

THE ANTECEDENT FACTORS PREDISPOSING SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TO DRUG ABUSE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Drug abuse is the use of modifying substances in dosage many times in excess of those used medically and over lengths of time that cause damage to the individuals, society or both. Most of the studies reviewed, showed that secondary school students in Nigeria use drugs. Health educators have no doubt that the use, misuse, and abuse of many drugs by students, can impair their health. These substances not only alter the functioning of the body and mind but affect the other dimensions of health. The educational objective of use of drugs is basically to prevent the development of an actual drug abuse situation. To achieve this objective, it is imperative that the health educator provides the students with accurate information on the drug in question particularly through honest discussion of the dangers of the problem. Therefore, this paper emphasized that the provision of basic knowledge on drug for students can go a long way in preventing students from going into drug abuse. School based health education, can start even in primary schools and be implemented through the joint responsibility of the parents, schools, the community and government.

Drug according to World Health Organization (WHO) (1986) is any substance that when taken in to the living organism, may modify one or more of its functions. The act of taking drugs like any other substance could be abused in so many ways. McGuire and Associates (2004) asserted that drug can be used positively as medicine for the treatment of diseases but the reverse is the case when the change harms or poisons the body.

Who (1988), emphasized that drug abuse is the use of modifying substances in dosage many times in excess of those used medically and over lengths of time, that cause damage to the individuals, society or both. Oduyale (1982), opined that drug abuse may grow out of not following doctor's prescription of drugs which many take on their own due to frustration or problems in their lives. Some also, due to emotional stress take to drugs and end up abusing these to make them forget their problems. On the other hand, some people often abuse drug without knowing the harmful effects of their actions.

Udoh (1982), asserted that the solace found in drugs which often develops to abuse of drugs seems to emanate from an individual's inability to cope with or handle personal problems practically and realistically.

Those who abuse drugs hardly admit to the practice, they always advance several individual or societal reasons to justify their unwarranted actions. As for

the adult addicts, it is already an established habit that is very difficult to stop or correct. One area of utmost concern for the drug habit in Nigeria today lies with the present rate at which adolescents in the secondary schools are involved in the unhealthy habit of using drugs arbitrarily. This is a negative behavior which needs to be corrected at this formative stage in their social and psychological development (Udoh, 1982).

Olu (1987), stated that the predisposing factors fo drug abuse range from living in slum conditions, easy access to drugs, drug peddlers, organized crimes and acute juvenile delinquency. Though, the extent of drug abuse is yet unknown in Nigeria, there is considerable evidence from newspapers and magazines articles that the problem of drug abuse is growing among secondary school students both in the rural and urban areas of Nigeria (Ogundele, 1986; Ogundele, 1987 and Olabisi, 2000).

The current spate of drug abuse particularly among the youths in Nigeria is alarming and should be of concern to every patriotic Nigerian (Ekeh, 1990). Contributing further, Ekeh emphasized that the drug problem has assumed a new dimension in Nigeria, as the drug addicts are mostly youths, particularly secondary school students who indulge in drug abuse for many reasons. This is further supported by Odejide (1990), Ibagebo (1990), who believed that drug abuse had affected the Nigerian students, physically, psychologically, socially and economically. Implications of all these on the lives of our students are too serious to bear. The consequences are usually life threatening. These include brain damage, schizophrenia, delinquency, stealing, assassination, absenteeism, fighting and pre-mature death. The drug problem among secondary school students has some causative factors which influence them to drug abuse. Therefore, health education will be a tool to translate knowledge about health into desirable individuals in order to change their behaviour of drug abuse and enable them to acquire desirable skills to cope or make healthy decisions about their future.

