

Demographic Determinants Of Drug Abuse Among Undergraduate Youths In South-Eastern Communities In Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The menace of drug abuse on the social, academic and health of students in tertiary institutions calls for an urgent intervention by social agencies such as Education (Science Education). This study investigated demographic determinants of drug abuse among undergraduate youths in South-Eastern communities Nigeria using a Cross-sectional survey research design. The population for the study comprised all South-Eastern Nigerian youths. A sample of 500 youths from five tertiary institutions, one each from 5 States in South-Eastern Nigeria (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States) through Simple Random Sampling technique without replacement was used for the study. Data for the study were obtained through researchers' self-made questionnaire. The analysis of data was conducted using frequency, percentage, bar chart and structural equation modeling statistical approach. The result obtained indicated that the youths in tertiary institutions in southeast Nigeria abuse drugs to a high extent. It was found that the drugs mostly abused by these youths (SEN) include Cannabis, tranquilizers, alcohol, tobacco and inhalants among others. The findings indicated that gender; levels of education, nature of upbringing and family size are significant determinants of drug abuse among the southeast Nigerian youths. Implication of the study indicates that more males are more addicted than females. This implies that more preventive measures should be geared towards male youths' drug intake. In view of the above findings, this study recommends an urgent social intervention aimed at educating parents on better children upbringing and encouraging parents to avoid having too many children more than they can take care of.

Keywords: Biology, Drug abuse, Nigerian Youths and Science Education

INTRODUCTION|

Drug abuse is the intake of illegal drugs that can cause harm to the health of individuals not prescribed by a medical Doctor. It is a deliberate use of chemical substances for reasons other than the intended medical purposes (Bararah, 2018). Drug abuse therefore is the illegal intake of drugs and other chemical substances without medical doctors' prescription. Kanmodi, Omoleke, Aliyu, Martins, Nwafor, Ogundipe and Abdulsemeeh-Omoleke, (2020) reported that drug abuse is a global issue. The authors noted that in 2010, the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) indicated that about 27million people in the world are drug addicts. Drugs are abused for different reasons. Kumar and Dangi (2019) stated that drugs may be abused to ease stress, feel good or to avoid some realities of life. Some of the drugs and substances commonly abused by youths include: Morphine, Heroine, Tobacco, Cough syrup, Tramadol, Valium five, Chinese tablets, Amphetamine, Cannabis among others (Ajala, 2012).

Drugs are derived from different classes of substances such as Alkaloids, Opioids, Benzodiazepines, Cannabinoids and are abused for different reasons. The abused drugs are of different categories or groups (Al-

Musa & Al-Montashiri, 2016). Eze and Eze (2021) categorized abused drugs into three groups: hallucinogens (such as Marijuana, ecstasy); depressants: such as heroin and barbiturates; stimulants and inhalants (such as Cocaine, Cracks and amphetamines).

Drug abuse is a trending issue among South-Eastern Nigerian youths. The effect of drug abuse on the youths has contributed to the high rate of social vices in Nigeria. Thus, Okafor (2019) remarked that drug abuse is a significant and prevailing problem affecting both social and academic lives of Nigerian Youths. Although there is no universally agreed international definition of youth, the United Nations (<http://www.org>global issues>) without prejudice to any other definition defined youth as those persons between the ages of 15-24years. However, in Nigeria, youths may include people within the age bracket of 15-30years of age. Youths therefore are young people (male or female) at the peak of life. Youths are usually spontaneous and adventurous, full of energy and always ready for fun, lead carefree life and are mostly influenced by peers, do not have space for worries and sadness and if need be for sadness tries to device means of restoring happiness. These characters among other factor make youths prone to social vices if not well controlled and managed by parents and guardians.

Drug abuse among South-Eastern Nigerian youths is not only a menace to sustainable development but constitute a global social, academic and health problems. The evidence of drug abuse in Nigeria could be imagined from the rate of social vices and crimes rates among youths (Okafor, 2019). The alarming and disturbing effects of drug abuse on the social, health and academic of individual drug addicts and the effect on the peace of the society in general, calls for the intervention of science educators who through the vital goals of science education could minimize the alarming effect of this global societal menace.

