
**PERCEIVED TENDENCY OF PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCE ABUSE
ON TVET SKILLS ACQUISITION AMONG TECHNICAL COLLEGE
STUDENTS IN AN ERA OF UNCERTAINTY IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Nigeria is passing through an era of uncertainty and the educational programme that has the propensity to alleviate the situation is technical vocational education and training (TVET), unfortunate technical colleges have fallen short of the goals and objectives of establishing them due to the substance abuse epidemic among the youths. The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of psychoactive substance abuse on skills acquisition among students of technical colleges in an era of uncertainty in Nigeria. The method used for this research is a descriptive survey and the instrument used to collate data is a questionnaire titled Psychoactive Substance Abuse Rating Scale (DPSARS). The sample population of 222 respondents were randomly selected from the three technical colleges from the three senatorial districts. Despite strict anti-drug rules on campus, findings reveal that 50.9% said drugs are abused by their colleagues in schools, and 64% of respondents agree that commonly abused psychoactive substances are readily available within their locality. Respondents Agreed that the most substances are: cough syrup, tramadol and alabukkun. Findings reveal that psychoactive substance abuse has negative consequences on students' skill acquisition programmes and the nation's efforts to surmount the present economic challenges. it was recommended that antisubstance abuse programmes should be organised regularly and those already on drugs should be rehabilitated. Furthermore, parents should monitor their children's whereabouts and protect them from social media and peer influence.

Keywords: Psychoactive Substance Abuse, Skills Acquisition, TVET, College Students, Nigeria

Introduction

The use of plants for medicinal and healing purposes has been the practice of the indigenous people in Nigeria from time immemorial. Records from ancient history, have shown that people have been using extracts from fruits, vegetables, seeds, and other plants for food, medicine, and recreational purposes. According to Merlin (2003), there have been traces of archaeological and historical evidence of the cultural use of psychoactive substances (mostly plants) over the past five thousand years. Although one important aspect of a psychoactive substance is its medicinal usage, there are, however, some who have opined that the desire to alter one's consciousness is the main reason people engage in psychoactive substance use.

Psychoactive substances, also known as psychotropic agents (hallucinogens) are substances that can interrupt the normal function of the brain and the mind.

Unfortunately, with the use of substances often comes misuse, a term commonly referred to as substance abuse. Many authors and medical professionals have on many occasions tried to dichotomise between drug and psychoactive substance abuse, while others opined that they are both the same. In this paper, both terms will be sparingly used interchangeably. The New Zealand Government (2013) identifies a psychoactive substance as a substance, mixture, preparation, article, device, or anything capable of inducing a psychoactive effect (by any means) in the person who uses it. Psychoactive substance abuse is characterised by an unstoppable cycle of continuous substance consumption that harms both the individual's physiological or psychological well-being and the society at large. According to the UNODC, (2018) the World Drug Report (WRP) of the same year states that, around 269 million individuals aged 15-64, which is about one in every 19 people in this age group, misuse drugs or psychoactive substances.

Just as it has been reported in other parts of the world, in Nigeria, youths are the main age group involved in drug and psychoactive substance abuse. Alarming media reports suggest that nearly every region of the country is affected by this issue. When highlighting the drug report of Nigeria, UNODC (2018), reports that 14.4% or approximately 14.3 million people aged 15 to 64 have abused drugs or psychoactive substances in the 2017, with the highest prevalence found in the southern political zones of the country. The issue of substance abuse among young people, particularly adolescents, is a significant concern for all Nigerians, including parents, educators, religious organisations, government ministries and agencies, and NGOs. Unless drastic actions are taken, the endemic rate of psychoactive substance abuse among Nigeria's teeming youth has the potential to worsen the current economically deteriorating society thereby plunging the nation further into a deeper abyss of uncharitable uncertainty.

