

PREVALENCE OF DEPRESSION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH DRUG ABUSE AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN CALABAR, CALABAR CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The society is getting more challenging for human living due to civilization and globalization. The secondary school students have their own share of the challenges. This has brought about increased prevalence of depression among the students. It is also noted that the use of illicit drugs are on the increase. Before, the use of illicit drugs was blamed on family background and peer influence. This research aimed at finding if there is a relationship between depression and drug abuse. The researchers also assessed the prevalence of these variables among senior secondary schools students in Calabar, Cross River State. The population of the study was one thousand and two (1002) senior secondary school students. Purposive and random sampling techniques were used to select the schools and the students respectively. Two hundred (200) students, representing about 20% of the population were involved in the study. However, only one hundred and ninety (190) successfully completed the stages of the study. Beck's Depression Inventory (BDI) and Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST) were the instruments used to collect data. Descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were used to analyze the data. The result showed that there is increased prevalence of both depression and drug abuse among the students. There is also a significant relationship between depression and drug abuse. The result was discussed after which the researchers recommended that homes and school environment should be made more friendly to enable the students share their problems with parents, teachers, and school management.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of drug abuse among secondary school students have always been blamed on family background and peer influence. While parents and teachers are working hard to offer good parenting and monitoring the kind of friends the students follow, it is observed that the problem is still on the increase. This indicates that there are more reasons why students abuse drugs.

The economic down turn, climate change, political instability and the likes have

caused untold social and psychological problems to many Nigerians in recent times. Secondary school students also share in their own challenges particularly at senior secondary level when they are at the peak of adolescence stage. At this stage, they are faced with a lot of biological and psychological challenges coupled with enormous family and societal expectations. Sometimes they get overwhelmingly plunged into depression and subsequently resort to drugs and other substances. A depressed person often seeks alternative source of happiness or a way of escape from his or her problems. The rate of

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crimes reported in the dailies being committed by young secondary school leavers is source of concern to many and points to the fact that many of them act under the influence of one substance or the other. The problems of armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, militancy, boko-haram and murder, which is ravaging nearly every city today may not be unconnected with the increased drug use among the youths.

This research is aimed at finding the prevalence of depression among senior secondary school students and its relationship with drug abuse. According to University of Michigan depression center (2014), depression is a real illness that impacts on the brain. It is more than a feeling because it is as a result of changes in the brain chemistry. Depression is commonly seen as mood disorder. Human beings are prone to mood changes from time to time but persistent and chronic feeling of dejection, sadness and worthlessness can be an indication of problem in health condition. Depressive symptoms in adolescents are often overlooked and attributed to normal life stress associated with the stage of life. According to Chinawa, Manyike, Obu, Aronu, Odukela & Chinawa (2015), 7.4% of adolescents attending secondary schools in the South East Nigeria are diagnosed with depressive symptoms.

Researchers like Eva, Janice & Victoria(1987) and Andrea (2015) have found out that adolescents with high risk of experiencing depression are those with behaviour problems, genetic problems, those who have problems with their parents, those experiencing academic problems, health challenges, those who abuse drugs etc. Symptoms of depression can be observed in various aspects of human life example cognitive (e.g problem of concentration, loss of memory, delusion etc), physiological (e.g feeling of sadness, hopelessness, moodiness, anger out bursts, loss of interest in friends, family and favourite activities), physical (e.g tiredness, weightless, loss of appetite, headache, sleep disorder) and behaviour (eg substance abuse, absenteeism, fighting etc). Whether these characteristics can influence drug use among the students is the problem of this research.

Drug is any substance other than food that when inhaled, injected, smoked, consumed, absorbed via patch on the skin or dissolved under the tongue causes a physiological change in the body. World Health Organization (WHO 1981) defined drugs as "any chemical entity or

mixture of entities other than those required for the maintenance of normal health, the administration of which alters biological function and possibility structure of the body. To many people drugs have become escape mechanisms from various behavioural and psychological problems.

Drugs can be used for good and bad purposes, some ailments are treated using drugs prescribed by doctors while some drugs serve as poisons to the body. Stephen, Mark and Gerarld (1999) defined drugs abuse as "use of any drug that causes physical, psychological, legal or social harm to the individual user or others affected by the drug users behaviour". Drug abuse can also be defined as the act of consuming orally, by injection or inhaling any medicine not prescribed by the doctor. Some people can go to the pharmacy at the slightest symptom to buy drugs without consulting a doctor. Some can use drug prescribed for another person because they have similar symptoms. All these are forms of drug abuse. The action or effects of drugs on the body can be measured in different ways and this help in classification of drugs. Drugs can be classified using many criteria such as the origin, action, therapeutic use, site of drug action, chemical structure and street name. The usefulness of any drug depends on the purpose of use and the ability of the user to adhere to recommendations or instructions of the pharmacists and the doctors.