Science education through researches, identifies social challenges and fosters sustaining solutions to such challenges, it also encourages broader participation of citizens in knowledge- based innovations that meet the highest ethical standards among other objectives (European commission, 2016). In view of this, science education could through its objectives foster sustaining solutions to the social and academic challenges of drug abuse among Nigerian youths.

Statement of Problem

The high increase in the rate of social vices and criminal upheavals in Nigeria are attributed to intake of hard drugs and drug abuse. Studies have indicated that drug abuse is a significant problem among South-Eastern Nigerian youths, which most of the time start at younger age as experiment until they become addicted to it. Drug abuse is a trending social problem and constitutes a menace to sustainable development. This is because the youths who are believed to be leaders of tomorrow destroy their future through drug abuse. The alarming and disturbing effects of this menace on social, health and academic lives calls for immediate intervention of science education.

Empirical Review

There have been many works on drug abuse globally done in different areas. However, the researchers reviewed some studies on drug abuse carried out by so many authors that will make people understand the havoc this menace has caused and still causing the entire world. Hence, the researchers deemed it necessary to examine the demographic determinants of drug abuse among South-Eastern Nigerian youths at tertiary institutions and the implication for science education.

Attah, Baba and Audu, (2016) carried out a study on “The effects of drug abuse and addiction on academic performance of students in Federal Polytechnic, Idah”. Two research questions and hypotheses guided the study respectively. The population is 14432 while the sample size is 201 respondents. Instruments used for data collection were questionnaire, interview, daily newspaper and journals. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentage and table SPSS Statistics Package. The result of the study concluded that the academic performance of students was hampered due to the effects of drug abuse and addiction. The study recommends that public bodies be strengthened to carry out their functions effectively so as to curtail the trend especially in Nigerian campuses.

Similarly, a study carried out by Masenga (2017) investigated the impact of drug abuse on academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Kishapu District in Tanzania, aiming specifically to identify common types of drugs the students abuse, explore causes of drug abuse among students in the area, to assess rate of school attendance among children involved in drug abuse as well as their terminal and annual examination performance. Questionnaires were used to collect data and from the findings, it was revealed that marijuana was most frequently abused closely followed by cigarette and alcohol. Also, the class attendance for students who abuse drugs was observed to be poor resulting in low performance in academics.

Onoyase, (2019) carried out a study on “Evaluation of the prevalence of substance abuse among students of higher education institutions in Benue State, North-central Nigeria: Implications for Counseling”. The investigation was directed towards the prevalence of substance abuse among students of higher education institutions, Benue State North-Central, Nigeria. One research purpose, research question and hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. The researcher made use of “Prevalence of Substance Abuse among Students’ Questionnaire” (POSAASQ) to obtain information for the research. The instrument was made up of 20 items.

The reliability coefficient of the instrument was 0.89 while it had content validity and language appropriateness. Six research assistants were used by the researcher to administer copies of the instruments to the respondents. The mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data. One-way Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis. Findings of the study show that there is prevalence of substance abuse among students and there is significant difference among students in colleges of education, polytechnics and universities. Some of the recommendations include; government should formulate laws to guide the consumption of different substances in Nigeria so as to prevent abuse, authorities of higher education institutions should sensitize students on the dangers of substance abuse through the use of posters and handbills.

Okafor, (2019) examined the causes and consequences of drug abuse among youth in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and a simple random technique was used to select the respondents from the University of Ilorin, Nigeria for the study. The instrument used was a questionnaire and it was revealed from the findings of the study that; low self-esteem was a major consequence of drug abuse; based on gender and faculty/department, there were no significant differences.

Kanmodi et al. (2020) determined the impact of drug abuse among students in school of Health Technology (SHT), in Jega, Kebbi State, Nigeria. The study adopted a Cross-Sectional research design. Questionnaire was administered to 254 students being the population of the study in order to collect data which was analyzed using the SPSS Version 20 software. The study found that most of the respondents who disclosed a positive history of drug abuse had directly or indirectly suffered socio-economic and health consequences such as engagement in crime, strained relationships and job loss. The above findings recommend the need for an urgent social intervention targeted at curbing the menace of drug abuse in the surveyed institution.