Apart from immediately remediating the socioeconomic consequences of substance abuse among Nigerian youth, there is also the need to provide them with the type of education that would prepare them for the world of work through skills acquisition and capacity building. The Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) recognises Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as the component of the Nigerian education system designed to equip individuals with the skills and competencies essential for self-reliance, economic development, and industrialisation. To achieve the objectives of TVET in Nigeria, technical colleges were established across the nation to provide technical education intending to turn out many skilled craftsmen, technicians, vocational-technical teachers, and other sub-professional personnel to satisfy the manpower needs of Nigeria (Alade, 2015).

However, TVET also has its share of challenges. One of the major challenges facing TVET in Nigeria is negative public perception, Esekheigbe (2019) opined that public perception of vocational and technical education is not encouraging and this is manifested in the low enrolment of students in technical schools due to parents' preference in sending their children/wards to study general science, arts, and humanities. They however often opt to send the children who have difficulty coping with the psychological rigour of conventional secondary school believing TVET is an education of only the hand. Coupled peer pressure, these conditions create tendencies for the students to find ways to cope with such frustrations, unfortunately, psychoactive substances become the way out. The prevalence and causes of drug and substance abuse have become a pressing global concern for governments, international organizations, and institutions.

While numerous studies have identified various factors contributing to the alarming rate of substance abuse, especially among teenagers, Kathleen (2012) suggests that these factors can be categorized as biological, personality, environmental, or a combination of

these. In contrast, Jean (1995) emphasizes the role of societal factors such as reduced family and community cohesion, unemployment, economic marginalization, and increased crime in making drug abuse more prevalent in many societies. Therefore, this study is carried out to investigate ways to mitigate the impact of psychoactive substance abuse on skill acquisition among technical college students.

Research objectives

The specific objective of this study is to investigate:

1. The level of awareness of psychoactive substance abuse within the localities of students of technical colleges in Ogun State
2. Awareness of types of psychoactive substances abused by the students
3. Factors causing psychoactive substance abuse among the students of technical colleges in Ogun State.
4. The influence of drugs and psychoactive substance abuse on the skills acquisition activities of students of technical colleges in Ogun state

Research Questions

The following questions drawn from the study's objective guided the study:

1. What is the level of awareness of psychoactive substance abuse within the localities of the students of technical colleges in Ogun State?
2. What is the level of awareness of types of psychoactive substances abused by the students?
3. What are the Factors causing psychoactive substance abuse among the students of technical colleges in Ogun State?
4. What influence does the abuse of psychoactive substances have on the skills acquisition activities of students of technical colleges in Ogun state?

Methodology

This study is a descriptive survey research design and the study population comprises all technical college students in Ogun state. However, a sample size of 222 students were selected through simple random sampling technique from three technical colleges one of the three senatorial districts of Ogun state was used for the study. A Likert scale research instrument titled Drug and Psychoactive Substance Abuse Rating Scale (DPSARS) was used to collate data. The SPSS statistical analysis application was used to analyse the collated data and the discussions on the findings from the study are as follows:

Discussion of findings

Table 1: *The level of awareness of psychoactive substance abuse within the localities of the students*

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
1	Psychoactive substances are commonly used ONLY during parties, celebrations and festivals in the community	48 (21.8)	51 (23.2)	76 (34.5)	41 (18.6)
2	Psychoactive substances are abused by fellow students within the school	39 (17.7)	73 (33.2)	67 (30.5)	34 (15.5)

3	Various types of drugs or psychoactive substances are readily and easily accessible by young people in their locality	60 (27.3)	82 (37.3)	64 (29.1)	11 (5)
4	The Government is doing nothing to curb the use and abuse of drugs in the community	42 (19.1)	52 (23.6)	76 (34.5)	44 (20)
5	Even religious and community leaders take drugs	51 (23.2)	74 (33.6)	44 (20)	46 (20.9)
6	There are strict rules in my school that prohibit students from taking drugs in the school environment	91 (41.4)	57 (25.9)	50 (22.7)	18 (8.2)
7	Use and abuse of drugs and psychoactive substances can destroy someone's future	133 (60.5)	61 (27.7)	13 (5.9)	10 (4.5)
8	Using Drugs/Psychoactive substances can help somebody to cope with the challenges of life	27 (12.3)	47 (21.4)	75 (34.1)	69 (31.4)
9	Some are abusing the use of drugs/psychoactive substances because they cannot stop even when they try very hard	75 (34.1)	85 (38.6)	44 (20)	12 (5.5)
10	Boys abuse psychoactive substances more than girls in my college	81 (36.8)	81 (36.8)	24 (10.9)	31 (14.1)

