

Substance Use and Violent Behaviour of Students in Nasarawa State University, Keffi – Nigeria

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Abstract:

Substance abuse has been associated with violent behavior for many decades. While the relationship is the same today as it was in the past, the pervasiveness of the association, and the consequences, are more dramatic. This study investigated substance use and possible causes of violent behaviour of students in Nasarawa State University, Keffi – Nigeria. Two hundred and ninety three (293) participants consisting of one hundred and forty seven (147) males and one hundred and forty six (146) females with the mean age of 23.67 (SD=3.77) were sampled. A questionnaire designed to elicit student's opinion on substance use prevalence was administered on the participants using a descriptive cross-sectional research design for data collection. Analysis revealed that majority of the students (80.5%) who use substance saw formal education as avenue to explore their curiosity, and majority have witnessed violence resulting from substance use (61.4%). Alcohol and marijuana were the top two on the list of substances abused by male and female students and it was reported that violent behaviours like sexual assault and violent crimes were common to students after they had abused substance. It was suggested by the respondents that the University Authority should use regulation and enlightenment to control substance abuse and use punishment and counselling among others to control violent behaviour among students.

Key words: students' opinion, substance abuse, violent behaviour, undergraduates, Nasarawa State University Keffi

Introduction

Prevalence rates for substance use and risk violent related behaviour on University students across Nigeria are likely to begin their initiation starting with smoking tobacco and drinking by 17 years of age; they are at greater risk for initiating cocaine and marijuana use at earlier ages.¹ Prevalence data for early-onset substance abuse is rare. Nonetheless, there are limited descriptive statistics for substance use and progression. Studies on tertiary school students in a mixed urban-suburban community (mean age 22.8 years; 27% African American); about one-quarter (24%) of the students had tried one or two cigarettes and 1% indicated smoking on at least a monthly basis.² Another study examined the prevalence of alcohol and drug use among tertiary students, almost one-third (30%) of the tertiary school students reported drinking alcohol one or two times, and 2% drank on at least a monthly basis. Regarding marijuana, 2% had tried it once or twice, and less than 1% reported using it regularly.³ Substance abuse and violence are serious issues on Nigerian school campuses across the country. It is generally believed that educating students on the risks and consequences associated with alcohol and other drug use, violence, and student health related problems empowers them to make choices that will keep them safe, healthy, and successful throughout their school experience⁴.

Substance Use and Abuse

Substance use and abuse used to be an issue treated with a lot of secrecy by those who use and abuse them. However, today, students in schools now boast of abusing substances⁵. Young people sampled from the eastern part of the country reported

that they started drinking between age 11 and 20,⁶ while those sampled from the southern part of the country reported “14 years or below” as the age of initiation into drug use.⁷ Researchers who sampled respondents from the northern part of Nigeria had participants aged between 10 to 14 from Secondary School in Zaria who were already smoking cannabis.⁸ Substance use and abuse has been found to start as early as when students are in secondary school. They compared two studies they conducted among secondary school students in Nigeria and found that drug use among the respondents reduced in 1993 compared to what they observed in 1988. However, they noted that rural secondary school male students were engaging more in substance use and smoking than the female counterparts. This found that some of their respondents reported using cigarettes and cannabis frequently that is, daily and weekly. The trend changed in 1998 observed mild stimulants, antibiotics and alcohol as some of the highly used substances among these secondary school students.⁹ Secondary school students in Lagos use caffeine predominantly¹⁰ but also use alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and so forth. While those in Kwara State have been found to predominantly use alcohol.¹¹

In rural Nigeria, secondary school students have been found to abuse the following drugs in increasing order: tobacco, Kola-nut, alcohol and alabukun “a local analgesic”.¹² Other studies using secondary school students seem to concur with the findings reported above among these young people.¹³ Interestingly, Fatoye and Morakinyo (2002) had earlier reported the use of analgesics, stimulants, antibiotics, alcohol, hypno-sedatives and tobacco among students in urban and rural areas of Nigeria.⁷ Majority of their respondents reported being daily users of tobacco. Hence, it could be inferred that secondary school students in urban Nigeria use and abuse substances as much as their counterparts in rural Nigeria.

Violence and Violent Behaviour

Violence has no precise or commonly accepted definition. The concept often serves as a catch for every variety of protest, militancy and coercion, destruction and condemnation even within the academic institutions. Violence has been defined as a destructive action undertaken against either property or persons. It has been deliberate or spontaneous, undertaken by government, private individuals, or students. It therefore embraces a wide range of actions including intimidation, terrorism, repression, riots, revolutions and all forms of warfare.¹⁴

The study of violence or violent behaviour in the Nigerian schools has been an area filled with controversy. Even brief discussions of violence are laden with interpersonal and political as well as psycho-social overtones. Great concern is often expressed over the level of violence prevalent in the Nigerian schools and society at large. However, the psychological study of violence within the academic setting has concerned itself with two primary approaches. The first has been the prediction of violence before its occurrence. The prediction approach involves a before the-fact judgment from statistical profiles (which explains the position of this paper), personality tests, behaviour patterns, demographic characteristics and behavioural histories that an individual or group of individuals is likely to commit violent acts in the future.¹⁵ The second area concerns the control procedures that follow the predictors of violence (which is part of the recommendation of this paper).

