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INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR ON ABUSED SUBSTANCE AMONG SECONDARY
SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ILORIN-SOUTH, NIGERIA: PRECURSOR TO MENTAL HEALTH
COUNSELLING

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Abstract

Increase in mental health cases among adolescents of secondary school age as a result of drug abuse is of grave concern to Nigerians and international communities and it is begging for decisive attention. In recognition of the conjecture that adolescence is a critical time for prevention of diseases and mental disorders and for the benefits of basing mental health counselling programmes on the information need and seeking behaviour exhibited by the adolescent, the present study investigated abused drugs secondary school students seek information on; the reasons for seeking information on abused drugs; ascertain their sources of obtaining information and drew implications for mental health counselling. The study was a quantitative type, conducted using survey research method. The population consisted of all secondary school students in private and public schools with a sample size of 224 which was determined by Cochran's formula and selected using multistage sampling technique. In collecting the data, a researcher-made questionnaire was validated and tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha method. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics including frequency counts and percentages. The findings revealed that the students sought information on array of drugs being abused at a varying degree but less interested in hard ones ; while the sources of obtaining information on drug use and abuse were 'friends/peer group', ' internet', 'virtual social media', 'classroom teaching' 'school environment', 'neighbourhood practice', 'television' 'siblings/family members' with the least being printed materials in libraries, they searched for information mostly on how drug relate to 'overcoming shyness', 'academic performance enhancement' and 'outperform in competition'. Implications of the findings for mental health counselling were drawn: that mental health medical counsellors should take account of the value of students' behaviour in mental health counselling; recognise knowledge, information needs and seeking behaviour as integral of cognitive information processing approach (CIP) to decision making in counselling, as it concerns drug abuse and mental health, and; appreciate the outcome of information seeking behaviour research while developing mental health inventory and school counselling programmes on drug use. Lastly, the study implied that librarians, particularly medical librarians and professional counsellors, mental health counsellors need to collaborate in addressing

mental health issues in the society, most especially in the educational institutions, through sensitization, workshops and conferences. Recommendations were provided based on the findings.

Keywords: Substance Abuse; Information Seeking Behaviour; Mental Health; Counselling Strategies

Introduction

It is not news that adolescents, including secondary school students in Nigeria and many countries of the world use/abuse drugs or substances. The information is that the age of initiation is dropping; hence rate of drug abuse, particularly among the adolescents is increasing with resultant increase in the number of *the adolescents having mental health and other related health issues*. In affirmation, Gerra, Zaimovic, Rizzi, Timpano and Zambelli (1999) observed an increase in alcohol and illicit drug use among young people with the early onset of substance use in adolescents at ages 14-16 years. Similarly, Chikere and Mayowa (2011) found that in a number of schools and colleges surveyed in Nigeria, alcohol use was most prevalent and most of them were introduced to the use of alcohol at a tender age of 16-20 years by their family members. Moreso, the 2018 report of the first large scale, nation-wide survey which examined the extent and patterns of drug use in Nigeria revealed that the prevalence of any drug use in the year 2017 was estimated at 14.4 per cent or 14.3 million people aged between 15 and 64 years with male having higher prevalence of drug use, excluding alcohol. Conversely, the report indicated that gender difference in the non-medical use of prescription opioids, tranquilizers and cough syrups was less marked between male and female users. Also, in the report, the overall prevalence rate was found to be higher than the 2016 global annual prevalence of any drug use of 5.6 per cent among the population (UNODC, 2019). Earlier, Gerra, Zaimvic, Rizzi, Timpano and Zambelli (1999) noted that gender differences were significant in the use of alcohol and ecstasy, with male subjects outnumbering females while the trend was inverted in the case of cannabis use. Precisely, the extent of exposure to alcohol and illicit drugs was more common among males than among females.