Table 1: The study also shows that most respondents (64%) agree that drugs and psychoactive substances are easily accessible in their communities and are frequently used, not just on special occasions. This finding aligns with other research highlighting the widespread issue of drug abuse in Nigerian communities, contributing to the drug abuse epidemic. Similarly, Emmanuel et al. (2017) found in their study of secondary students in Gboko, Benue State, that 44.5% of participants felt that the abuse of drugs and psychoactive substances is driven by their availability.

Table 2: Common types of psychoactive substances abused by the students

SN	Commonly Abused Substances	VC	C	UC	VU
1.	Aerosol	56(25.5)	49(22.3)	78(35.5)	30(13.6)
2.	Beer	126(57.3)	60(27.3)	21(9.5)	7(3.2)
3.	Caffeinated energy drink	118(53.6)	54(24.5)	27(12.3)	11(5)
4.	Cigarette	124(56.4)	51(23.2)	24(10.9)	13(5.9)
5.	Cocaine	91(41.4)	53(24.1)	51(23.2)	17(7.7)
6.	Ecstasy	44(20)	48(21.8)	73(33.2)	42(19.1)
7.	Hallucinogens LSD	62(28.2)	51(23.2)	61(27.7)	39(17.7)
8.	Heroin	78(35.5)	52(23.6)	52(23.6)	30(13.6)
9.	Hot/Gin	130(59.1)	47(21.4)	23(10.5)	11(5)
10.	Inhalant/solvents/	66(30)	63(28.6)	61(27.7)	21(9.5)
11.	Inhalants	77(35)	46(20.9)	63(20.9)	24(10.9)
12.	Local herbal bitter Drinks	120(54.5)	52(23.6)	31(14.1)	11(5)
13.	Marijuana (weed)	108(49.1)	57(25.9)	35(15.9)	13(5.9)
14.	Palm Wine	134(60.9)	57(25.9)	14(6.4)	12(5.5)

15. Petrol	69(31.4)	44(20)	53(24.1)	44(20)
16. Quick Patch solution	65(29.5)	47(21.4)	71(32.3)	28(12.7)
17. Sepe	103(46.8)	67(30.5)	32(14.5)	12(5.5)
18. Suck away fume	58(26.4)	52(23.6)	67(30.5)	33(15)
AVERAGE	41.1%	29.9%	17.4%	15%

Table 2: From the data on common types of psychoactive substances abused by students, it was also revealed that palm wine, beer, and hot/gin were the most commonly available and abused substances, while the least abused psychoactive substances were aerosols, suck-away fumes, and ecstasy.

Table 3: *Factors Influencing Substance Abuse Among the Students.*

S N	ITEMS	Mean	St.D
1	If Drugs or psychoactive substances are readily available & easily accessible within the locality it will influence someone to abuse	3.11	.982
2	Friends and classmates using drugs or psychoactive substances will influence a person to want to use them too	3.01	.919
3	If a parent or any family member is into drugs it will influence a person to also want to try it too	2.94	.956
4	Watching music and movies celebrates using drugs/psychoactive substances on-screen motivate one to also use them	2.61	1.012
5	Taking drugs or psychoactive substances will help a person cope with the stress of academic activities in school	2.29	1.113
6	Drug or psychoactive substance abuse helps someone cope with life's problems.	2.25	1.095
7	The belief that when a student takes a drug or psychoactive substance, his/her classmate will love them more	2.18	1.156
8	Family socioeconomic status influences students to abuse drugs or psychoactive substances	2.67	1.035
9	Lack of parental guidance is one-factor leading people to abuse drugs and psychoactive substance	2.97	.967
10	Lack of Government commitment to the fight against drug and substance abuse is responsible for the high rate of drug abuse among young people	2.85	1.051
11	The belief that drugs and psychoactive substances can make a person feel good about him/herself influences their use and abuse	2.50	1.096

