

Determination of the Prevalence of Substance Abuse among Students in University of Port Harcourt's Host Communities

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Abstract

Background: Substance abuse refers to the use of all chemicals, drugs and industrial solvents that can produce dependence (psychological and physical). It can also refer to repeated non-medical use of potentially addictive chemical and organic substances. According to UNICEF and WHO, substance abuse includes the use of chemicals in excess of normally prescribed treatment dosage and frequency, even with knowledge that they may cause serious problems and eventually lead to addiction. Hence, this study was done to determine the prevalence of substance abuse among students in University of Port Harcourt host's communities. **Materials & Methods:** The study was a descriptive cross-sectional study carried out in ALUU Community in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State. The study involved 150 volunteers recruited randomly through a multi-staged sampling technique which included secondary school students, undergraduates and post graduates who are 13yrs and above residing in ALUU community while, those who did not give consent were excluded. The data was collected using a self-structured close-ended self-administered questionnaires and data analysis done using SPSS version 25. **Results and Discussions:** The most frequent age category was 20-24years (42.67%), while the least frequent category was 10-14years. The most frequent gender (sex) was the males (71.33%); the most frequent educational level was undergraduate 84.67%. The study again showed that the most commonly abused substances by students were alcohol 90.57%, Nicotine 39.62%, while the least abused drugs were heroin and cocaine being 1.89% respectively. The prevalence of drug abuse seen in the study was 35.33%. Moreover, the distribution of known acquaintance of persons who abuse drugs was 78.67%. **Conclusion:** The prevalence of drug abuse seen in the study was 35.33%. Peer group, neighbourhood influence and parents habits of drug/substance abuse were the attributed contributing factors to the prevalence of drug/substance abuse amongst students in Aluu.

Keywords: Substance abuse, Drugs, Students, & Aluu.

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INTRODUCTION

Substance use and abuse is a major public health problem worldwide. According to a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Report some 200 million people, or 5 percent of the world's population aged 15 - 64 have used either one or more of these substances- cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy, alcohol, tobacco, at least once in the last 12 months - 15 million more than the previous year's estimate [1, 2]. Likewise, according to the World Drug Report, the use of illicit drugs in all nations has increased in recent years. The report, goes on to note that the increasingly availability of a variety of drugs to an ever widening socio-economic spectrum of consumers is disconcerting [2].

Substance abuse refers to the use of all chemicals, drugs and industrial solvents that can produce dependence (psychological and physical) [2,

3]. It can also refer to repeated non-medical use of potentially addictive chemical and organic substances. According to UNICEF and WHO (2006)', substance abuse includes the use of chemicals in excess of normally prescribed treatment dosage and frequency, even with knowledge that they may cause serious problems and eventually lead to addiction [2, 3].

Concern over drug abuse among the youth of Africa is a recent phenomenon. A radical change appears to have taken place about 30 years ago when substance abuse crept into the mainstream society. There has been a dramatic acceleration of this trend during the past 20 years. Concern regarding abuse of hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine is even more recent, starting about 15 years ago in some countries and escalating to involve more countries during the past 5 years [4, 5].

There is also consensus of opinion that these changes in drug abuse have been preceded and accompanied by a gradual and inexorable erosion of traditional social fabric and values [5]. The African family, recognized in its extended form, occupied a prime and central position in this social system, which is disintegrating. Social disintegration is also accelerating under the adverse influences of growing “poverty, civil war, tribal conflicts, droughts and other natural catastrophes which lead to famine and massive displacement of populations, creating a situation in which drug abuse worsens rapidly [6]. Hence, this study was done to determine the prevalence of substance abuse among students in the University of Port Harcourt and her host communities as an attempt to curb the menace and its effect on students and the entire society at large.

There are other reports by previous authors on the same subject and related matters in other regions of the country and in international communities [4-10].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was a descriptive cross-sectional study carried out in ALUU Community in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State. ALUU is an upland community with a vast arable land making majority of the people farmers. The main language ALUU is Ikwerre with pidgin as a secondary language and consists of nine villages which include: Omuike, Omuoda, Omuigwe, Mbodo, Omahunwo, Omuchiolu, Omuokiri, Omuhuechi, Omuoko. Rivers State is situated in the South-south geopolitical zone of Nigeria with its capital in Port Harcourt. The estimated population of Rivers State is put at 6,689,087 (2006 census) and the land mass is about 11,077 square kilometers. The state is home to numerous ethnic groups some of which are: Ikwerre, Ijaw, Kalabari, Etche, Ogbia/Egbema/Ndoni, Ogoni, Ekpeye, Engenmi, Ibani, Andoni, Abua, Okrika, Ikwerre and Ijaw are the most spoken languages although, English is also widely spoken.