Studies have shown that adherents for various reasons have been victims of drug abuse. Many people have attributed this to peer influence and family background. Many parents are conscious of the effect of illicit drug use on youth so they are teaching and preaching against it at home. Many schools employ counselors who organize seminars on dangers of illicit drug use, some allow students to belong to clubs and societies that expose the dangers of drug abuse. All the efforts have yielded no significant results because secondary school students are still getting involved in drug abuse. This has stimulated greater curiosity in the researchers to investigate the relationship between drug abuse and depression.

The society we live in today is exerting a lot of pressure on the young minds. They are faced with a lot of biological, social and intellectual challenges. This has resulted to some of them living in depressive mood and the easiest

source of joy and fulfillment is the use of drugs. The research answered two important questions.

1. To what extent are senior secondary school students depressed?
2. How does depression relate to drug abuse in senior secondary schools?

One null hypothesis was tested which is that depression has no significant relationship with drug abuse among senior secondary school students. This research was carried out in Calabar education zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. The education zone is located at the capital of Cross River State. In geographical location, it lies between longitudes 7⁰.50 and 9⁰.23 east of the green-which meridian and latitudes 5⁰ 23 and 4⁰27 north of the equator. The people are highly socialized and educated because of their early contact with Europeans through the Atlantic Ocean.

Significance of the study

This study is very important because the problem of drug abuse in secondary schools is of great

concern to the parents, teachers, school management and students themselves. It is necessary to know the contributory factors because it will help in tackling the problem. Drug abuse can expose children to behaviour problems.

Research Method

The research design adopted was survey because it gave the researcher opportunity to sample the opinion of the respondents on the various variables. The population of the study was one thousand and two (1002) senior secondary school students. Two sampling techniques were used which are purposive and random sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select three (3) senior secondary schools in the zone (one mixed school, one boys school and one girls school). Random sampling technique was used to sample 20% of the population of students from each school. A sample of 200 senior secondary school students was drawn from the total population for the research.

Table 1: Distribution of students according to schools

Schools	N	Sample
School 1: (mixed)	485	97
School 2: (boys)	262	52
School 3: (girls)	255	51
Total	1002	200

Two instruments were used for data collection; they are Beck’s Depression inventory (BDI) which was used to collect data for depression and an adapted version of Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST) which was originally developed by Skinner (2001). Beck’s Depression Inventory (BDI) is a 20 items questionnaire. The items have 4 point scale ranging from 0-3 in increasing order of severity. The maximum score was 60 because 3 which is the highest score per item multiplied by 20 is 60 while the lowest score was 0. Respondents answered by ticking the option that most represent their behavior. Each respondent’s scores were summed up. The manual for interpreting Beck’s Depression inventory respondents were classified as follows:

- Total scores - level of depression
- 0-10 - Normal life ups and downs
- 11-16 - Mild mood disturbance
- 17-20 - Borderline clinical depression
- 21-30 - Moderate depression
- 31- 40 - Severe depression
- 40 and above - Extreme depression

The drug abuse screening test (DAST) was adapted from Skinner (2001). The adapted version was a 12 item questionnaire. The instrument had a reliability coefficient of .92 for all the items and .74 drug abuse items. It was judged to have very high content validity.

DASTS has yes and No response. Every “yes” attracted one mark while “No” is zero.

Maximum score for the instrument was 12 while minimum was zero. Data collected from this research was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment

Correlation Coefficient. The questionnaires were distributed among 200 students but only 190 successfully completed the two questionnaires. The responses were scored and interpreted.

RESULTS

Research question one; To what extent are senior secondary school students depressed?

Table 2: Distribution of students according to their level of depression

Level of Depression	N	%
Normal life ups and down (0-10)	91	N7.89
Mild mood disturbance (11-16)	28	14.74
Borderline clinical depression (17-20)	17	8.95
Moderate depression (21-30)	29	15.26
Severe depression (31-40)	20	10.53
Extreme depression (over 40)	05	2.63
Total	190	100

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation for BDI & DAST

Variables	N	\bar{x}	Std. Dev
BDI	190	14.87	11.377
DAST	190	3.42	2.034

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient showing relationship between BDI and DAST

Variables	N	\bar{x}	Std. Dev	r-cal	p-value
BDI	190	14.87	11.377		
DAST	190	3.42	2.034	.303	000

Correlation significant at the 0.01 level

Table 4 shows a significant relationship between Beck's depression inventory (BDI) and Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST). The r-cal. is higher than the critical value. This means that as

depression increased drug abuse also increased. The null hypothesis raised for this study is therefore rejected because there is a relationship.

