

PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF SELECTED PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCES ON SCHOOL PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ONDO STATE

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Abstract

The study identified the Psychoactive Substances (PS) perceived to be commonly used by students of tertiary institutions in Ondo State, and examined the reasons for using PS among the students. The study employed the descriptive survey research design. The population for the study consisted of students of the tertiary institutions in Ondo State. The sample comprised a total of 300 respondents from tertiary institutions in the State who were selected using multistage sampling procedure. Tertiary institutions in Ondo State were stratified into University, College of Education and Polytechnic. Simple random sampling technique was used to select two institutions from each stratum. Six institutions were selected using simple random sampling technique. Lastly, a sample of 50 students per institution was selected using convenience sampling technique. A self-designed and validated questionnaire titled Psychoactive Substances and School Performance (PSSP) was used to collect data for the study. Data collected were analysed using percentage, mean and graphical representations. The results showed that depressant was perceived to be the most commonly used group of PS 329 (33.78%). Specifically, in their different groups, tramadol (65.2%); alcohol (40.7%) and codeine (26.1%) were perceived to be commonly used PS among the students. The perceived reasons for students' use of PS were to get high (149; 22.7%); secure confidence (91; 14.24%) and enjoy sex (72; 11.26%). Respondents perceived that PS use had influence on school activities regarding; users' relationship with lecturers and colleagues (75.0%) and violent behaviours (71.0%) respectively. Results also showed that 198 (66%) respondents perceived that PS use had negative influence on school academic regarding examination results. The study concluded that psychoactive substances use negatively impacted tertiary institution students' school performance in Ondo State.

Keywords: *Psychoactive Substances, School Performance, Perceived Influence, Students, Tertiary Institution*

Introduction

Medically, substances use is meant for diagnosis, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation including insomnia and anxiety disorders. Psychoactive substances (PS) are substances that have effects on the body systems as a whole. In addition, psychoactive substance can produce temporary feeling of well-being, surplus energy, euphoria, stimulation, depression, relaxation, hallucination, drowsiness and sleepiness (Mfrekemfon, 2014). As noted by Mfrekemfon (2014), psychoactive substances causes excessive energy, more active, depression, hallucinations, relaxation, drowsiness and sleepiness for users. World Health Organization (WHO, 2004), stated that psychoactive substances are capable of changing consciousness, mood and thoughts.

According to WHO (2004), psychoactive substances are classified into alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, tramadol, cocaine, heroin, amphetamine, opioid, depressants, stimulants, hallucinogens. World Health Organization further discovered that psychoactive substances whose categories are abilities to either reduce or boost the actions of the central nervous system, slow down its reactions and reduce the strength of its response, improve performance and alter the user's thought and perception. For instance, stimulants, depressants, heroin, cocaine among others are capable to stimulate the activity of the heart and other organs in the body including sleep interruption (Mfrekemfon, 2014). Egbochuku and Akerele (2007), submitted that stimulants increase the heart rate and blood pressure of the users. Fagan, Geesey, Jadhar, kaur, Lelkes, Nasreen, & Perez (2009), founded that stimulants are used by students to sustain longer study sessions, and makes it easier for students to be awake and also boost their ability to give all attention to their studies.

Apparently, depressants are substances that slow down the action of the central nervous system which induce sleep, relaxation and drowsiness if taken in excess, it may lead to slurred speech and staggering with loss of memory (Hales, 2007). Richard (2004,) however noted that substance use among university students slow down the heart rate and make breathing shallow to a state of coma or death. According to Bonson (2020), hallucinogens such as marijuana, LSD, mescaline, lysergic and phencyclidine also referred to as psychedelics have ability to alter the state of consciousness of colour, time, touch, sound and reality, that is, the user might see, hear, smell, or feel things that are not real. These substances affect brain functioning thereby altering the mood and thinking of the users.

However, Oshodi, Aina and Onajole (2010), revealed the reasons students of tertiary institutions engaged in psychoactive substances as having fun at parties and night clubs, facing the various challenges within school environment, relief them of stress and for studying. Omigbodun and Babalola (2004) found out that psychoactive substance use is attributed to parental divorce and deprivation. Edward (2003), posited that peer group influence was the strongest motive which drove students in their study into substance abuse. Similarly, the rate at which young ones use psychoactive substances in the society has been attributed to different factors such as lack of parental power, availability of the substances and accessibility to it (Liddle, Rowe, Gonzalez, Henderson, Dako & Greenbaum, 2006). It is generally believed that the rate in which tertiary institution students use alcohol in Nigeria starts from their early adolescence (Awoyinfa, 2012).