The study was limited to students residing in Aluu community in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State, South-South Nigeria. The study included secondary school students, undergraduates and post graduates who are 13yrs and above residing in ALUU community; while those who did not give consent were excluded.

The sample size for the study population was determined using the formula,

$$n = p \cdot q / e^2 / 1.96$$

Where

n = required sample size

P = estimated proportion/working prevalence (from a previous study)

e = margin of sampling error tolerated or precision

$$q = 100 - p$$

The confidence interval used for the study was 95%, where ‘e’ is a 5% tolerable error, the calculated minimum sample size was 136; a non-response of 10% was added and the figure rounded up to 150.

Sampling Method

The sampling method adopted for this study was multi stage sampling. At the stage one: only one (Omuokiri) out of the nine villages in ALUU community was randomly selected based on the assumed students’ population as there was no accurate data to that effect. At stage two: houses were systematically chosen at interval of alternate households, and at the final stage: all eligible students in these households were administered the questionnaires.

DATA COLLECTION

The research tool used was a self-structured close-ended self-administered questionnaires. The tool was structured based on the objectives of the study: Section A- information about the socio-demographic characteristics, Section B- the use of drugs and Section C-the type of drugs that is most often abused.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The ethics committee of the University of Port Harcourt gave approval before the commencement of the study. In addition, the gate keepers of the community gave a verbal approval for the study to be done in the community. Afterwards, an informed consent was gotten from the respondents and assurance of confidentiality was given to the respondents.

