



Research Article

The Socio-Economic Effects of Substance Abuse In Nigerian Youths -A Case Study of Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital, Yaba, Lagos

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Abstract

The prevalence of substance abuse remains high among youths in Nigeria. Young people who have been identified as a critical priority group for prevention and treatment interventions for substance abuse. The socioeconomic effects of substance abuse are undermined by youths who indulge in substance abuse seeing drug use as part of transition into adulthood. To assess the predominant factors of substance abuse among youths; as well as examining the socioeconomic effects of substance abuse; which appears to be highly prevalent among youths in order to proffer solution to reduce the menace. Purposive descriptive survey design was used with validated self-developed questionnaire. The participants were 88 youths that were outpatients, (64 males, 24 females) seeking healthcare at the Neuro-psychiatry hospital, Yaba Lagos. The results showed that the youths were mostly between 15 and 19 years old (mean 16.7). Over twenty seven (27.3%) had alcohol habit and 23.9% smoked occasionally. About forty-eight (47.8%) took substance to 'feel good/high'. The youths agreed that parental genes, culture and ethnicity, and environment (59.1%, 78.4% and 76.2% respectively) influenced their substance abuse. Peer pressure and socioeconomic status (SES) significantly influenced substance abuse ($p < 0.05$). Peer pressure and socioeconomic effects of substance abuse remain a major public among youths in Nigeria. There is need for health education of youths, parents and other stakeholders on the health consequences of substance abuse and its prevention which should involve all the members of the society.

Key Words: Youths, psychoactive drugs, substance abuse, Psychiatry hospital, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

According to World Health Organization (WHO), "substance abuse refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs" (WHO, 2017). The use of psychoactive substances is a major significant activity amongst young people in Nigeria (Oye-Adeniran et al, 2014). Youths have been identified as a critical priority group for prevention and treatment interventions for substance abuse. Substance abuse and other associated problems are inimical to the survival and effective functioning of human societies; a significant number of untimely deaths and accidents have been ascribed to the activities of persons under the influence of one drug or the other (Chikere and Mayowa, 2011). According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2008), substance abuse is worsened by complex socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, poverty and crime in general. Too many youths seem to think of experimentation with substances as an acceptable part of transition into adulthood. Few take seriously the negative consequences of dependence on substances; many adolescents and youths still have limited awareness of the adverse socioeconomic consequences of substance use (Gobir et al, 2017). Majority of the Nigerian youths ignorantly depend on one form of drug or the other for their various daily activities such as social, educational, political, moral etc. such drug include tobacco, Indian hemp, cocaine, morphine, Heroin, Alcohol, Ephedrine, Madras, caffeine, Glue, Barbiturates, Amphetamines etc. (Essien, 2010). In the same vein, Odejide (2014) observed that the reasons advanced by the students for taking drug are: to feel on top like adults, to feel good, to get

excited, to be like friends and to be like stars. It has also been pointed out that abuse of substances among youths is associated with a broad range of high-risk behaviour. This type of behaviour can have profound health, economic and social consequences, examples of high risk behaviour are that some youths participate in deviant peer groups, unprotected sexual intercourse, interpersonal violence, destruction of property and poor performance in their studies among others (Nevadomsky, 2011).

The socio-economic status of the parents may influence adolescents to abuse or not to abuse drugs (Atilola, 2013). The effect of socio-economic status is manifested in how many young people live in communities which suffer from multiple deprivations, with high unemployment, low quality housing and where the surrounding infra-structure of local services is splintered and poorly resourced. In such communities drug supply and use often thrive as an alternative economy often controlled by powerful criminal groups (Atilola, 2013). Also, peer group pressure plays a major role in influencing many youths into drug usage (Zolola et al, 2016). This is because peer pressure is a fact of teenage and youths life. In Nigeria, and other parts of the world, one may not enjoy the company of others unless he conforms to their norms. Parental pressure and deprivation have also been attributed to substance abuse among youths (sex and gender difference in substance abuse, 2017). Many parents have no time to supervise their sons and daughters. Some parents have little or no interaction with family members, while others put pressure on their children to pass examinations or perform better in their studies. These pressures from parents make some children result to substance abuse. Also, pathological family background – broken homes,

illegitimate relationships, alcoholic parents or parent's involvement in antisocial and illegal activities are some factors that increase drug usage amongst youths. Previous studies reported that the socioeconomic effects of substance abuse thus render many youths homeless, wanderers, derelicts, unemployed, rapist, thugs, and armed robbery; a lot of lives and properties have been wasted in accident and violence because of drug (James and Omoaregba, 2013; Collins, 2016). Youths are supposed to be the hope of their families and the society at large as well as being useful to themselves. Unfortunately, many youths have wasted their lives, all because of drugs and this has been a serious problem in Nigeria.