Therefore, tertiary institutions provide students with high level of freedom that were not enjoyed at home as a result of direct parental guidance, supervision and strict rules which effected in secondary schools days. Mean whilst, many of them abuse such freedom by exploring and imitating bad habits of using drugs. They resort to negative coping strategies like the use of substances especially alcohol in order to handle school-related stress. Oshikoya and Alli (2006), buttressed this point by stating that Nigerian youths indulge in the use of psychoactive substances to carry out their daily activity demands without undermining consequences.

Hingson, Zha, and Weitzman (2009), revealed that harmful effects of psychoactive substance use are grouped into short-term and long-term effects. The short-term health effects can be death and injuries caused by involving in accidents

following intoxication. The author founded that about 1,825 college students aged 18 to 24 years die due to injuries caused by alcohol-related injuries. Besides, psychoactive substances lead to social and health problems (cirrhosis of the liver, lung cancer, emphysema, HIV or hepatitis B and C) that students normally have. In support, Makanjuola, Daramola, and Obembe (2007), stated that the rate in which psychoactive substances are used among university students are associated with anti-social behaviours such as cultism, violence, vandalism, rape, examination malpractices, bullying and truancy (WHO, 2014). Singleton and Wolfson (2009), discovered that too much of alcohol consumption was one of the factors that affects sleeping method of users which makes them have low achievements in their academic performance. It is strongly believed that these factors were associated with student's low grade. Also Ballas, (2006), also posited that psychoactive substances use and abuse which resulted to addiction among students of tertiary institutions affect their academic performances in the sense that student-users of PS usually involve in examination malpractices, miss lectures and tests as a result of hangover, while some do breakdown during examinations. These may eventually make students withdraw from school due to their poor academic performance.

Interestingly, the school, media, law, religions, home, and the governments (Federal, State and Local Governments) are trying their bits to reduce the problem of illicit substance use among its population; for instance, the school curriculum reflects drug education as an important area of health education, strict laws are enacted, governmental drug law agencies are at work. There are War Against Drugs clubs here and there and churches have not failed of their teachings and counselling programmes to wage wars against the use, misuse and abuse of these psychoactive substance. For instance, manufacturers of cigarettes were always compelled to inscribe boldly on their containers warning like 'users are liable to die young' 'use responsibly'. The major concern is that these boys and girls are expected to build the society and nation as future leaders. Unfortunately, there are evidences that the prevalence of PS among students is increasing.

It has been observed that young boys who are either expected to be at one of the tertiary institutions or learning a profitable trade are found roaming the streets, patronizing drug and alcohol joints. Those on campus when on holidays usually patronize psychoactive substances outlets of which some of them usually misbehave on campus, disobeying the school rules, causes violence and are often used as political thugs in the community. Sadly, the depressive behaviour, neurotic and psychotic conditions of many of them have been attributed to hard substance use. This situation prompts one to wonder whether or not these students perceived psychoactive substance as having any effect on their school works, thus prompting the researcher to look at the Perceived Influence of Selected Psychoactive Substances on School Performance of Students in Tertiary Institutions in Ondo State.

Statement of the Problem

It is established that psychoactive substances are mind-altering substances which is capable of changing users consciousness, mood and thoughts and negatively affect the chemical and physical functioning of the brain when misused or abused. The short and long-term effects of these substances on health of users (like liver cirrhosis, hepatitis B and C, lung, growth of cells, injuries caused by accident and death) have been established. Unfortunately, prevalent use of these substances among students in

tertiary institutions is becoming high. Today, the issue of psychoactive substances use as it affects students is fast becoming a global concern. Majority of the educational studies on the effects of these substances are limited to sports performances, whereas, there is dearth of knowledge as to their influence on the general school performances (e.g. punctuality, regularity in school, obeying school rules, relationship with teachers and colleagues and academic performance) of students in Ondo State tertiary institutions; hence, this study.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to;

- a) Identify the psychoactive substances perceived to be commonly used by students of tertiary institutions in Ondo State;
- b) examine the reasons for using psychoactive substances among the students;
- c) examine the perceived influence of psychoactive substances on school activities of users (e.g. regularity and punctuality in school, obeying school rules, relationship with teachers and colleagues); and
- d) examine the perceived influence of psychoactive substances on academic performance of the students

Research Questions

The following questions guided the conduct of this study are:

- a) What are the psychoactive substances perceived to be commonly used by students in tertiary institutions in Ondo State?
- b) What are the reasons for using psychoactive substances among the students?
- c) How does a psychoactive substance affect academic performance of the students?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The population for this study comprised all the students in 11 tertiary institutions in Ondo State. Multi-stage sampling procedure was employed for the study. The first stage involved the stratification of the 11 tertiary institutions in Ondo State into three, based on the degrees awarded. The second stage involved the selection of two institutions from each group using simple random sampling technique. The third stage involved selection of fifty students per institution using convenient sampling technique. A self-structured research instrument titled “Psychoactive Substance and School Performance (PSSP)” was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire contains five sections (A-E). Section A sought information on the demographic characteristics of the respondents which are age and gender, section B contains an item on psychoactive substances perceived to be commonly used by students in tertiary institutions in Ondo State, section C contains 10 items relating to reasons for taking psychoactive substances, section D has 14 items relating to the perceived influence of psychoactive substances on school activities, section E contains 6 items which relate to the perceived influence of psychoactive substances on academic performance. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by experts in the department of Kinesiology, Health Education and Recreation Obafemi Awolowo University. Test-retest method was used to determine the consistency of the instrument. PPMCC yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.862. Administration of questionnaire was done on individual basis in their hostels and classrooms and was completed in two months. Data was analysed using descriptive analysis of percentage and graphical representations.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the psychoactive substances perceived to be commonly used by students in tertiary institutions in Ondo State?

Table 4.1: Perceived Psychoactive Substances Commonly Used by Students in Tertiary Institutions

| Item | Groups of Psychoactive Substances | Types of Psychoactive Substances in each Group | Frequency | Percentage | Ranking on Group Basis |
|------|-----------------------------------|--|------------|--------------|------------------------|
| 4 | Stimulants | Cocaine | 59 | 18.7 | 2 nd |
| | | Amphetamine | 23 | 7.3 | 3 rd |
| | | Tramadol | 206 | 65.2 | 1 st |
| | | Methamphetamine | 11 | 3.5 | 5 th |
| | | Ritalin | 15 | 4.7 | 4 th |
| | | Kolanut | 2 | 0.6 | 6 th |
| | | Total | 316 | 100.0 | |
| | Depressants | Marijuana | 65 | 19.8 | 3 rd |
| | | Codeine | 86 | 26.1 | 2 nd |
| | | Barbiturate | 26 | 7.9 | 4 th |
| | | Heroin | 16 | 4.9 | 5 th |
| | | Alcohol | 134 | 40.7 | 1 st |
| | | Morphine | 2 | 0.6 | 6 th |
| | | Total | 329 | 100.0 | |
| | Hallucinogens | Magic mushroom | 79 | 26.2 | 2 nd |
| | | Ketamine | 86 | 28.5 | 1 st |
| | | Angel dust/rocket fuel | 37 | 12.3 | 5 th |
| | | Mescaline | 47 | 15.6 | 3 rd |
| | | Lysergic acid diethylamide | 43 | 14.2 | 4 th |
| | | Total | 302 | 100.0 | |

Table 4.1 showed that out of the three groups of substances used by students, depressant was ranked 1st as the most commonly used with 329 (33.78%) responses; stimulants ranked 2nd with 316 (32.44%) responses while hallucinogens was 3rd with 302 (31.00%) responses. On group basis, data on stimulants indicated that, tramadol 206 (65.2%), cocaine 59 (18.7%) and amphetamines 23 (7.3%) were ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively while Kolanuts 2 (0.6%) were ranked 6th as commonly used stimulants among students of tertiary institutions in Ondo State. The data on depressants showed that alcohol 134 (40.7%), codeine 86 (26.1%) and marijuana 65 (19.8%) were ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively while morphine were ranked last as commonly used depressants as perceived by students. On hallucinogens, ketamine 86 (28.5%), magic mushroom 79 (26.2%) and mescaline 47 (15.6%) were ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively while angel dust 37 (12.3%) was ranked 5th as commonly used hallucinogens as perceived by students.

Research Question 2: What are the reasons for using psychoactive substances among the students?