RESULTS

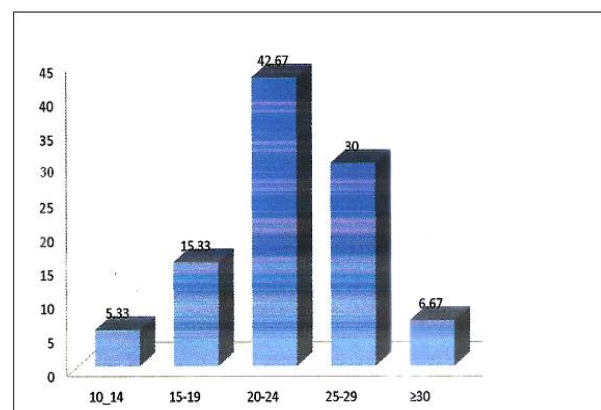


Fig-1: Age distributions

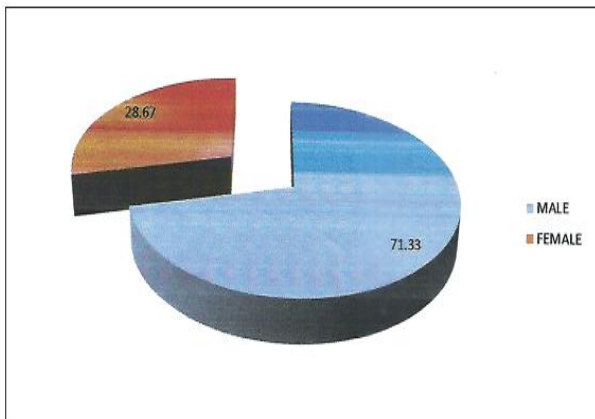


Fig-2: Sex distribution

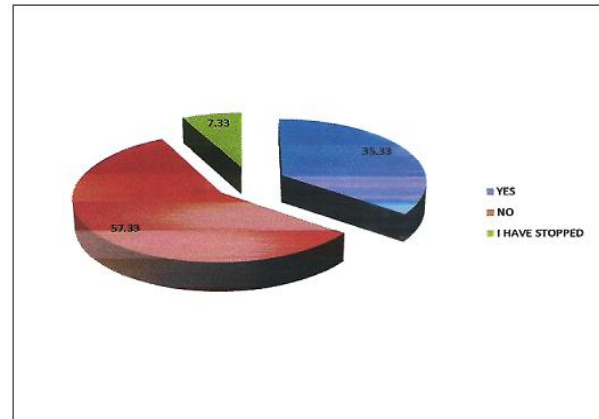


Fig-6: Distribution of drug use by students

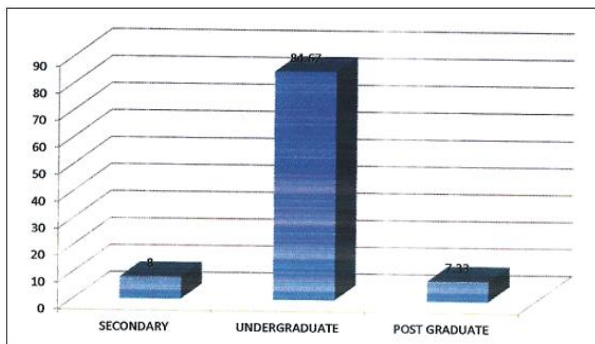


Fig-3: Distribution of educational level

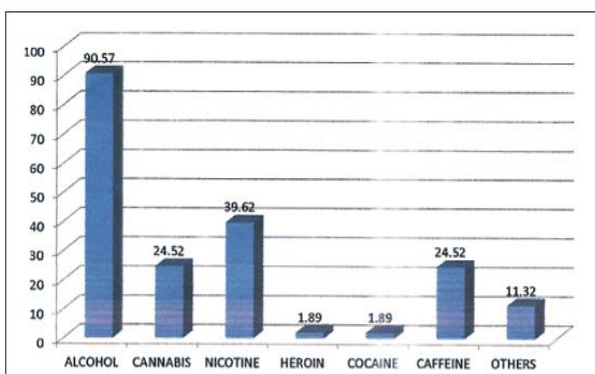


Fig-4: Distribution of most commonly abused substances by students

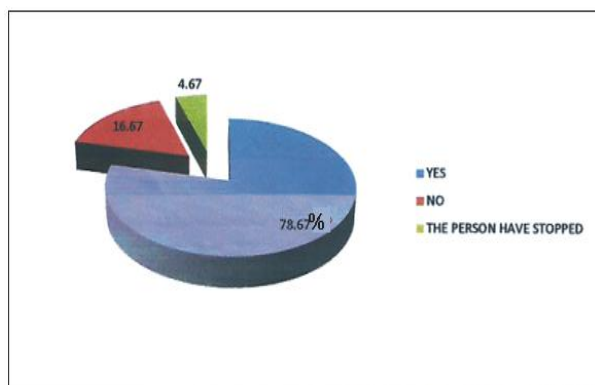


Fig-5: Distribution of known acquaintance of person who abuses drugs

DISCUSSIONS

Summary of results

The most frequent age category was 20-24years (42.67%), while the least frequent category was 10-14years. The most frequent gender (sex) was the males (71.33%); the most frequent educational level was undergraduate 84.67%. The study again showed that the most commonly abused substances by students were alcohol 90.57%, Nicotine 39.62%, while the least abused drugs were heroin and cocaine being 1.89% respectively.

The prevalence of drug abuse seen in the study was 35.33%. Moreover, the distribution of known acquaintance of persons who abuse drugs was 78.67%.

Implications

The study showed that four in seven students residing at Aluu is into drug/substance abuse. It also has shown that a third of the students residing in Aluu abuse drugs/substance. The most abused substance was alcohol. This study has, in addition, revealed that for every one student who abuses drug/substance, he/she has at least two friends/acquaintances who abuse drugs as well. This goes on to imply that there seem to be a positive correlation between peer group, acquaintance and abuse of drug/substance. It means that to curb the prevalence of drug/substance abuse, peer group influence, association and interaction in the neighbourhood as to be considered. If there is a possibility of isolating a student who is given into drug abuse from peers and neighbourhood influence, there are chances that such student will be free from drug abuse or at least reduce the frequency of addiction.

Another factor that also influence the use of drugs or substance abuse is family. A student whose either parent abuses' alcohol may likely do same. This is because in our African society, children and teenagers are often sent on errands to purchase alcohol and other substances for the adults without taking into consideration the exposures that they give to such a child at a young age. Naturally, such child that purchases alcohol or other substances for adults would

eventually attempt to consume it to have a taste of what adults consume. This is particular in a family where the parents consume these substances, the children would see it as a normal thing to do since their parents have given approval to such substances. If this persists till the secondary education of such child, there will be no boundary for consumption of same alcohol and other substances as have been seen at home. It is therefore very important that parents be educated on the dangers of drug/substance abuse and its influence on their children and wards. The findings of this study corroborates the results of Ekpenyong [3], Fearnow-Kenney [4], Werch [5], Schwinn [6] and Wyrick [8] in their various studies.

CONCLUSION

The prevalence of drug abuse seen in the study was 35.33%. Moreover, the distribution of known acquaintance of persons who abuse drugs was 78.67%. The study again showed that the most commonly abused substances by students were alcohol 90.57%, Nicotine 39.62%, while the least abused drugs were heroin and cocaine being 1.89% respectively. Peer group, neighbourhood influence and parents habits of drug/substance abuse were the attributed contributing factors to the prevalence of drug/substance abuse amongst students in Aluu.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

There is no conflicting or competing interest.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION(S)

Chigozie Njoku designed the study, wrote the protocol, wrote the first draft of the manuscript, and managed the literature searches.

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