On the basis of the foregoing and for the negative and debilitating economic, medical, physical, political and social consequences on the users, immediate and remote communities including family members, friends, relations and governments at local, national and international levels, the use or abuse of drug has generated a great concern in recent time. With reference to Nigeria, the 2018 National Survey indicated that users reported poor health status with health conditions ranging from chronic pain, high blood pressure, heart diseases, liver diseases, kidney diseases and HIV/AIDS, depending on the duration, type of drugs and behavioural practices of the abusers. In addition, effects on others manifest as harm to the health and wellbeing of a person, domestic violence, and relationship issues among others while the other related problems are concerned with family issues (conflict or breakup), loss of work or employment, or legal issues (criminality or arrests) as a result of someone's drug use. Regarding the effect of drug abuse on the adolescents who are schooling, drug and substance abuse have been found to cause myriad of problems, including academic difficulties, health-related problems, poor peer relationships and incarceration for committing juvenile offences. Similarly, there are consequences for family members, the community, and the entire society like conflict between friends, family breakdown, violence, gang raping, and drug trafficking. Declining grades, absenteeism from school and other activities, and increased potential for dropping out of school are also associated with adolescents' substance abuse (Abdu-Raheem, 2013 & Muoti, 2014). Furthermore, low level of commitment to education and higher truancy rates appear to be related to substance use among adolescents. Again, drug abuse was noted to indicate short attention span, boredom, loss of interest in school work including co-curricular, and poor judgement activities (Kikuvi, 2009 & Adamson, Onifade and Ogunwale, 2010) and with the abusers exhibiting unruly or illicit behaviours, like destruction of school property, they create unconducive learning environment which affects the learning of other students (Olley, 2008; Onifade & Ogunwale, 2010; United Nations, 2015). The use of drugs with their abuse has been found to push the users to engage in illicit sex resulting to early pregnancy in the case of female students and its attendant problems including

the chance of these abusers, irrespective of gender to contracting STIS and AIDS (Oshikoya & Alli, 2006; Maithya, 2009; & Chinkere & Mayowa, 2011).

Therefore, it is not gainsaying that drug use and abuse negatively affects everybody directly or indirectly irrespective of someone's location or position in the society. Thus, it is not impossible that the third goal of Sustainable Development Goals which is aimed to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, and the fifth target, that is, to strengthen prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol (UNDP, 2015) have been conceived in recognition of the ripple effect of drug use and abuse as well as the need for all hands to be on deck to mitigate the effect. Also, it is a fact that to prevent drug abuse or treat drug abusers, the place of relevant and adequate information cannot be fathomed out. In this instance, Information means the communication of knowledge about an event and given condition or the spread of knowledge derived from observation, study or instruction (Bates, 2010). Besides, Powell (2006) noted that information is an important and integral part of health care and above all he remarked that information can be used to prevent disease, to promote self-care, to support treatment choices and to improve the effectiveness of health care. Thus, this study on the information seeking behaviour of students regarding drug use or abuse is helpful to address issues of drug abuse among adolescents, particularly students in the secondary schools. Specially, such study would help to identify effective information and communication management strategies for the prevention, treatment and recovery of victims of substance use and abuse. In the same vein, Higgins, Sixsmith, Barry, and Domega (2011) opined that such knowledge would generally lead to the promotion, protection and maintenance of health together with mental health.

Drugs and alcohol are said to have greater effects on adolescents than adults (Gonzales, 2018). Also, the conjecture is that adolescence is a critical time for prevention of disease and mental disorders. Considering the benefits of basing mental health counselling programmes on the information need and seeking behaviour exhibited by the adolescent, the present study investigated abused drugs secondary school students sought information on; find out the reasons for seeking information on abused drugs; ascertained their sources of obtaining information and drew implications for library and information management, mental health counselling and school policy on drug prevention. The study of this nature is germane as it revealed how individual interacts and reacts to information, in terms of information needs, seeking, evaluation, selection and usage (Kumar, 2015). In the blatant statement of Bates (2010) there would always be much to learn from knowledge about information behaviour, more so, with the emergence of wide range of information and communication technologies and broad spectrum of end-users of the result. More, information behaviour is regarded as an important resource that contributes towards the development of a nation, provides the core of the development of knowledge, the basis for innovation, the resources for informed citizenry and becomes commodity for progress of a society (Wasserman, 1991 & Kumar, 2015). Also, Fajonyomi, (2006), reiterated the importance of information service provided by counsellors in helping secondary school students take wise decision about their lives and academics.

Methodology

The study employed descriptive and quantitative survey research design which enabled the researcher to obtain relevant and dependable information from a representative sample of the population using a valid instrument, analyse the information and data collected, explained results and described relationships between or among the variables considered in the study (Fajonyomi & Fajonyomi, 2013; Kothari, 2014).