Theoretical Framework to Explain Students' Drug Abuse in Nigeria

Health education theory was applied in explaining students drug abuse and deviant behaviours. Focus was on (Green, Kreuter, partridge & Deeds, 1980). Behavioural Antecedent model also known as the PRECEDE framework, which stands for predisposing, reinforcing and enabling causes in Educational Diagnosis and Evaluation is an approach to planning, that examines the factors which contribute to behavior change of students. These include:

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1. **Predisposing factors:** The individuals' knowledge, attitude, behaviour, beliefs, and values prior to intervention that affect their willingness to change.
2. **Enabling factors:** The structure of the environment or community and an individual's situation that facilitates or present obstacles to change.
3. **Reinforcing factors:** The positive or negative effects of adopting the behavior (including social support) that influence the behaviour as well as the social influence of parents, and other important persons in the individual's life.

These factors require that the individual be considered in the context of their community, and social structures, and not in isolation, when planning communication or health education strategies as will be seen in figure 1. These issues of the types of drugs commonly abused by students, knowledge of the danger of drug abuse and influence of other people on a student's decision to use drugs are some of the problems that the paper addressed.

The abuse of drugs has some adverse health consequences such as destruction of the respiratory system, damages of vital organs of the body and deviant behaviour as well as illness and death. The option available for health education is to prevent the students from drug abuse at the preliminary stage than when they are already addicted to drugs. The possible benefit is a drug-free society and a better future for our youths.

Antecedent Factors

Health-Related Behaviour

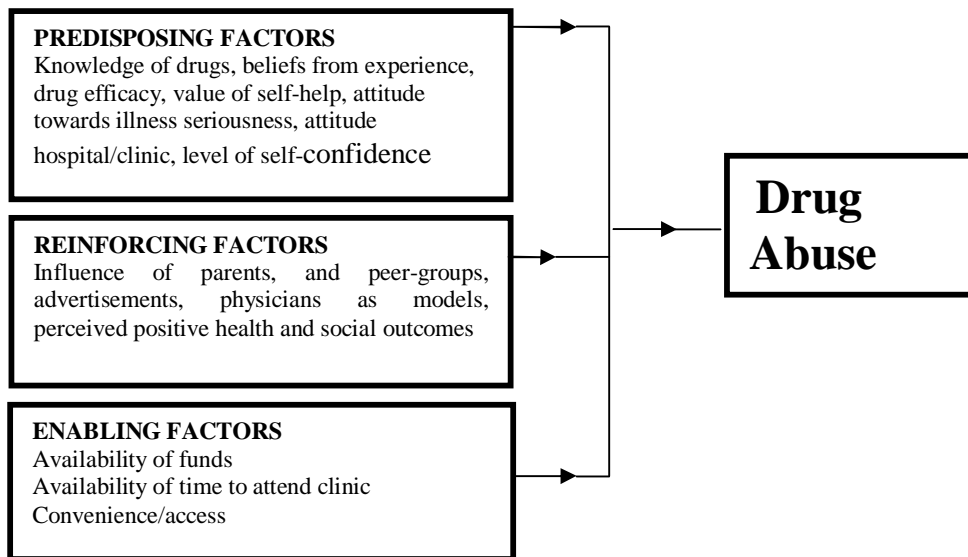


Figure 1: The Precede Framework

Health education is the use of educational processes to translate knowledge about health into desirable individual and community behaviour patterns. Rosenstock (1980), described the process as an educationally oriented approach to planned change that focuses on those behaviours or problems that directly or indirectly affect people's health. Based on these definitions, the implication of drug problem in this paper includes highlighting health education strategies that could increase students knowledge on drug abuse, change their attitude towards drug abuse and enable them to acquire desirable skills to cope or make healthy decisions about their future.

Based on the predisposing factors, communication strategies should be utilized with guidelines that drugs should not be taken without the knowledge of their action. Udoh (1982) suggested that drug education of the public as well as students is an important matter which must be of great concern to the homes, communities, schools, colleges as well as higher educational institutions, the government with their relevant agencies and medical and para-medical personnel. However, students should exercise some measures of restraint, control and possess certain skills and participate in selected aspects of their healthcare through organized health programmes beyond the formal school curriculum for incorporating drug education into the activities of the school.