Thus, this research explored the demographic determinants of drug abuse among undergraduate youths in south-eastern communities in Nigeria. It was therefore hypothesized that demographic characteristics of undergraduate youths in south-eastern communities in Nigeria significantly ($p < .05$) determine their level of drug abuse.

Method

Cross-Sectional survey research design was used to carry out this study. Cross-Sectional survey research design is a commonly used method in social sciences and other fields to gather data and analyze relationships between variables at a specific point in time. This type of research design involves collecting data from a sample or population at a given moment, with the aim of describing characteristics or relationships without establishing causality or determining the sequence of events (Babbie, 2016; Singleton, & Straits, 2018).

Population

Population of the study comprised all South-eastern Nigerian youths at tertiary institution levels.

Sampling and sampling technique

A sample of 500 youths in tertiary institutions from five States in Nigeria (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States) was used for the study. Simple Random Sampling technique without replacement was used to sample 100 youths from each of the five institutions from the States under study for fair justification of result from the schools involved.

Instrument for data collection

Data for the study were obtained through the use of researchers' self-made questionnaire titled Drug Abuse Questionnaire. It consists of two sections: Section 'A' consist of demographic factor like State while section 'B' consists of 13 items addressing some of the demographic determinants of drug abuse among University students, with :two to four response options depending on the nature of the questions respectively (Age bracket of the abuser, gender, education level, Parental status of abuser, family type, Position of abuser in the family, family size, Educational background of the abuser's parents, abusers' parents' occupation, Life status of parents of abusers, economic status of abusers' parents, upbringing of the abuser and Mode of first initiation of the abuser).

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The instrument was validated by three experts: two from Biology unit while one is from Measurement and Evaluation unit, all from the researchers' University. All suggestions and modifications suggested by the evaluators were used to draft the final instrument used for the study. The trial testing was carried out in another University in the South-East outside the ones used for the study but has similar characteristics with those Universities under study. The internal coefficient index of the instrument was obtained to be 0.86, using Cronbach Alpha. This shows that the instrument is reliable.

Collection of Data Analysis

The questionnaire was used to solicit information from the South-eastern Nigerian youths in the five States involved in this study. The questionnaires were randomly distributed by the researchers to 100 youths each

from those five different Universities in the states under study. The filled questionnaires were collected on the spot after filling them to avoid loss of any.

Method of Data Analysis

Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) and analysis of moment structure (AMOS) software were used for the data analysis. SPSS was used to perform frequency, percentage and bar chart analysis while AMOS was used to perform structural equation modeling analysis.

Results

Table 1: Percentage analysis of the demographic profile of students in higher institutions in south-eastern Nigeria.

Demographic	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	375	75.0
	Female	125	25.0
Family Size	1-2	42	8.4
	3-4	125	25.0
	5-6	249	49.8
	6 and above	84	16.8
Parents Education	FSLC	42	8.4
	SSSC	209	41.8
	OND/NCE	166	33.2
	B.Sc/HND	83	16.6
Upbringing	Brought up by parents	249	49.8
	Brought up by grandparents	126	25.2
	Brought up by relatives	125	25.0
Economic Status	High	83	16.6
	Moderate	250	50.0
	Low	167	33.4
Family Type	Monogamy	332	66.4
	Polygamy	168	33.6
Parental Status	Divorced	41	8.2
	Separated	125	25.0
	Living together	250	50.0
	Single parent	84	16.8
Age	16-20 years	166	33.2
	21-25 years	125	25.0
	26-30 years	209	41.8
Level of Education	Polytechnic	42	8.4
	College of Education	125	25.0
	University	333	66.6