This study therefore examined the predominant factors of substance abuse among youths and the socioeconomic effects of substance related disorders on youths that assess healthcare at the neuro-psychiatry hospital Yaba, Lagos with the aim of proffering solutions to ameliorate the situation

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study design: This study used descriptive survey design to collect and analyze data and further establish the socio-economic effects of substance abuse by youths. A self-structured, close ended validated questionnaire (0.82 reliability coefficient) was used to gather views, facts and feelings of the respondents.

Sampling technique: One hundred (100) youths (70 males and 30 females) who came to the Neuro-psychiatry hospital clinic for routine check-up or follow-up were purposively selected to take part in the study (out-patients only). Youths were considered to be people between the age of 15 and 25 years. Selecting out-patients was to ensure that the participants were relatively fit to participate in the study compared to sick patients on the hospital ward who may be disturbed by the study procedure. The selection of participants was limited to 20 per day and it lasted for one week (Monday to Friday). With the aid of two trained research assistants, identification numbers were given to the youths (15-25 years old) to wait behind after seeing their physicians for not more than one hour to participate in the study. However, 88 participants (64 males and 24 females) returned analyzable questionnaires for the study (12% attrition).

Data collection: Approval was obtained from the management of Neuro-psychiatry hospital to conduct this study. An informed consent was obtained from voluntary participants (youths) that visited the General Out-Patient clinic of the Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital, Yaba, Lagos either for check-up or follow-up to participate in the study. The principal investigator explained the purpose and procedure of the research to the selected participants and consent forms were signed with the help of the research assistants. The trained research assistants distributed the questionnaire to the participants which were filled by the participants and collected on the spot by the research assistants.

Data analysis: The questionnaires were manually checked for accuracy and completeness. Data were cleaned, entered into and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21.

Quantitative variables were summarized using mean and standard deviation, while the categorical variables were summarized using frequencies and percentages. The two null hypotheses were analyzed using ANOVA. All statistical analysis was set at 5% level of significance (i.e. $p < 0.05$).

Ethical consideration: An ethical approval to carry out the study was obtained from the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH). The study was approved on the 13th of December, 2016 by the Health Research and Ethics Committee of LASUTH (LREC) with REG. NO. NHREC04/04/2008 (www.nhrec.net).

Inclusion criteria: Any client that came to the outpatient clinic of the Neuro-psychiatry hospital Lagos for follow up or check-up and was found to be within the age group of interest (15-25 years old) was given a number of identity to take part in the study.

Limitation: The youths that came for follow-up daily were very few and it was difficult convincing them to be part of the study, many were not willing to take part in the study, hence the sample size was 100 but only 88 questionnaires were analyzable

RESULTS

Table 1 shows that there were more males than females in the study (64:24), 37.8% of the participants were between 15 – 18 years of age and 52.2% between 19 and 20 years. The Yorubas dominated the ethnic group expectedly (48.9%), followed by the Igbos (37.5%) and the Hausas (13.6%). Table 1 also revealed that majority of the participants claimed that they did not take alcohol (72.7%) nor smoked cigarette (76.1%).

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Variables	Frequency n = 88	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	64	72.7
Female	24	27.3
Age (years)		
15- 16	21	23.8
17- 18	12	14.0
19- 20	46	52.2
21- 22	09	10.2
Mean age = 18.47 years		
Ethnicity		
Hausa	12	13.6
Igbo	33	37.5
Yoruba	43	48.9
Alcoholic Habit Taking at least 1 - 2 bear bottles or a shot or two of strong drink/spirits daily)		
Yes	24	27.3
No	64	72.7
Smoking Habit (tobacco/marijuana)		
Never	67	76.1
Occasionally	21	23.9

Table 2:
Predominant factors of substance abuse among youths

Variables	Frequency n=88	Percent (%)
Poverty	12	13.6
Lack of Knowledge	12	13.6
Feel good/High	42	47.7
Low Price	22	25
Total	88	100

Table 3
Youths perception of parents' genes as factor of substance abuse.