The following are best predictors of violent behaviour: lack of support from immediate family members, history of violence among the family, violent behaviour patterns among peers both in school and outside school, the absence of steady employment, the availability of 'willing' victims, the availability of alcohol or substance abuse and weapons for violence, and the

recency and prevalence of violence by the individual within the school environment.¹⁶

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to investigate substance use and possible causes of violent behaviour of students in Nasarawa State University, Keffi - Nigeria. In order to achieve this aim, the study therefore posed the following hypotheses:

- (i) There will be no significant relationship between the opinion of Northern and Southern students studying in Nasarawa State University, Keffi – Nigeria on substance use and violence behaviour.
- (ii) There will be no significant relationship between the opinion of new (100 & 200 level) and old (300 – 500 level) students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi – Nigeria on substance use and violence behaviour.
- (iii) There will be no significant relationship between the opinion of male and female students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi – Nigeria on substance use and violence behaviour.
- (iv) There will be no significant relationship between the opinion of students living in the Hostel and those living off-campus on substance use and violence behaviour.

Method

Research Design

The study seeks to investigate substance use and possible causes of violent behaviour of students in Nasarawa State University, Keffi - Nigeria. To meet up the expectation of the study, correlational research design was adopted in order to establish relationship between variables. This design does not allow the researcher to manipulate the variables. Also, the research adopted the survey design, which will enable the

researcher to move to the study area and administered an instrument to the participants who are students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi - Nigeria.

Population

The population for this study comprises of students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi – Nigeria. This includes the new and old (100-500 level) male and female students living in Hostels and off-campus identified as southern and northern students studying in Nasarawa State University, Keffi – Nigeria.

Sample

This study was conducted using 300 undergraduates of Nasarawa State University, Keffi (NSUK), Nigeria. The students were selected using simple random sampling. One hundred and fifty (150) male and one hundred and fifty (150) female participants were used. The participants were matched on the bases of age, religion, geo-political zones, gender, and academic level. The participants ranges between 16 and above years of age (Mean age= 23.67; SD=3.77).

Instrumentation

A self-report questionnaire designed to capture the objective of this study was randomly administered to the randomly selected participants in their classrooms after a consent form had been completed. A total of 300 participants responded to the questionnaire. However, 7 of the questionnaires were not correctly responded to hence, they were not analyzed for the study. A participation rate of 97.67% was recorded for the 293 analyzed questionnaires.

The questionnaire is of two sections; Section A captured the socio-demographic details of the respondents like gender, marital status and religion; while section B which is a combination of 19 open and close ended questions captured

their opinion on substance abuse and violence behaviour within the University.

Procedure

Permission was obtained from the University authorities to conduct the study. The researchers randomly dichotomized the students living in campus (Hostels) and those living off-campus using simple random sampling method. The sampling was done through selecting the students with odd and even number. The administration of the questionnaires was done only to the odd number students within the classroom. The same procedure was used to select participants who lived off campus. Before the questionnaire distribution, the respondents were given consent form which informed them of the purpose of the study. The selection procedure was done not taking into cognizance the respondent's department but their level was taken into consideration. Hence, they were selected from year 1 to year 5.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19.0. (SPSS Inc, 2010). Chi-square goodness-of-fit and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data in order to examine the extent of relationship in the opinion of participant on substance use and violence behaviour.

Results

Variables	Nomenclature	Frequency	Percentage
	(N=293)	(%=100)	
Gender	Male	147	50.2
	Female	146	49.8
Age	16-20	52	17.76
	21-25	156	53.24
	26-30	79	26.96
	30 & above	6	2.04
Marital Status	Single	271	92.5
	Married	22	7.5

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Religion	Christian	217	74.1
	Islam	72	26.6
	Others	4	1.4
Residence	Hostel	138	47.1
	Off-Campus	155	52.9
Level	Year 1	63	21.5
	Year 2	52	17.7
	Year 3	80	27.3
	Year 4	92	31.4
	Year 5	6	2.0
Total		293	100%

