraduate students from the Faculties of Arts, Pharmacy and Environmental Sciences of the University of Lagos which yielded a coefficient of 0.79 for Section B and 0.82 for Section C within a time interval of six weeks between the first and second administrations of the instrument. Concurrent validity obtained by inter-correlating the instrument with Attitudes to Violence Scale ranged from 0.71 to 0.86 for Sections B and C

The researchers personally administered the questionnaire to the participants in their various faculties individually through the assistance of course advisers who helped in collecting the questionnaire after completion. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to collate data which were subjected to the Pearson Moment Correlation to determine the relationship between the variables. All the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Hypothesis one states that there is no significant relationship between drug abuse and truancy among undergraduate students. Table 1 presents the results of data analysis utilizing Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient.

Table 1: Relationship between drug abuse and truancy among undergraduate students (N=200)

Variable	\bar{x}	sd	df	r _{cal}
Drug Abuse	18.96	3.46	98	0.13
Truancy	17.48	3.18		

p > 0.05, df = 198; r_{crit} = 0.19

Table 1 show that r-calculated of 0.13 is not greater than the r-critical of 0.19 given degree of freedom 198 at 0.05 level of significance. This suggests that there is no significant relationship between drug abuse and truancy among undergraduate students.

The second hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between drug abuse and cultism among undergraduate students. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and the results are summarized in Table 2

Table 2 Relationship between drug abuse and cultism among undergraduate students (N=200)

Variable	\bar{x}	sd	df	r-cal
Drug Abuse	18.96	3.46	98	0.17
Cultism	17.15	3.10		

Not significant at 0.05, df = 198; r_{crit} = 0.19

Table 2 shows that r-calculated of 0.17 is less than the critical r of 0.19 given 198 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance hence, it was concluded that no significant relationship exists between drug abuse and cultism among undergraduate students.

The third hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between drug abuse and risky sexual behavior among undergraduate students. The results of data analysis relating to this hypothesis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Relationship between drug abuse and drug abuse and risky sexual behavior (N = 200)

Variable	\bar{x}	sd	df	r-cal
Drug Abuse	18.96	3.46	98	0.10
Risky sexual behavior	12.36	2.94		

Not significant at 0.05, df = 198; r_{crit} = 0.19

Table 3 shows that r-cal value of 0.10 is less than critical r value of 0.19 given 198 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance, which indicates that there is no significant relationship between drug abuse and involvement in risky sexual behavior among undergraduate students.

From the results presented above, it was evident that statistically significant relationship does not exist between drug abuse and each of truancy, involvement in cultism and risky sexual behavior among undergraduate students.

Discussion of Findings

The first hypothesis stated that there is no significant relationship between drug abuse and truancy among undergraduate students. The result showed that there no significant relationship between the two variables.

This result contradicts the finding of Osarenren (2000) where she attributed the high level of truancy among students to drug abuse. Falaye and Gesinde (2003) and Falaye and Adebayo (2002) also claim that adolescent rebellion, self-assertion, perceived poor academic achievement and maladjustment are traceable to drug abuse.

The results of the study also indicate no significant relationship between drug abuse and each of cultism and high risk sexual behavior among undergraduate students. These results also run contrary to the findings of Atere (2003), Raufu (2003) and Okirika (2000) that students who abused drugs were actively involved in secret cults and the females among them engaged in prostitution as a means of easy money to live above their economic means.

That the result of this investigation revealed no significant relationship between drug abuse and each of truancy, cultism and engagement in high risk sexual behaviour is surprising and contradicts popular opinion and empirical evidence which has demonstrated that most truants and cultists and those involved in high risk sexual behaviour are often involved in drug abuse either for its excitement or as an escape from the reality of their situation or to give them false confidence and Dutch courage for their nefarious illegal activities. However it does appear that some methodological nuances such as the nature of the sample and the sampling process, the instrument used for data collection which contained a large pool of opinion and attitudinal items which are prone to faking and response set and the reactive nature of the issues investigated which are psychologically threatening may have conspired to produce the no relationship results. This therefore has implications for the design of future investigations in this area which may have to involve data triangulation. Also, the study may have to be delimited to known truants, cultists and sexually pervasive individuals even though it is difficult to establish the causal relationship between deviancy and drug abuse; whether the abuse of drugs causes the abuser to engage in deviancy or it is deviancy that causes the deviant to abuse drugs or there is reciprocal causation. These are issues for further investigation.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Drug abuse must be viewed within the wider context of the Nigerian society which has variable standards regarding the use of addictive substances. Some drugs are socially accepted (for example, alcohol, tobacco and minor tranquilizers) while others are prohibited. In the light of this scenario, teachers have a significant role to play in the war against drugs. As custodians of morality, teachers should embark on regular advocacy programmes with a view to enlightening youths on the dangers of drug abuse. Attention should be focused on students at all levels of education especially secondary and tertiary education students.

However, it is important to point out that based on our present research findings, deviant behaviours in the University system are not necessarily a fall-out of drug abuse by University students. This does not vitiate the outcomes of other researchers in the field. On the other hand, we strongly recommend that in the fight against drugs, law enforcement agencies like the Nigeria Police (NPF), National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) should not focus on the drug supply chain (manufacturers, smugglers, pushers, transporters and financiers) alone but also equally on the demand side.

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