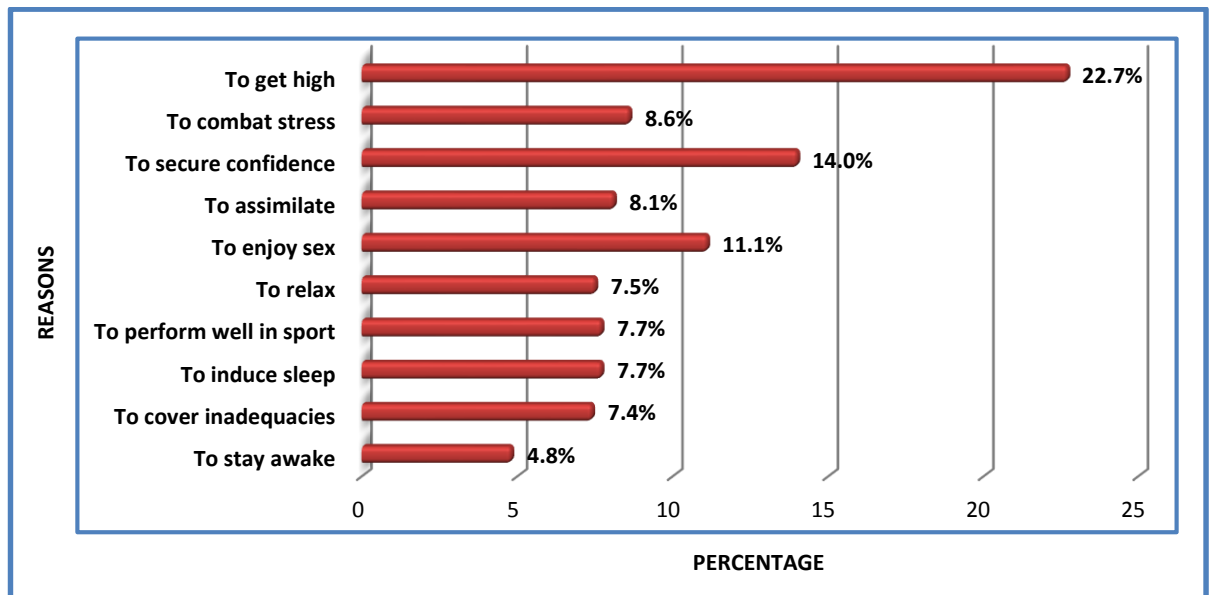


Fig 1: Bar chart showing the reasons students of Ondo State tertiary institutions used psychoactive substance

Research Question 3: What are the influences of psychoactive substances on academic performance of the users?

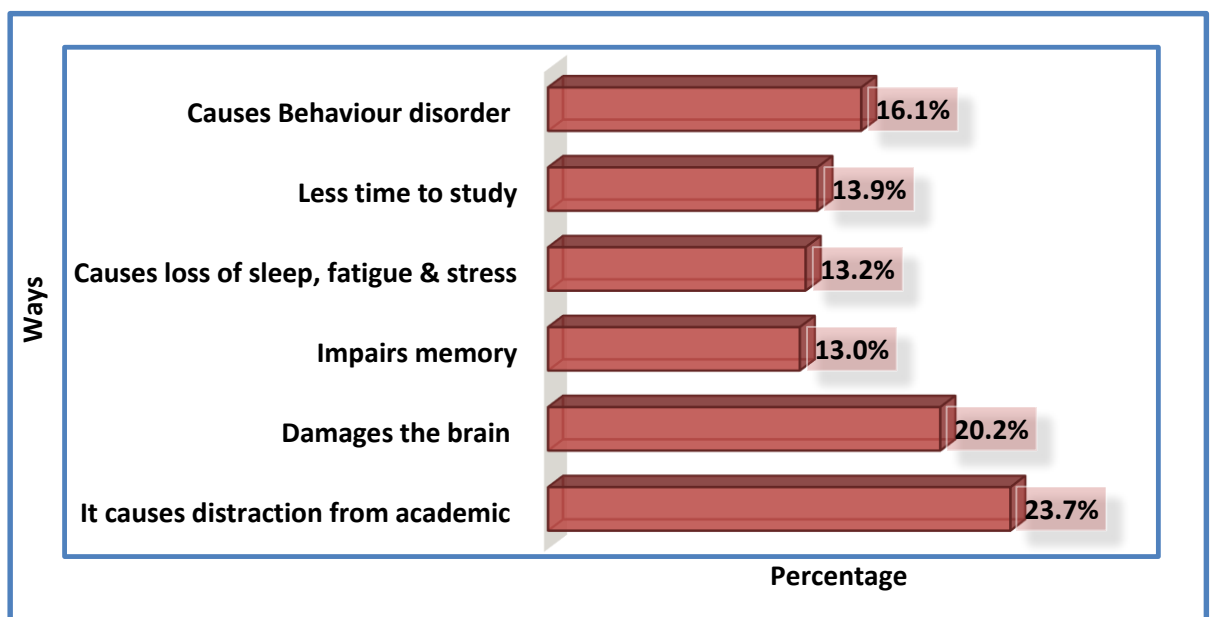


Figure 4.2: Bar Chart showing the Perceived Influences of Psychoactive Substances on the Users' Academic Performance