Table 1 shows the percentage analysis of the students' demographic characteristics. It shows that 375 (75%) of the participants are male students while 125 (25%) are female students. In terms of family size, 42 (8.4%) of the participants had family size within 1-2 person(s), 125 (25%) of the participants had family size within 3-4 persons, 249 (49.8%) of the participants had family size within 5-6 persons while 84 (16.8) of the participants had family size of 6 persons and above. In terms of parents' education, parents of 42 (8.4%) of the participants had first school leaving certificate (FSLC), parents of 209 (41.8%) of the participants had senior secondary school certificate (SSSC), parents of 166 (33.2%) of the participants had OND/NCE while the parents of 83 (16.6%) of the participants had B.Sc/HND. The other demographics and their frequencies as well their percentages are as shown in Table 1.

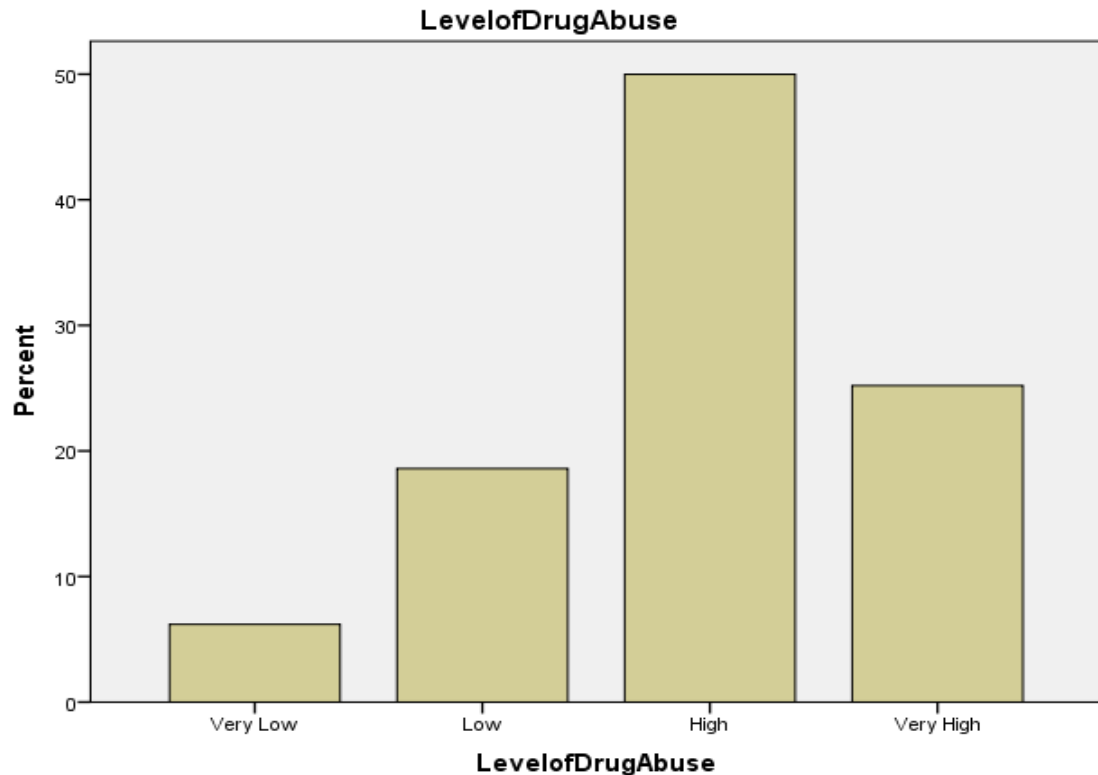


Figure 1: Bar chart representation of students' level of drug abuse

Figure 1 indicates the 31 (6.2%) of the participants abuse drugs to a very low extent, 93 (18.6%) of the participants abuse drugs to a low extent, 250 (50.0%) of the participants abuse drugs to a high extent while 126 (25.2%) of the participants abuse drugs to a very high extent. This implies that majority of the students in the higher institutions in the southeast Nigeria abuse drugs to a high extent.