Drug education is an integral part of preventive phase of a school drug programme. This has been emphasized and advocated by many researchers. Carroll (1989); Asuni, (1991) WHO (2000), Wayne (2002) and Winer, (2005) recommended that drug abuse education should be included in primary and post primary curriculum. Drug education can hopefully reduce the wrong perception of students on drug abuse; the amount of drug misuse can help students to make irresponsible decision regarding their experiments and recreational drug-use (Onohwosafe, Egenegbe & Blinkhorn, 2008). The educational objective of use of drugs is basically to prevent the development of an actual drug abuse situation. To achieve these objectives, it is imperative that the health educator provides the students with accurate information on the drug in question particularly through honest discussion of the dangers of the problem. Drug education must not only be informative, but factual because the facts concerning the effects of drug-abuse are the first steps towards enlightenment and mature behavioural value judgement. Facts and positive motivation are what young people need to help them make a sound decision, should they one day face the temptation of drug abuse (Onohwosafe & Olaseha, 2004).

Drug education is an educational approach designed to make people aware of the constituents of drugs, laws against drug abuse, their usefulness and health risks of drug mis-use and abuse. Through knowledge acquired on drug issues, those who benefit from drug education programmes can be safe from drug

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misuse and abuse (Bradley, 1989). Moronkola (1993) and Odebunmi (1994) remarked that if young people are to develop and maintain the skills needed to confront the temptations and stresses to which they will be exposed, early education is essential, school programmes that provide continuous opportunities for positive experiences, accurate information and a strong sense of self will assist students of all ages in making health decisions about their future.

Oshodi (1981), believed that to curb the wave of alcohol use/misuse, no single measure can be expected to solve the problem of alcoholism but series of coherent measures are needed. This means that health education programming must look at factors other than knowledge and attitudes. In this case, the reinforcing factors point to the need for parental education since children have to depend on the family during the early years of age, as themselves cannot meet their demands of life. Hence to combat problems of drug abuse, preventive programmes should be designed to include the family. The parent-Teacher Association could be a forum to educate family members.

Thus health education strategies aimed at the enabling factors will be more challenging in these times of economic hardship and with a way to improve their health and to reject those which will have adverse effect on their health.

Conclusion

Drug use can become an unhealthy way of relieving stress. When psychological dependence combines with physical dependence, the addict may begin to lose touch with reality. The use of psychoactive drugs can be tremendously disruptive in many peoples lives, from causing tragic deaths to being the reason for the loss of employment opportunities and promoting the deterioration of personal relationships to being the cause of babies born with profound birth defects. It is safe to say that drug use remains a significant problem for both college students and the general population. However, the best way to avoid the immense costs of drug abuse is simply to reduce the demand. We do this by helping students through health education to develop the skills needed to avoid the use of illegal drugs.

Recommendations

1. Drug abuse is a human problem that does not arise only from the individual but can be created by the family, friends and society. To combat it therefore, health education preventive programmes must be designed and implemented among students in Nigerian secondary schools.
2. In Nigeria today, the drug problem is not just legal problems, its implications are general. It involves economic, social, as well as health aspects. The battle against drug use should therefore be fought from all the

five prongs namely: legal, social, and economic and health as well as individual positive change of behaviour.

3. For the problem of drug abuse to be solved, the provision of basic knowledge on drug for students can go a long way in preventing students from going into drug abuse and drug education must begin in the children's early life. School-based health educations that have already started in the primary schools can be extended to tertiary institutions and this can be implemented through the joint responsibility of the parents, schools, and the total community.
4. Drug abuse among secondary school students may be due to imitation and advice received from parents and peer groups. Health education for the family regarding drug abuse is quite necessary. Parents and students can be reached through workshop, class-room teaching, PTA, the clinics the parents attend and the mass media.

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