The population consisted of all secondary school students of senior secondary school gross age (14-17 years) in public and private schools within the boundary of Ilorin South Local Government Area, Kwara State. Out of the population of 4078, a sample size of 224 determined by Cochran's formula was selected using multistage sampling technique for its advantages of ensuring inclusiveness (Kaplan, 2014). Table 1

presents distribution of the sample by age, gender, family means of transportation and number of occupants per room.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	Information	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	104	46.4
	Female	120	53.6
	Total	224	100
Age	Distribution	Frequency	Percentage
	14	90	40.2
	15	98	43.8
	16	30	13.4
	17	6	2.7
	Total	224	100
Family means of transport			
	Not having any means of transport	67	30.0
	Moto/tri-cycle	64	28.6
	Moto car	93	41.5
	Total	224	100
No of children sleeping in a room	1	80	35.7
	2	130	58.0
	3 and more	14	6.3
	Total	224	100

In collecting the data, a researcher-made questionnaire, entitled Information Seeking Behaviour of Senior Secondary Students on Drug Abuse (ISBSSoDAQ) was prepared and used. Preparation of the questionnaire took cognisance of the objectives of the study and literacy ability of the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into four sections A, B, C, and D. Section A had four items including age, gender, family means of transportation as a measure of economic status, and number of family members sleeping in the same room. Section B focused on the abused drugs students ever sought information about and how often. Nine drugs and substances such as tobacco, alcohol, pain reliever, stimulants, hallucinogens, sleeping pills, solutions/patch, chewing gums and inhalants made the list. Respondents indicated how regular they have sought information about the drugs with three options: very often (at least five times), often (two to four times) plus rarely (at least once). Section C centred on the reasons why the students sought information concerning the drugs. The section comprised 12 items. Examples of items in the section 'C' were 'could aid sleeping', 'eliminate shyness', 'for improvement in learning', and 'for curiosity-just to know'. Respondents simply made a tick on 'yes' or 'no' against each item. Section D was concerned with where the students usually got information on abused drugs from. Sources identified and enlisted were television, radio, friends or peers in neighbourhood, class/school mates, teachers, books/resources in school library, family members, satellite channels, visual social media, adults in the society, recommended school textbooks and religious gatherings. The respondents affirmed the sources by indicating 'yes' or 'no'. The instrument was properly validated to guarantee its face and content validities by giving it to Experts in the Department of Information and Library Science and Department of Counsellor Education in the University of Ilorin. In testing for reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha technique involving ten senior secondary school students was employed.

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The mean of inter item correlation was .73 with values ranging from .49 to .91 which suggest strong relationship among the items.

The researchers visited each school selected purposely to introduce themselves to the management of the school and sought permission to conduct the research. With the permission granted, they went to the classroom to explain the study and gave out parental permission and assent forms to selected students. That is, parental permission was sought before administration of the questionnaire. On the second visit, copies of the questionnaire were administered on the students whom permission and assent forms were obtained in their classrooms with the consent of the school's authority and cooperation of the class teachers. Research assistants who had been trained provided instructions, answered questions raised by the respondents. All of the sample (224) returned the duly completed permission and assented forms well as participated by duly filling the questionnaire.

The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics including frequency counts and percentages

Results

Results of the analyses are presented in tables 2, 3 and 4

Table 2: Abused drugs/substance on which information ever sought

Drugs	Very Often	Often	Rarely	Mean	Rank
Cigarette (Tobacco)	13 (5.8)	20(8.9)	191 (85.3)	1.21	3
Alcohol	10(4.5)	27(12.1)	187(83.5)	1.21	3
Chewing gum	64(28.6)	115(51.3)	45(20.1)	2.08	1
Pain reliever (Tramadol)	4(1.8)	37(16.5)	183(81.7)	1.20	5
Caffeine (Kola nut)	0(0.0)	30(13.4)	194(86.4)	1.13	6
Cocaine	3(1.3)	10(4.5)	211(94.2)	1.07	7
Indian hemp	0(0.0)	13(5.8)	211(94.2)	1.06	8
Patch or liquid (codeine syrups, bull)	24(10.7)	16(7.1)	184(82.1)	1.29	2
Hallucinogens(LSD ,magic mushroom)	0(0.0)	14(6.3)	201(93.8)	1.06	8

(...) Percentages in brackets

Table 3: Reasons for seeking information about the abused drug(s)

