



Research Article

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Perceptions of Drug Use and Abuse among Adults in Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria: Implications for Social Work Practice

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Abstract

Drug use has not been the problem but rather its abuse and irrespective of the risk thereof, people still abuse them. That is why this study was set out to examine the perceptions of drug use and abuse among adults in Enugu-Ezike in Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria. The study utilized a cross-sectional survey design. The study subjects consisted of 195 respondents (107 males and 88 females) aged 18 years and above. The quantitative data gathered were analyzed with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) using percentages and frequency distribution tables. Chi-square (X^2) statistics were used to test the hypotheses. The findings showed that 52.3% of the respondents know the meaning of drug use while majority of the respondents were aware of drug abuse. 81.0% of the respondents have negative perception of drug abuse. Also, 54.9% stated that Marijuana is the most abused drug in the study area. Eighty percent (80%) believed that increase in drug abuse increases the rate of crime in the communities. Above thirty-one percent believe that family problems contributed in abusing drugs. The implications of the study to social work practice therefore, is to carry out the public enlightenment, community education, counselling and research on the dangers of drug abuse in Nigeria. The study recommends that the stakeholders in drug use and management should develop appropriate measures to combat the menace of drug abuse that is ravaging our society.

Keywords: Drug use, Substance Abuse, Perceptions, Social work, Enugu-Ezike

1. Introduction

One of the greatest discoveries of man is the therapeutic use of drugs to cure his ailment, to excite him when he is dull, to slim him when he is fat, to expand him when he is thin and to put him to

sleep when he is awake (Dauda, 2011). Thus, since time immemorial, man is known to be using drugs and learning to depend on drug usage by various societies in the world to relieve pain, escape reality, to alter perception, provide pleasurable sensation and find the assumed meaning to life.

Oluremi,(2012) describes drug abuse as the harmful use of drugs. The author posits that drug abuse refers to problem with illegal drugs and this also includes harmful use of legal prescription drugs where many people have resorted to self-medication. The practice of drug abuse involves the repeated and excessive use of drugs to produce happiness or avoid reality despite its destructive effects (Ogomoh 2003). Such drugs may be illegal such as marijuana, opium, cocaine, heroin, cannabis, and other psychotropic substances as described by Mbatia (1994) which most adults indulge in or legal substances such as prescription drugs, tobacco, alcohol, and inhalants like nail polish, solution, paint, gasoline etc. We use drugs in foods like vitamins; these are both necessary and beneficial. In the beginning, people may think that drug use has positive effects and they also believe that they can control their use, not knowing that drugs can quickly control their lives.

Drug abuse has been documented widely as a global problem (Lakhanpal, Agnihotri, 2007; United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, 2007; (UNODC) Abudu, 2008). How to use drug poses challenge to the entire world, since the introduction of heroin and related substances. On daily basis, one obtains an ugly news or information on drug abuse and other related offences. (Malima, 1995). The issues arising from drug abuse places a significant threat to the entire nations (Giade 2012; Oshodi, Aina & Onajole, 2010). Almost every country in the world is affected from one or more drug being abused by its citizen's (UNODC, 2007). The only varying factor is the laws regulating their use and consumption in different countries and locations.

Risks inherent in taking these psychoactive substances vary just as drugs of abuse. The determinant factors of drug use and abuse are many, varied, and yet not clearly understood. People's reasons for using these substances also vary, depending on their personal history, health, family background and social setting (Eze and Omeje, 1999). Also, it has been evidenced that people's biology, environment and the influence of the gene on one's development are factors that predispose one to use and abuse drugs.

The practice of drug abuse and use by older adults is often unnoticed not only by friends and relatives but also by primary care practitioners and other service providers (Michael and Kimberly, 2015). However, this reflects on the belief that old people don't drink alcohol and use drugs. This notion exhibits ignorance about the signs of drug use problems among older adults. It also reflects the failure of primary care practitioners and other health professionals to routinely ask about and screen for substance use problems (Schonfeld, et al, 2010). Finding effective treatment for and the prevention of substance abuse has been difficult (Ezenwa 2015). Through research, we now have a better understanding of the behavior. A study conducted in the Institute of Alcohol Studies (IAS 2002) made it clear that drug education and prevention aimed at adolescents and young adults offer the best chance to curb the abuse nationwide.