Table 2: Regression weights of the demographics on the participants' level of drug abuse

	Demographic	B	P
Drug Abuse <---	Gender	.380	.007
Drug Abuse <---	Level of Education	-.254	.009
Drug Abuse <---	Family Size	.037	.612
Drug Abuse <---	Parents Education	.083	.261
Drug Abuse <---	Upbringing	.170	.021
Drug Abuse <---	Socio-economic Status	.112	.150
Drug Abuse <---	Family Type	-.216	.017
Drug Abuse <---	Parental Status	.370	.628
Drug Abuse <---	Age	.100	.212

Table 2 revealed that gender of the participants had a significant positive path coefficient with their level of drug abuse, $\beta = .380$, $p = .007$. In the same vein, level of education of the participants had a significant negative path coefficient with their level of drug abuse, $\beta = -.254$, $p = .009$. Upbringing of the participants had a significant positive path coefficient with their level of drug abuse, $\beta = .170$, $p = .021$ while family type of the participants had a significant negative path coefficient with their level of drug abuse, $\beta = -.216$, $p = .017$. However, family size ($\beta = .037$, $p = .612$), parents' education ($\beta = .083$, $p = .261$), socioeconomic status ($\beta = .112$, $p = .150$), parental status ($\beta = .370$, $p = .628$) and age ($\beta = .100$, $p = .212$) of the participants had no significant path coefficients with their level of drug abuse.

Figure 2 shows the causal model for the demographic determinants of the participants' level of drug abuse. Besides, the data for this research demonstrated a good model fit with the following fit indices, Comparative fit index (CFI) = .932, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .041, Chi-square goodness of fit index, $\chi^2 = 165.87$, $p > .050$.