Responses	Frequency (n=88)	Percent (%)
Strongly disagree	12	13.6
Disagree	24	27.3
Agree	34	38.6
Strongly agree	18	20.5
Total	88	100

Table 4
Perception of youths on culture and ethnicity as social factors of substance abuse

Responses	Frequency n= 88	Percent (%)
Strongly disagree	8	9.1
Disagree	11	12.5
Agree	45	51.1
Strongly agree	24	27.3
Total	88	100

Table 5
Perception of youths on environment as socioeconomic determinant of substance abuse.

Responses	Frequency n=88	Percent %
Strongly disagree	9	10.2
Disagree	12	13.6
Agree	40	45.5
Strongly agree	27	30.7
Total	88	100

Table 2 shows that 13.6% (12) of the participants were of the opinion that the cause of substance abuse among the youths was poverty, 13.6% (12) participants also opined that the cause of substance abuse was Lack of basic knowledge on danger and effect of substance abuse on health, 47.7% (42) of the participants indicated that the cause of substances abuse was because they wanted to 'feel good or high' and they represented majority response from the participants and 25% (22) of the participants were of the opinion that the causes of substance abuse among the youths was due to the low price (cheapness) of the substance

Table 3 indicated that 13.6% (12) of the participants strongly disagreed and 27.3% (24) disagreed that genes from parents (genetics) is a contributory factor of substance abuse; 38.8% of the participants (34) participants and 20.5% (18) of the participants strongly agreed respectively that genes from parents (genetics) is a contributory factor to substance abuse.

Table 4 shows that 9.1% (8) of the participants strongly disagreed and 12.5% (11) of the participants disagreed that culture and ethnicity were social factors of substance abuse among the youths. Also, 51.1% (45) and 27.3% (24) participants agreed and strongly agreed respectively that

culture and ethnicity were factors of substance abuse among the youths.

Table 5 shows that 10.2% (9) of the participants strongly disagreed and 13.6% (12) of the participants disagreed that environment was a socioeconomic determinant of substance abuse among the youths. Also, 45.5% (40) and 30.7% (27) of the participants agreed and strongly agreed respectively that environment was a determinant of substance abuse among the youths.

Table 6 reveals the F statistic model for peer pressure influence of substance abuse among the youths. The table shows a significant relationship between peer pressure influence and substance abuse among the youths. Table 7 also reveals that there is significant relationship between parental socio-economic status and substance abuse among the youths

Table 6
ANOVA showing peer pressure influence and substance abuse among the youths

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.254	2	2.254	5.138	0.026*
Within Groups	37.734	85	0.439		
Total	39.989	88			

*sig-value < 0.005

Table 7
The relationship between parental socio-economic status and substance abuse among youths

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.808	2	5.808	8.255	0.005*
Within Groups	54.879	85	0.704		
Total	60.688	88			

*sig-value < 0.005

DISCUSSION

A total of 88 youths returned completed questionnaires analyzed for this study. More males than females dominated this study (table 1); this finding is consistent with findings in other studies on substance abuse where more males participated in the study (Atilola et al, 2013). Previous studies indicated that men are more likely to use drugs compared to women, also that males are 2-3 times more likely to engage in substance abuse than females; polydrug use was more common among men (Zolola et al, 2016; Sex and gender difference in substance abuse, 2017). However, this does not necessarily reflect a lower risk or side effects for women. It is also possible that females involved in substance use shy away more from coming to the hospital because the society frowns more at females smoking and drinking alcohol than their male counterparts. Particularly, in the age group used for this study, the tendency for males to use psychoactive substances more commonly than their female counterparts has also been

reported from previous studies (James and Omotosho, 2013; Zolola et al, 2016; Sex and gender difference in substance abuse, 2017) . The proposed participants for the study were 15-25 years but no age group was recorded for age 23-25 years. The final participants were youths between 15- 22 years of age. The mean age group was 18.47 years. The age group of 15 – 18 years and 19 - 20 years predominantly dominated the study. The finding in this report, confirms the finding in previous study reported by Atilola et. al (2013) where they carried out similar study and found out that young age have been indulged in substance abuse. This finding indicates the need for health education of adolescents on substance abuse among this age group in the country, in order to avoid the adverse effect of substance abuse later in life. The drug abusers become burdens to themselves, families, the society, and the Nation at large. This is indeed an undesirable outcome since the young people are supposed to shoulder Nigeria's future development in terms of socio- economic aspect.