Reasons	Yes	No
Aid sleep	119(53.1)	105(46.9)
Eliminate shyness	119(53.1)	105(46.9)
Improve learning ability	136(60.7)	88(39.3)
Enhance performance in physical activities	130(58.0)	94(42.0)
Just to know about the drug (for curiosity)	150(67.0)	74(33.0)
Make someone happy	119(53.1)	105(46.9)
Identify with group to belong	71(31.7)	153(68.3)
Know consequences of use/abuse	84(37.5)	140(62.5)
Know if the drug is cheap	78(43.8)	146(65.2)
Improvement in health status	91(40.6)	133(59.4)

(...) Percentages in parentheses

Table 4: Sources of information on drugs

Sources	Yes	No
Television	217(96.9)	7(3.1)
Radio	133(59.4)	91(40.6)
Friends/peers	203(90.6)	21(9.4)
Class/school mates	178(79.5)	46(20.5)
Teachers	80(35.7)	144(64.3)
School library	35(15.6)	189(84.4)
Family members	110(49.1)	114(50.9)
Satellite channels	110(49.1)	114(50.9)
The Internet	210(93.8)	14(6.3)
Visual social media	191(85.3)	33(14.7)
School textbooks	107(47.8)	117(52.2)
People around your house	168(75.0)	56(25.0)
Religious gathering (church/mosque)	59(26.8)	165(73.7)

(...) Percentages in brackets

Table 2, on whether the students ever sought information about the listed drugs and how often, revealed that the respondents sought information about the drugs but at varying degrees. Information was mostly sought on chewing gum (Mean= 2.08), followed by patch/solution (syrup, bull) (Mean= 1.29), alcohol (Mean=1.21) and cigarette (Mean=1.21), pain reliever (tramadol) (Mean= 1.20), caffeine (kola nut) (Mean= 1.13), cocaine (Mean= 1.07), Indian hemp (Mean= 1.06), hallucinogens (LSD, magic mushroom) (Mean= 1.06). Table 3 showed that there were different reasons for seeking information on the abused drugs with the indication that the respondents sought information on abused drugs to just know the drug (for curiosity) with a frequency of 150 (67.0%), trailed by improving learning ability with 136 respondents (60.7%), making one strong for competition (58 %) and knowing if the drugs are cheap having the least number of respondents of 78 (43.8%). Table 4 on sources of information revealed that television had the highest frequency with 217 (96.9%) respondents indicating that they got information on the abused drugs through telecast. It further revealed that the internet was the next means of sourcing information on abused drugs with a response rate of 210 (93.8%) , then followed by friends/peers with a response rate of 203 (90.6%), visual social media with 85.3 percent, people in the neighbourhood (75.0%) and radio (59.4%). The patronage of each of the other sources was less than 50 percent. Family members and satellite channels were patronised each by 49.1 percent of the respondents. One hundred and seven respondents (47.8%) consulted the school-text to get information on abused drugs, 80 (35.7%) received information on abused drugs from the teachers, 59 (26.8%) at religious gatherings and the school library had the least response rate of 35 (15.6%).

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of the study found that the students are aware that the drugs listed were being abused, if not by them, by their secondary school mates and more they have sought to know about the drug(s) at one time or the other. However, there was variation as to the regularity of seeking information the drugs with (stimulant) chewing gum topping the list followed by cigarette, alcohol and pain reliever. This result is not unconnected with the findings on drug use among the adolescents. A few studies, for examples Adewuya (2005), Adamson, Onifade and Ogunwale (2010) and Geramin, Gharaat, Taheri, Moherbpour, Nahvizavideh, Farajzadegan, Heidan (2014) found out that students and young population mostly abuse substances such as stimulants, depressants and narcotics in the form of alcohol, tobacco and tranquilizers, tobacco and chewing gum. Except in the work of Geramin and others, most studies tend to overlook the significance of stimulant chewing gum as a substance subtly being abused particularly among school children. It is important to note and be watchful of the various substances being consumed by the

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adolescents as drugs are being introduced to these seemingly innocent ones in sneaky ways, most especially through advertisements. In other words, this development should be of concern to all as incidence of drug or substance abuse, as previously observed, most often starts off from adolescent age and it is a function of the information and knowledge received.