However, in Enugu-Ezike drug abuse has led to rise in crimes and other social problems, rendered a reasonable number of adults useless, and has also led to the reduction in pursuance of education, family problems to mention but a few. In view of the above problems, this study is set to examine the perception of drug use and abuse among adults in Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area.

2. Social Work and Drug Abuse

Social workers work with individuals, families, and communities affected with substance use disorders. Professional social workers also provide categorized and non-categorized services to individuals and their families where substance use disorders are often part of the clients' presenting problems. According to (NASW, 2008), these settings include the following; health and mental health centers, hospitals, child welfare and aging services, courts and correctional facilities, employee assistance programs, and private practices.

Substance or drug abuse problems have been difficult to detect. This is usually because the users are often ashamed to declare their status or more so, go secretive in the act. As social workers, it is pertinent to be conversant with potentials of drug use and its associated components. Some clients may complain or seek help for depression; hiding the underlying problems of drug dependence. The onus falls on the social worker to identify the possible underlying issues and help the client obtain necessary assistance (Miller, 2015).

In providing assistance to these drug abusers, there are many ways of treating them individually and viewing the client as part of a larger system while providing individualized treatment as appropriate, becomes more important in the delivery of effective services. Following the negative perceptions of substance use disorder such as the extensive social stigma, the diagnosis and treatment of a client can affect his/her professional status including his social standing, and livelihood. The problems associated with substance use disorders can massively damage a client's family system. In order to solve the problem of the clients with substance use disorders, social workers must keep abreast with the recent changes in legislation, regulations, and third-party payer requirements. (NASWS, 2013; Galvani, 2012).

3. Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this study on the perceptions of drug use and abuse among adults in Enugu-Ezike in Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area of Enugu state, Nigeria. Social control theory and social learning theory were adopted as the theoretical framework. The use of these theories was premised on the fact that human behavior is largely learned rather than being genetically influenced. From social control theory, people abuse drugs because of less conformity to conventional others like parents, teachers, clergies, employers; conventional activities such as familial, education, religious, occupational; and less belief in conventional institutions. This is a basic feature of our society today especially in Enugu state, southeastern Nigeria which has led to rise in the use and abuse of drugs and other social problems. Fewer stakes to these conventions presupposes the insurgence of anxiety, personal and social inadequacies, stress and depressive situations and relapse to drugs as a means to escape from reality.

4. Research Hypotheses

- i. Female adults have more negative perception of drug use and abuse than their male's counterparts.
- ii. Older adults are more likely to have negative perception of drug abuse than the younger adults.
- iii. Educated people have a different perception of drug use and abuse than their uneducated counterparts.
- iv. Low income earners are more likely to abuse drugs than high income earners.

5. Research Method

The study was conducted in Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria and a cross sectional survey design was adopted. Cross sectional survey aims at collecting information on certain variables in a study population at a point in time. (De Vaus, 2001; Goral, 2013). They may cover physical characteristics of people, perceptions and behaviors of people as well as the knowledge, attitudes, belief, and opinions that help to explain the behaviors, events and practices that occurred or are occurring in the population (Ireland, et al, 2009). Currently, the 2006 census figure extracted from the National Population Commission (NPC), put the population of Enugu-Ezike at 259,431 (National Population Commission, 2006). The study utilized 200 respondents who were drawn from the study population using Purposive sampling and simple random sampling procedures.

Data collected using the questionnaires were carefully edited to ensure completeness, consistency and accuracy. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used for analysis. In characterizing respondents, descriptive statistics such as percentages, the frequency tables were employed while chi-square (χ^2) was used to test all hypotheses. This helped in determining the nature of the relationships between variables.