Figure 2 showed that out of 570 respondents used psychoactive substances, as many as 135 (23,7%) respondents noted that it caused distraction from academic, 115 (20,2%) discovered that it damaged the brain and 92 (16,1%) said caused behavioural disorder. Results also noted that 79 (13,9%), 75 (13,2%), and 74 (13,0%) of the respondents discovered that psychoactive substances caused time wasted, sleeping interruption and impaired memory respectively among students of Ondo State tertiary institutions, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The finding from this study revealed that the commonly used group of psychoactive substances among students in tertiary institutions is depressant, specifically, alcohol, codeine, and marijuana. This finding corroborates that of Knots (2000) who reported that youths commonly abused substances ranging from alcohol and marijuana which were often obtained from friends, patent medicine stores, open markets and mobile drug sellers with little or no difficulty. This result was earlier found by WHO (2008) which estimated that, among adolescents in over 40 countries, 18% of 15 year-old adolescents had already tried marijuana during some period of life. This study which indicated that out of the depressant substances, alcohol was found to be commonly used supported the report made in Nigeria by NAFDAC (2008) that the popularly abused substance in Nigeria with almost 61% of population engaging in its use is alcohol. It was revealed that almost 90% of students used alcohol before leaving school. In Nigeria, Awoyinfa, (2012) stated that the rate in which secondary school and tertiary institution students' use alcohol in Nigeria starts from their early adolescence.

This finding may be attributed to many reasons. For instance, the finding may be linked to the fact that the students have easy access to these substances more than others. Also, the finding may be as a result of the fact that some of the depressants that are commonly used are cheap. This view was also shared by Yusuf (2010). Some of the students who use psychoactive substances might also have come from homes where those substances were by their parents used.

The finding of this study which indicated that the reasons for students' use of psychoactive substances in tertiary institution were to get high, secure confidence and enjoy sex, could be connected to the fact that many of the students' users might not have been sensitized on the negative effects of psychoactive substances. They might not have had any opportunity to be exposed to any kind of counselling service against the use of psychoactive substances. Once again, the students may have felt that using psychoactive substances could help them to get over stress or worries of life. There is possibility that many of the students who use them feel that psychoactive substances would make them overcome fears and timidity. Wood, Read, Palfai and Stevenson (2001) also found out that social factors played a strong role in college alcohol use and student users do attribute their comportment to the reduction of stress or anxiety following alcohol use.

The result of this study that indicated that PS users play truants, habitual late comers at lectures, inattentive in classes, non-challant about submitting assignments, miss tests and examinations were substantiated by Kariuki (2015) that many substance users are absent minded and can hardly concentrate in the classroom. Also that substance reduces number of hours spent studying. Student who is addicted will think of taking some substances as soon as he wakes up in the morning, he hangs out with friends who are also addicted. PS users become weak after taking some substances and may feel reluctant to attend lectures or late for the lecture which can result to truancy.

The finding of this study which indicated that the use of psychoactive substances causes distraction from academics and less time to read might be true. For instance, a student-user of PS who has already taken some depressant substances like alcohol and marijuana would become weak and would always prefer to forgo lectures.

Also an addict's mind would not be in whatever a lecturer is teaching at the time he is craving for a particular substance. He might be totally distracted and can even take a permission to go out of the lecture room and find a way of getting the substance, after which he might not be able to come back for the completion of the lecture. This corroborate with the findings of Ginny (2001) that marijuana prevents neuronal functions in the hippocampus, resulting in problems with attention, memory and concentration. Also Wolaver (2002) supported the study that heavy drinking leads to lower GPA's because it takes time away from hours that could be spent studying.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the commonly used groups of PS by students of tertiary institutions were depressant substances and the most commonly used depressant substance is Alcohol. It was also perceived that the reason why students use PS was to get high. It was concluded that PS use has negative effect on school activities.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- (i) Ondo State Government should further enforce and extend Drug Crimes law to all its tertiary institutions.
- (ii) The State Government should intensify efforts at creating public awareness on ill effects of substance use. This it can do by using social media platforms, since the used of traditional means of communication seem not yielded positive results.
- (iii) The school management and authorities in higher institutions also have roles to play. The management in higher institutions should put mechanisms in place to identify, arrest and prosecute any student that is involved in the use of psychoactive substances. Rules and regulations on substance use should be strictly enforced.
- (iv) Campus security should be heightened and regular check should be carried out on students to ensure that no student use substances in school premises.

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