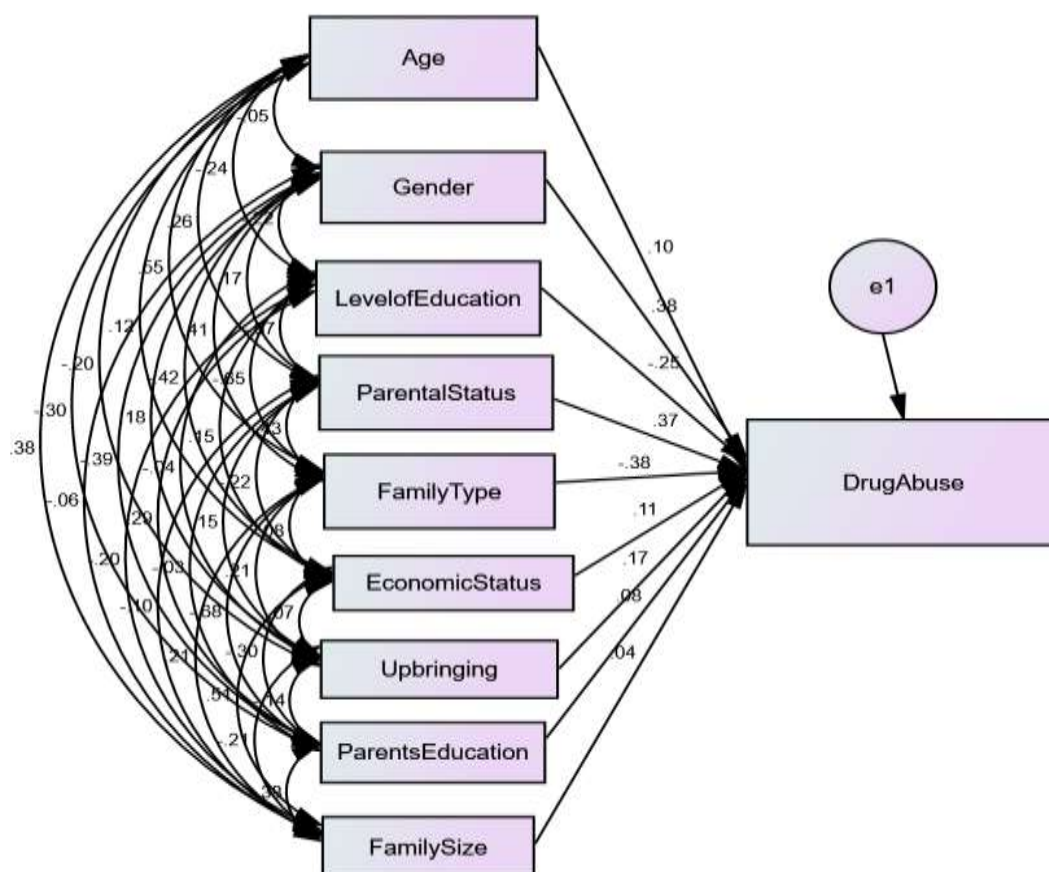


Figure 2: Causal model for the demographic determinants of the students' level of drug abuse

Discussion of Findings

Table 1 above shows the percentage analysis of the students' demographic characteristics with the male students having 75% while the female students have 25%. This implies that male youths abuse drugs more than the female youths. This is in corroboration with Zakiniaez, 2018; National Institute on Drug Abuse, (2022); Fonseca, et al, 2021 and The Recovery Village, 2023 which reported that males have greater substance use than females.

Level of education among the youths was another factor that influences students' (youth) drug abuse. The findings of this study revealed that youths (students) at lower level of education in the higher institutions, abuse drugs more than those at higher education levels. This result is in line with the views of Makanjuola and Sajo, 2014 and NIDA, 2023 that this newly acquired independence often results in influencing youths to unhealthy behaviours such as drinking, smoking and use of hard drugs.

Table 2; shows that Socio-economic status, family type and parental status had no significant path coefficients with youths' level of drug abuse. This is in disagreement with the findings of Yie-chu, Cai-lain and Teck-Heang, (2023) which revealed that family factors (such as family economic standing) and peer influence played an important role in an individual's drug abuse. This study also found that a person's drug abuse is usually caused by a combination of several factors instead of just one sole factor.

The study revealed that youths from single parent family abuse drugs to a higher level more than youths with both parents living together. This finding is in corroboration with Vanessa & William (2011) which revealed that children of single-parent families (especially fathers only) were significantly more prone to Marijuana use than children from single-parent (especially mothers only) family structures, whose Marijuana usage, in turn, significantly exceeded that of children of dual-parent families. In the same vein, Anzalone, (2020) found out that young children with parents with marital aggression and those with fathers who were more aggravated with their children in early childhood were more likely to have substance abuse problems as adolescents, according to a study by researchers in the school of nursing and the Department of psychology.

Implication of drug abuse to science education

The intake of non-prescribed drugs and hard drugs by the students has led to unprecedented loopholes in science education. Those who abuse drugs show behaviors such as promiscuous sexual activity, destruction of school properties, risk taking and other behaviours detrimental to human health. The unpleasant effect of Drug abuse finds its way changing the functions of body cells, making students uncomfortable even in classrooms. It

has ruined the future career and good dreams of many students, drifting students' thoughts away from their academic pursuit thereby creating physical and psychological chaotic situation in science education.

Conclusion

Prevalence and extent of drug abuse among youths in South-Eastern Universities is significant. This is in relation to some of their demographic characteristics among which is gender, level of education and family type. Therefore, drug abuse among youths if left unchecked may have adverse implication on the academic performance, state of mental health, as well as social and economic lives of our future leaders. Hence, there is a need for urgent social intervention programs to curb the problem of drug abuse in these surveyed tertiary institutions.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made to see if the menace of drug abuse could be reduced to the barest minimum.

Conducive atmosphere needs to be created for counselors so that the counselee feels accepted and be able to open up and reveal his or her problems to the counselor.

There should be guidance and counseling services to monitor and win students who abuse drugs. Science education should undertake further researches into other causes of high rate of drug abuse among youths and also organize seminars and lectures for students on the consequences of drug abuse. Guest speakers or resource persons should be invited to talk to the youths on dangers of drug abuse. Peer counseling should be encouraged to transform the attitudes of drug abusers.

There should be strict school regulations to checkmate the culprits as well as providing other possible ways of eradicating drug abuse among youths.

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