Table 1: Socio-demographic Details of participants

Questions	Categories	Frequency	Percentage	X ²	P-Value
		(N=293)	(%=100)		
Do you see substance abuse as a problem in NSUK?	Yes No Undecided	236 20 27	80.5 10.2 9.2	861.72	<.001
Do you think substance abuse can result in violence among students?	Yes No Undecided	277 9 7	94.5 3.1 2.4	1279.41	<.001
Have you witnessed any type of violence resulting from the use of illicit substance?	Yes No Undecided	180 95 18	61.4 32.4 6.1	465.10	<.001
Are there other possible causes of violence among students?	Yes No Undecided	166 56 71	56.7 19.1 24.2	337.81	<.001
Are male students more likely to abuse illicit substances more than female students?	Yes No Undecided	248 29 16	84.6 9.9 5.5	976.83	<.001
Are male students more likely to engage in violent behaviours than female students?	Yes No Undecided	247 26 20	84.3 8.9 6.8	965.98	<.001
Are there students' activities that are prone to violence?	Yes No Undecided	143 41 109	48.8 14.0 37.2	224.10	<.001
Are you aware of	Yes	197	67.2		

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measures adopted by NSUK to control the abuse of illicit substances among students?	No Undecided	19 77	6.5 26.3	545.89	<.001
Are there measures put in place by NSUK to control students' violent behaviours?	Yes No Undecided	152 44 97	51.9 15.0 33.1	264.17	<.001

Table 2: Opinion of respondents on substance abuse and violence

Questions	Categories	Male (n=147)	Female (n=146)	Frequency (N=293)	Percentage (% = 100)
Which substance do you think students commonly abuse?	Alcohol	83	97	180	61.43
	Caffeine(Coffee)	14	15	29	9.90
	Marijuana	33	21	54	18.43
	Tobacco	17	13	30	10.24
Which substance is peculiar to be abuse by male students?	Alcohol	56	63	119	40.61
	Marijuana	58	59	117	39.93
	Tobacco	27	19	46	15.70
	Caffeine(Coffee)	6	5	11	3.76
Which substance is peculiar to be abuse by female students?	Alcohol	87	98	185	63.14
	Marijuana	11	5	16	5.46
	Tobacco	18	17	35	11.95
	Caffeine(Coffee)	31	26	57	19.45
What are the likely period/day of the week that Students frequently abuse Drugs?	Workdays	16	9	25	8.53
	Weekends	114	121	235	80.20
	Others	17	16	33	11.27

Table 3: Chi-Square difference on Substances Commonly Abused between Male and Female Students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi - Nigeria.

Questions	Categories	Northern (n=147)	Southern (n=146)	Frequency (N=293)	Percentage (% = 100)
Violent					

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behaviors common to students on account of Substance abuse.	Sexual Assault	74	41	115	39.25
	Physical Assault	42	86	128	43.69
	Violent Crimes	31	19	50	17.06
Possible causes of violence among students	Cultism	32	13	45	15.36
	Rivalry	14	22	36	12.29
	Frustration	12	10	22	7.51
	Anxiety	48	57	105	35.84
	School Policies	23	14	37	12.62
Student activities that are prone to violence	Oppression	18	30	48	16.38
	Elections	67	72	139	47.44
	Sports	30	12	42	14.33
	Competition	13	13	35	11.95
	Parties	18	19	37	12.63
	Rallies	8	14	22	7.51
What can the school authorities do to control substance abuse among Students?	Protests	11	7	18	6.14
	Students' Demonstrations				
	Regulations	59	72	131	44.71
Measure school Authorities can take to control violence among Students and ethnic groups to promote peace	Enlightenment	45	54	99	33.79
	Counseling	43	59	63	21.50
Measure school Authorities can take to control violence among Students and ethnic groups to promote peace	Counseling	96	104	200	68.26
	Punishment	13	21	34	11.60
	Seminars	6	5	11	3.75
	Use of religious teaching	32	16	48	16.38

Table 4: Chi-Square difference in Opinion on Substance Induced Violent Behaviours, Causes and Possible Curbing Strategies between Northern and Southern Students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi - Nigeria.

Questions	Categories	Male (n=147)	Female (n=146)	Frequency (N=293)	Percentage (% = 100)
Which class/category of Students is more likely to engage in Substance abuse and Violence behaviour.	Wealthy	91	95	186	63.48
	Average	41	38	79	26.96
	Below-average	15	13	28	9.56

Table 5: Economic Status of Students Most Likely To Abuse Drug and Engage In Violence

Discussion

Drug use and abuse among university students is rampant (7, 17, 18, 6, 19) and this has been linked to violence from the results above. The study revealed that 53.24% of participants are within the age range of 21-25 in Nasarawa State University, Keffi (NSUK) and more than 80% of students sampled believe that substance abuse is a major problem and can cause violent (94.5%) behaviors among students in NSUK. In a recent study, it was reported that young adults between 18 to 25 years of age were the population with the highest vulnerability to substance abuse while adolescents between the ages of 11 to 17 were reported as the second highest population vulnerable to substance abuse.² The age of 18 is the average age that students enter into Universities. It seems that students tend to continue a culture of substance use and abuse already learnt in secondary schools when they enter into Universities. Other research supported the finding that Alcohol and substance use may lead to violence behaviour (20, 21).