The Yorubas and Igbos were the predominant ethnic groups; this implies that these ethnic groups live more in Lagos than any other ethnic group in the country. The predominance of the Yorubas was expected because Lagos is in the Southwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria where the Yorubas hail from and live in. Also the Ibos being in Lagos and well represented in this study even though they are from Southeast geopolitical zone of the country is probably because they are very good at business/trading and Lagos is the commercial business capital in Nigeria.

From this study, approximately, 27% of the youths admitted taking alcohol, which is quite a significant number for the age group in the study. Consistent and regular alcohol consumption apart from the obvious economic disadvantage of alcoholic habit, it can bring about decreased reaction time, drowsiness, drowning, self-inflicted injuries, and susceptibility to accidents, falls, and others. Reports have indicated that SES influences the use of alcohol by individuals (Collins, 2016). It is generally believed that the people with higher SES consume more alcohol but with perhaps less devastating effect. Whereas, the people with low SES consume may be not as much but with a worse health effect. The reason for this difference may be in the area of diet. The person with high SES is more likely to have more money to eat well and remain healthy for a longer time than the low SES individual who may compromise healthy feeding and fall down faster with associated long term illnesses like liver hypertension, diabetes, cirrhosis, cancer, among others.

Smoking of tobacco is a major public health problem in Nigeria. From this study, approximately 24% of the youths admitted smoking tobacco/marijuana. This percentage of smokers in young people is so high; People who begin to smoke at an early age are more likely to develop severe levels of nicotine addiction than those who start at a later age (Linetzky, et al, 2012). Although tobacco may not cause impaired social function but affects more people than the number recorded here through passive smoking. The active smoker and passive smoker may come down with the same health effects of smoking which makes tobacco smoking a big public health problem. Studies show that Low SES is a major predisposing factor for tobacco smoking. Children from low SES tend to use smoking to cope with financial problem. On the other hand, marijuana is not openly smoked or displayed since it is an illicit drug in Nigeria, but some youths still get them secretly to smoke and find it difficult to own up to

smoking it. The health effects of smoking tobacco include nicotine addiction, respiratory symptoms, lung cancer, cardiovascular and abnormal reproductive effects. Mental health is also seriously affected and psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia, depression and anxiety disorders may develop. Other studies also pointed out that most young people who smoke regularly continue to smoke throughout adulthood and are more at risk of being predisposed to many of the aforementioned chronic diseases (Oyewole et al, 2018; WHO, 2018).

Put together, the findings for alcohol consumption and smoking in this study, for youths of this age group, calls for a health education intervention among this age group so that the negative health effects associated with chronic smoking and alcohol will be combated early among the youths to prevent cutting their lives short. Smokers and alcohol drinkers are likely to also be drug users.

Assessing the factors predisposing to substance abuse among the youths, "feeling good/high" was the main factor that predisposed the youths to substances used (47.7%), while "low price" of the substances abused was the second factor predisposing to the use of substances abused (25%). This finding revealed that the youths were becoming dependent and addicted to the substances they used; "feeling good/high" is one of the major side effects of substance addiction (Oshikoya, and Alli, 2006). This finding in this study corroborates the finding from previous study on substance abuse among Nigerian youths (undergraduates) where it was revealed that youths indulge in substance abuse because it made them to feel happy, excited and friendly especially to members of opposite sex (Adeoti, 2010). Since the youths also confirmed that the low price of these substances makes them find it easy to abuse them, there is the need to increase tariff on substances that can be easily abused; cigarettes and alcohol, such that they become very expensive by the time they get to the consumers. Government and policy makers are to take a cursory look on how cocaine and marijuana and cannabis among others which are illegal in Nigeria still enter the country and are sold secretly to youths. Monitoring should be enhanced to block all entries of these substances to the country. This is an urgent need because drug use results in rising numbers of patients in mental hospitals and treatment centers. Another particular concern of drug use is transmission of HIV and hepatitis B via risky sexual behaviour. This is of importance because substance abusers tend to lose their physical and emotional control and have intercourse indiscriminately as well as having increased risk of rape. These risks of sexual behaviour predispose them to sexually transmitted diseases like HIV and hepatitis.