Table 5: Types of Drugs abused by senior secondary school students

Types of drug	N	%
Cough syrups	23	56
Marijuana	4	10
Pethidine	4	10
Codeine	1	2
Others	9	22
Total	41	100

Table 5 shows that 41 out of 190 students representing 21.5 % abuse one form of drug or the other. The drug that is mostly abused is cough syrup which is an over the counter drug. Twenty three (23) students out of 41 abuse cough syrups representing 56% of those who abuse drugs.

Discussion of findings

The result of this research shows that senior secondary school students have their levels of depression like every other group of people. However, about 13% of them have depressive symptoms that call for concern. This shows an increase from the estimate of Steven, Pamela and Larkin (2001) which estimated about 0.4% to 8.7% though the prevalence can vary among races and ethnic groups. There is no doubt that adolescents which the population of the study represents are passing through woods as they navigate through this developmental stage. The expectations of the family and the society on these young people are enormous.

Naturally children at this stage have a lot of biological, psychological and social challenges to contend with. The global economic down turn and climate change have also exerted their own weight on these young ones. These have contributed to the increased prevalence of depression among senior secondary school students. The research shows that 21.5% of senior secondary school students abuse one form of drug or the other. The drug that is mostly abused is cough syrup. This could be because it is easy to get since it is over-the-counter drug used in treating cold, cough and the likes. It is available and affordable to students. Government has placed restrictions on the sale of such drugs but it is still highly abused among secondary school students. Some of them use it to induce sleep or for a feeling of high.

There was a significant relationship between depression and drug abuse among senior secondary school students. This is in line

with the findings of Andrea (2015), Steven, Pamela and Larkin (2001) and Lausa, Wayne and Michael (2003). Drug use among adolescents is on the increase. Some of them openly use these drugs. Many of them use drugs to forget about their problems, it gives some a false feeling of greatness. In this computer age getting information about the drugs and where it can be found is not a problem to them. There is also a problem of academic overload among secondary school students in recent times.

However, some researchers have argued that depression is more associated with alcohol use than with drugs. Eva, Janice and Victoria (1999) associated depression with alcohol use than drug use. Rosea, Carla, Nichohol and James (2007) also towed the same line of argument while Joe, Steve, Tani, Huedo and Jose (2011) associated depression to tobacco and alcohol use rather than cannabis. Whatever be the type of substance, the general argument so far is that depression influences the initial introduction to substances that negatively alter the brain chemistry and function. There is need to create friendly environment in the school and at home to enable the adolescents confide in their teachers and parents. It will enable them share their problems rather than taking to drugs.

Raina, Layla, Shanmon, Steve and Adam (2014) blamed the high relationship of depression and drug abuse on what they termed negative urgency. Negative urgency is a construct that reflects the tendency to act rashly without consideration of consequences in the face of emotional or physical problems. We are in a fast moving generation where people want things done very fast and through the easiest way. Many parents do virtually everything for their children, some secondary school students have never met any challenge in their life so any persistent task throws them off balance and they seek a way of escape. Children should be trained to face life challenges more rationally. Illicit use of drugs has caused havoc to the school system

and society at large. Effort should be geared towards eradicating and blocking the sources of these drugs.

CONCLUSION

Depression is a mood disorder that manifests in variety of forms among individuals. Examples include feeling of sadness, helplessness, hopelessness, anger out bursts, loss of interest in life activities, loss of appetite, loss of memory, delusion, truancy, thoughts of suicide, headaches, sleep disorders, destruction of properties etc. It is not a surprise that there is increased prevalence of depression among secondary school students because there are increased life challenges which this group of people battle with in recent times. There is a significant relationship between depression and drug abuse among senior secondary school students. Drug abuse which is an illicit use of drugs can alter the chemistry and functioning of the brain. No wonder some of the students use drugs to forget about their troubles and responsibilities. They also use it when they want to carry out lawless activities. The drug that is mostly abused by the adolescents in recent times is cough syrup. Cough syrups are over the counter drugs so they are available and affordable for the students. Though these drugs are used in treating certain ailments. Doctors and pharmacists should take care in prescribing them to make sure they are used for good purpose.

Recommendations

Having studied and discussed the finding of this research. The researchers recommended that: teachers and parents should create friendly environment in the schools and homes to attract the students closer to them. This will help the students to share their problems with significant others who can provide more rational solutions.

Parents and teachers who are looking after the students should be more observant to make sure these students use drugs the right purposes.

Schools should intensify campaign against drug and substance abuse. Dangers of this habit should be properly elaborated. There should be appropriate punishment for offenders. Those caught with drugs of abuse should be punished no matter whose children they are. Schools should investigate and make sure that all

sources of drugs abuse are blocked so that students will not easily have access to drugs.

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