The finding from this study where 61.43% of students believed that students were more likely to abuse alcohol is in line with Okoza, Aluede, Fajoju, & Okhiku, (2009) who reported an actual abuse rate of 66% among students of Ambrose Ali University (Nigeria) sampled for their study.¹⁹ In line with this, Chikere & Mayowa (2011) reported that 20% of the students

they sampled from the University of Lagos took marijuana or smoked excessively while 19% excessively drank alcohol.⁶ Furthermore, another researchers reported 40.9% use of alcohol and 36.4% use of Kolanut among students of University of Ibadan (all in Nigeria) and more current use among females (16.4%) were higher than males (10.2%).²² Among students of Ekiti state university, Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti and College of Education, researcher recently found a consumption rate of 47.9% and 43.8% for alcohol and tobacco respectively.²³ These concurring studies highlight the fact that actual substance use is fast becoming a major issue in the society as a result of uninhibited use by undergraduate students. The determining role of substance abuse in violent behavior had earlier been highlighted by previous studies (24, 25, 26, 27, 28), but has been further established from students' opinion by this study. For instance, Engs and Hanson (1994) found a relationship between alcohol and students' fighting, having legal troubles, vandalism, having trouble with their school administration among University students.²⁹ Sexual assault, physical assault and violent crimes reported by our respondents as violent behaviors common to students on account of substance abuse is in concurrence with Abbey's (1991) findings on acquaintance rape and alcohol consumption among College students.³⁰ Also, group of researchers reported that when University students drink or use drugs; it predisposes them more to sexual assault or rape.²⁷

The opinion of students on the peculiarity of substances like alcohol and marijuana to males is consistent with other studies (31, 32) while their opinion that females consume alcohol more than other substances is in line with the finding of researchers who reported that female students were found to use more alcohol and tobacco than male students while males had the tendency to consume more quantities than females in a Brazilian university (26). Apart from the present study that sampled University students and others highlighted, it has

been found in a nationwide survey that, “alcohol is the most commonly used psychoactive drug in Nigeria”³³. Also, weapon carrying has been linked to alcohol and drug use among University students.³⁴ This weapon carrying could be one of the reasons they engage in more violence when aggravated. Other studies had found the same trend of weapon carrying, drinking, drug use and sexual activity as predictors of violence among high school students.³⁵ As much as 61.4% of our respondents have witnessed violence as a result of substance. This calls for more efforts towards reducing violence and circulation of illicit substances in schools. Although this study did not investigate school violence and substance use, it has been found that when illegal drugs are available in school, there is increase in school violence.³⁶ Even with the availability of drugs, it has been found by this study, that students who are wealthy (63.48%) are more likely to engage in substance abuse and violence than their average and below average counterparts. This could mean students who have cash (money) available; this was supported by studies who have found that when young people do not have the resources to obtain illicit substances, they go as far as stealing to maintain their habits.³⁷

Drug use and alcohol predisposes students to being violent and also paradoxically makes them victims of victimization as a result of their behaviours.³⁸ Sexual abuse victims have been found to use alcohol and substance (39, 40). These predisposing factors could be circumvented by universities enacting and enforcing laws to curb abuse of substances or using environmental modification as suggested by Kingery et, al.³⁸

Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite the above discussion, the findings of the present study on students’ opinion on substance use and violent behavior seems disturbing because it clearly demonstrate a link between

substance use and health risk violent behaviour among students of Nasarawa State University, Keffi-Nigeria. This study made justification on those substances commonly use and abuse (alcohol caffeine/coffee, marijuana, tobacco) by University students as the major predictors of violent behaviours (sexual assault, physical assault, violent crime), which is influence by possible causes to include frustration, oppression, rivalry, cultism, anxiety, and school policies within the University communities. Moreover, illicit drug use, sexual risk-taking behaviours, and other related risks are associated with the leading based causes of death in the United States.⁴¹ However, the finding of the study suggested further regulatory measures for the school authority to be use in controlling violent behaviour through enlightenment and counseling, seminars, punishment, and teachings from religious bodies both within and outside the school campus would help to reduce and possibly eradication the students' possibility of indulging in substance and health risk violent behaviour in our campuses.

Gratifying to know from the experience of the authors that Nasarawa State University, Keffi (NSUK) has put measures in place to curb the use of illicit substances and this is known by the students. Also, with punishment, seminars, counseling and use of religious and ethnic groups to promote peace as the students have suggested, it is believed that violent behavior among students would be curbed. Importantly too, public health surveillance surveys present information on the data collected on the extent of behaviours or experiences that threaten the health of young people. Lack of such information places University students at risk of substance use and violent behaviour.

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