6. Results

Table 1: Demographical Variables

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	107	54.9
Female	88	45.1
Total	195	100.0
Age		
18-22 years	52	26.7
23-27 years	104	53.3
28-32 years	39	20.0
Total	195	100.0
Marital status		
Single	100	51.3
Married	91	46.7
Divorced	3	1.5
Widowed	1	.5
Total	195	100.0
Religion		
Christianity	190	97.4
Traditionalists	5	2.6
Total	195	100.0
Academic qualification		
FSLC	12	6.2
Junior WAEC	26	13.3
Senior WAEC	59	30.3
OND/HND	53	27.2
B.Sc/MSc/PHD	45	23.1
Total	195	100.0
Occupation		
Students	34	17.4
Trader	76	39.0
Civil servants	51	26.2
Farming	34	17.4
Total	195	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2016

From the above table, it shows that 54.9% of the respondents were males, while 45.1% of the respondents were females. In summary, greater numbers of the respondents were males.

Age of the respondents show that 26.7% of them were within the age range of 18-22 years whereas 53.3% were within the age range of 23-27 years while 20.0% of the respondents were within the age range of 28-32. The table shows that the greater percentage of the sample population falls within the age range of 23-27 years. On the marital status of the respondents, the table showed that 51.3% of the respondents were single; 46.7% were married; 1.5% of the respondents were divorced; while .5% were widowed. The table shows that the greater percentages of the sample population were single.

The table above shows that 97.4% of the respondents were Christians while 2.6% were traditionalists. The above findings show that greater number of the respondents were Christians On the issue of academic qualification, the study shows that 6.2% of the respondents were first school Leaving certificate holders; 13.3% of them were Junior WAEC certificate holders and majority of the respondents (30.3%) were senior WAEC certificate holders. The finding above shows that 17.4% of the respondents were students while the majority 39% were Traders.

Table 2: Cross tabulation for testing of hypotheses

Gender	How do you perceive drug abuse?		Total	
	Negative perception	Positive perception		
Male	71	20	91	
Female	87	17	104	
Total	158	37	195	p≥.013
Age level				
Younger	122	34	156	
Older	36	3	39	
Total	158	37	195	p≥.045
Education level				
Lower	71	20	91	
Higher	87	17	104	
Total	158	37	195	p≥.371

Source: Field Survey, 2016

The above table is cross tabulation frequency for testing the hypothesis which stated that Female adults have more negative perception of drug use and abuse than their male counterparts. A calculated chi square value of 4.712 was obtained in the study at probability level of 0.13, indicating that the result is significant. We then accept the alternate hypothesis which states that Female adults have more negative perception of drug use and abuse than their male counterparts

Another hypothesis tested in the above table states that older adults are more likely to experience negative perception of drug abuse than the younger adults. The hypothesis was tested with chi square (X^2) statistics and a value of 2.257 was obtained in the study at probability level of .045, indicating that the result is significant. We then accept the alternate hypothesis which states that older adults are more likely to have negative perception of drug abuse than the younger adults.

The above table also shows the cross tabulation frequency for testing the hypothesis which stated that educated people have different perception of drug abuse than their uneducated counterparts The study utilized chi square (x^2) statistics in testing the hypothesis where a calculated chi square value of 1.001 was obtained in the study at probability level of .371, indicating that the result is not significant. We then accept the alternate hypothesis which states that educated people have no different perception of drug abuse than their uneducated counterparts

7. Discussion

In this study, Female adults had more negative perceptions of drug use and abuse than their male counterparts. This means that male participants are more likely to have positive perceptions on drug use and abuse than their female counterparts. This finding corroborates with the study carried out by Szuster, et al, (1990) whose report from psychiatric emergency room visits showed that people with a substance-induced disorder were more likely to be males. Men and women differ with regard to patterns of substance use disorders (Geen, 2006). In prior research, women have been found to be consistently less likely to perceive positively the drug use and abuse. For instance, men are more likely than women to use illicit hard drugs and the use of these illicit drugs can lead to hospital

emergencies or deaths for men than women.

People who are naturally different from each other are likely to react differently when it comes to the problem of substance use as a result of gender. Gender roles are culturally defined, in Africa societies where the roles of men and women are usually identified, Gender roles determine how people can see or perceive themselves or the use of drugs and how they relate with each other (Clayton et al, 2014). Gender has received much attention in research and has been found to be a significant determining factor on the perception of drug use and abuse.