Some studies on substance abuse among youths traced the use of substance abuse to genetics (Dick, 2016). Although, Dick in his study of addiction and substance abuse said "Genetic influences affect substance use and substance use disorders but largely are not specific to substance use outcomes" (Dick, 2016). In this study, 59% of the youths also agreed that genetics is a contributory factor to substance abuse. However, there appears to be a dearth of data in Nigeria to place the exact perspective of genetics and substance abuse. Although, it may be true that most children who grow up in the house of drug abusers may get involved in drug abuse, it is not all children that are brought up in this type of homes that abuse drugs. This influence of where a child grew up affecting his substance abuse may be more of environmental influence

than genetics. This calls for further study especially in Nigeria to ascertain the exact position of genetics in substance abuse. In the same vein, majority of the youths agreed that culture and ethnicity was a factor influencing their choice of substance abuse. This appears to be true especially concerning smoking and alcohol use. In some cultures, especially among Edo, Delta, Rivers, Bayelsa and Igbos (Eastern side of Nigeria) the test of a “true” man is how much alcohol can be consumed.

This finding in this study corroborates the finding of Nwagu et al. (2017) where they reported that social influences together with local cultural norms are central factors that can influence the use of alcohol in a study they carried out among young people in an alcohol producing community, in Nigeria. Again, there is need to educate the youths on the negative health effect of this cultural practice. Also the environment was seen by the youths as a main factor of socioeconomic effect influencing them to take to substance abuse. The environment polluted with drug abusers is subject to at increasing criminal activities associated with drug abuse like robbery, burglary, rape, vandalisation of public properties, increasing rate of HIV/AIDS, the congestion of penitentiaries where the families spend more in health care for mental illness and the government suffers from the economic effect of spending more in the maintenance of prisoners, and of course the growing numbers of destitute which our social welfare administration system cannot carter for, thereby depleting government’s budget.

This environmental influence on socioeconomic effect is not surprising because as previously discussed, environment is where the child stays and grows and whatever the child sees every day in the environment registers in his memory and easily wants to explore things in the environment as a matter of curiosity. The environmental effect is more noticed among children without proper parental guidance (children from broken homes); incompetent parenting exposes children to different types of danger in the society including drug abuse and other crimes. The finding in this study corroborates the finding of Essien (2010) where he pointed out that family condition and environments predispose children to substance abuse.

The first hypothesis tested the influence of peer pressure on substance abuse and there was a significant effect of peer pressure on substance abuse ($p < 0.026$). This implies that peer pressure influences substance abuse; the students probably resulted to taking drugs to please their friends or to be acceptable to their friends. Peer pressure has been reported by many studies as influencing substance use among youths (Oshikoya and Alli, 2006; Adeoti, 2010; Dick, 2016; Janicijevic, 2017; Oyewole et al, 2018; WHO, 2018). The youths need to be given further training on emotional maturity to be able to take personal decisions in life without depending on other people or friends. The second hypothesis which tested the relationship between parental socio-economic status and substance abuse among the youths was also significant ($p < 0.005$). This infers that their socioeconomic status (SES) measured by parental education and household income has a significant effect on their abuse of drugs. Socioeconomic environment in which young people were raised as children predicts their behavior in young adulthood and understanding this relationship, is an important step in identifying persons at risk (Humensky, 2010; Patrick et al, 2012). Generally, children from low and high socioeconomic status are likely to be predisposed to substance abuse. The true position of the

relationship between socioeconomic status and substance abuse has been controversial in some cases. Despite worldwide concern and education on substance abuse, some studies believe that the children from a high socioeconomic background have more money to expend on substance abuse and this stance is supported by most studies^{20, 21}. On the other hand, a few studies reported that “Smoking in young adulthood was associated with lower childhood family SES, although the association was explained by demographic and social role covariates”.²² children from poor SES probably would take drugs for acceptance and mechanism of survival among their peers.

From this study, socioeconomic effects of substance abuse remain a major public health problem among youths in Nigeria. Peer pressure and socioeconomic status (SES) are factors that continue to influence the prevalence of substance abuse among adolescents and youths in Nigeria. To combat the menace of substance abuse, it is of urgent need that all stakeholders (Families, government, teachers and community organizations) and indeed everyone in the society to put in a concerted efforts to target both in-school and out-of-school youths in substance use control strategies through health education on avoidance and withdrawal from smoking, alcohol and other drug consumption. There is therefore, the need to organize health education: workshops and seminars for parents on how to help their youths to combat substance abuse among youths by giving more attention to psychological and emotional needs of their children. Also, written and effected alcohol control policy must be put in place by the government to regulate the production and availability of alcohol. Finally, legislation should be put in place requiring all large shops and supermarkets to remove cigarette displays at the point-of-sale. The aim is to reduce the impact of tobacco marketing on children and young people and so reduce the likelihood of them taking up smoking.

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