On the reasons for seeking information on the abused drugs, the finding showed that students look out for information on abuse substance mostly for four topmost reasons: curiosity, improvement of learning ability, enhancement of performance in physical activities, boldness and control of sleep. On the ground of curiosity which depicts explorative tendency of adolescence, most adolescents and young ones begin to experiment with drugs. Perhaps, the finding mirrors the reason why students take or abuse drugs. For instance, Linhardt (2001) noted that students see the use of stimulants as channel for relief from pain and problems, elevation of mood, wakefulness, increased confidence, feeling and psychomotor activities, athletics, and feeling of euphoria. Also, Ajayi and Ekundayo (2010) noted that students possibly took to drug to reduce pain, anxiety and tension, ignorance and misinformation about parental background, urge to commit crimes, peer group influence, isolation and loneliness. However, the veracity of the claims are questionable taking cue from the results of the studies by McCrystal, Higgins and Percy (2007) and Abdul-Raheem (2013) which confirmed that instead of drugs being abused to enhance students' performances they resulted to the students' academic failure.

On the sources of information, respondents recognised varieties of sources ranging from television to internet, friends/peers, visual social media, radio, family members and satellite channels. The last four sources were school-text, the teachers, religious gatherings and the school library. That is, the major outlets of information on abused substance are from the stock of electronic media, friends/peer group and family members. The finding of the present study partially corroborated that of Ilo, Ignatius, Nwimo and Onwunaka (2015) which indicated that vast majority of the students received their information on drugs from the mass media and friends and peers and very little communication regarding drugs occurred between the students and their parents, teachers or health workers (e.g., doctors & nurses). Plausible reasons adduced for their results were lack of interest on the part of teachers, culture on the part of parents and non-involvement in the organization of school health services on the part of health workers. The authors, however, did not check for the use of internet, visual social media and satellite channels which are products of advancement of science and technology and has significantly influenced media of communication of accumulated intellectual capital as well as has expanded means of information dissemination (Kumar, 2015) being enshrined not only in books and serials, but also in electronic and mass media. The questions, among others, are: what is the quality of information received through the sources? How reliable and helpful are the sources of information in stemming substance abuse among secondary school students and the general populace? How could the information through every of the sources be controlled? These questions are raised amidst the fear expressed by Halpern and Pope (2000) that many of these sources, especially internet could offer thousands of pages of information- albeit questionable accuracy. Also, textbooks, school libraries, professional counsellors, teachers and religious organisations are expected to provide sound, relevant and reliable information on drugs and its abuse to these students but the sources were least patronized by these students, this calls for reorientation of their information seeking behaviours.

Conclusion

The study revealed that the students sought information on array of drugs being abused at a varying degree with various sources of obtaining information on drug use and abuse such as; peer group, internet, teachers, libraries, television and so on, in which they searched for information mostly on how drug relate to 'overcoming shyness', 'academic performance enhancement' and 'outperformance in competition. The outcome of the findings revealed that all are not well with secondary school students regarding information seeking behaviour on abused substances and this calls for urgent solution to remedying this menace which should be the duty of all stakeholders in the school and outside the school.

Implications for Mental Health Counselling

- The findings of this study buttressed the importance of harvesting quality information and disseminating same in the management of mental health issues including mental health counselling of adolescents.
- All stakeholders (library and information scientists, school authorities, teachers, medical practitioners and mental health counsellors) should collaborate together in controlling information available to the students to obtain drugs and prevent misuse.
- School Librarians should work towards meeting the information needs of end users (e.g. teachers, students, counsellors) on the matter of drug use. They should cooperate to develop 'school policy on drug' to include responsibility of every group in the prevention and treatment.
- This would be done when professional counsellors collaborate with other stakeholders to provide information, orientation and referral services to concerned students as a means of stemming the tide of drug abuse and improving the mental health of students.
- Mental health counsellors should take account of the value of behaviour in providing mental health counselling, when carrying out sensitization, conferences for students. Recognition should be given to knowledge, information needs and seeking behaviour as integral of cognitive information processing approach (CIP) to decision making in counselling, as it concerns drug abuse and mental health, and there is need to appreciate the outcome of information seeking behaviour research while developing personality inventory and school counselling policy on drug use.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

- Professional counsellors and librarians should provide regular information on drugs to all students so as to help them avoid misusing it within and outside the schools;
- Government should collaborate with all stakeholders (Professional counsellors, library scientists, teachers, psychologists) to meet the curiosity of information seekers by providing alternative to achieving their curiosity;
- Policy makers should provide tougher regulations to all stakeholders on the use of internet, visual social media etc in order to avoid subtle forms of getting information on drugs;
- Mental health counsellors should take account of the value of behaviour in providing mental health counselling, when carrying out sensitization, seminars and conferences for students.

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