The study also showed that older adults were more likely to experience negative perception of drug abuse than the younger adults. Young people are generally known for the abuse of drugs but today evidence has shown that older adults also indulge in drug abuse and is increasing (Beynon, C, McVeigh J, Roe B, (2007). There are two reasons to show why the older people of today are still using drugs; (1) because they did so when younger, and (2) have done little to change their consumption as they have aged. The use of illicit drugs by older adults is not widely recognized but will increase as the general population of many developed countries ages, and drug users continue to use drugs.

The use of drugs by the older adults and young ones is an act that has been considered as a problem by society, because it affects mostly the younger adults. During the adolescence stage, there is usually a high increase in drug use, because of availability of the drugs. In this context, consumption of drugs becomes more enjoyable by the younger adults since they have a positive perception towards it. At this stage, they feel that they are on top of every situation, that nothing will happen and that they have control over the situation. It is a common characteristic among younger adults, which contributes to a reduced risk perception and increases the consumption of drugs.

In this study, it was revealed that educated people have no different perceptions of drug use and abuse than their uneducated counterparts. There is some evidence which indicates that there is no relationship between education level and substance use. However, the controversy surrounding this connection is based on the fact that it fails to recognize other factors which can play a major role in the development of an addiction, such as somebody's socioeconomic status. Probably, there could be a relationship existing between addiction and the level of one's education. No doubt, it may not be always true. When people are educated, they learn skills, tools, and techniques to live their life. Those who have education might have more resources available to them to withstand the challenges that life can sometimes bring

The study, however supported other assertions which state that higher income earners are more likely to abuse drugs than the lower income earners. Higher socio-economic status of family may be associated with drug use and abuse because once there is availability of fund to purchase substances, the users and abusers will not hesitate to do so. On the other hand, lower socio-economic status of family may be related to drugs use as a coping mechanism because of increased stress and less access to alternative activities (Megan, et al, 2012).

8. Implications for Social Work Practice

In order to help control or curb the menace of drug use and abuse, social workers through this research findings, can now better understand the inherent complexities in people perceptions of drug use and abuse and also, the risks inherent in the abuse of drug. The findings will also help social workers to understand that the effect of drug abuse extends beyond the abuser to include the family members, friends, neighbors, community members and the society at large including the reciprocal influences of the individual and socio-economic and other environmental factors. Therefore, interventions should be coordinated in a way that the various affected systems are included for positive outcome. Notwithstanding that the response showed that majority (81%) of the respondents have negative perception of drug abuse, social workers need to engage in public enlightenment as its importance is invaluable.

Further, social workers have a major role to play in the area of counseling. The social workers have to identify the individual's perception of drug abuse, the psychological factors that led the

person to use drugs in the first place, how the use of drug culminated to abuse so that he/she can better help the client in unlearning the behavior, develop better coping mechanisms and increase the client's self-esteem.

Finally, stakeholders in the areas of drug use and abuse should embark on continuous development and implementation of programs and strategies directed towards increasing people's knowledge of the negative effects of drug abuse.

9. Conclusion

There is no doubt that people use drugs for so many reasons. Some use it to cure illness, reduce/relief pains. Others use it for motivation or to display their masculinity. However, the current study sought to explore the perceptions of drug use and abuse among adults in Igbo-Eze North local government area of Enugu state, Nigeria. The study revealed that older adults were more likely to experience negative perceptions of drug abuse than the younger adults. Substance abuse is generally perceived as behavior of the young. The study found out that male adults and higher income earners were more disposed to the use and abuse of drugs in Igbo-Eze LGA. Since drug use and abuse is somehow inevitable to both young and old, they should be encouraged to learn to adjust better to drug use.

10. Recommendations

- The National Association of Social Workers in Nigeria should strive for the professionalization of social work profession so that social workers will be given the appropriate leverage to play their roles in the issue of drug use and abuse.
- Communities and parents should work hand-in-hand towards restoring the social control systems that will create good environment of conformity to the expected behavior by members of the family/communities.
- The government should involve the community services in the fight against illicit drug use and abuse. Through this way, the treatment to drug abusers will be within the community thereby cementing integration and avoiding stigmatization.

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