Table 3: indicates that respondents believe the availability and accessibility of drugs or psychoactive substances in a locality can lead to abuse ($\bar{x} = 3.11$; St.D= .982). They also agree that friends and classmates who abuse these substances can influence others to do the same ($\bar{x} = 3.01$; St.D= .919). Additionally, they agree that if a parent or family member uses drugs, it can encourage others in the family to try them ($\bar{x} = 2.94$; St.D= .956). Watching celebrities use drugs in music and movies also motivates some to abuse them ($\bar{x} = 2.61$; St.D= 1.012). However, respondents do not believe that taking drugs or psychoactive

substances helps them cope with academic stress ($\bar{x} = 2.29$; St.D= 1.113). They agree that family socioeconomic status influences drug abuse among students ($\bar{x} = 2.67$; St.D= 1.035) and that a lack of parental guidance is a factor in substance abuse ($\bar{x} = 2.97$; St.D= .967). They also think that insufficient government commitment to combating drug abuse contributes to its prevalence among young people ($\bar{x} = 2.85$; St.D= 1.051). Lastly, they agree that the belief that drug use can improve self-esteem influences its abuse ($\bar{x} = 2.50$; St.D= 1.096).

Table 4: Influence of Drug and Psychoactive Abuse on Students' Skills Acquisition

S/N	ITEMS	MSt.D	
1	Taking psychoactive substances can help a student prepare very well for all practical activities	1.57	.626
2	Using and abusing substances enables one to be well organized during a skills development practical session	1.67	.758
3	Substance abuse helps one to cope with the frustration that one may be experiencing during practical class	1.80	.714
4	Substance abuse helps one to develop better thinking skills required for solving problems during a practical session	1.53	.571
5	Taking psychoactive substances before a practical session can energize a person to cope with the intense stress associated with the physical activities of skills acquisition	2.63	1.025
6	psychoactive substance abuse enables one to strictly follow instructions laid down for workshop practice	1.83	.699
7	When students take psychoactive substances, it will enable them to obey safety rules and regulations in the workshop	1.63	.718
8	Students who abuse substances attend practical sessions promptly and regularly	1.73	.583
9	Students who abuse drugs perform better in their trade test	1.67	.711
10	Drug and substance abuse help one to master all the skills learned in a practical class	1.50	.630

Table 4: reveals that respondents disagreed with the notion that taking drugs or psychoactive substances aids in adequately preparing for practical classes (1.57; St.D=.626). They also disagreed that drug and substance abuse helps one stay organized during skills development sessions (1.67; St.D=.758). The sampled students did not agree that drug or substance abuse assists in coping with frustration during practical classes (1.80; St.D=.714). Additionally, respondents did not believe that drug abuse enhances the thinking skills necessary for problemsolving in practical sessions (1.53; St.D=.571). However, they agreed that taking drugs or psychoactive substances before a practical session can energize a person to handle the intense stress of physical activities involved in skills acquisition (2.63; St.D=1.025). The respondents rejected the idea that drug or substance abuse helps one strictly follow workshop practice instructions (1.83; St.D=.699). They also disagreed with the statement that taking drugs or psychoactive substances enables adherence to safety rules and regulations in the workshop (1.63; St.D=.718). Furthermore, they did not believe that students who abuse drugs attend practical sessions promptly and regularly (1.73; St.D=.583). The respondents did not accept that students who abuse drugs perform better in their trade tests (1.67; St.D=.711), and they did not agree that drug and substance abuse helps one master all the skills learned in practical classes (1.50; St.D=.630).

Conclusion

Nigeria is passing through an era of uncertainty, and many are looking up to TVET as a programme that could rescue the nation and place it on the path of economic growth and prosperity unfortunately many technical colleges are plagued by an epidemic of substance abuse. The result of this study highlights how drug and substance abuse can hinder the goal of TVET, which is to train skilled workers for Nigeria. Skills development requires discipline, focus, attention, and critical thinking, all of which can be negatively affected by drug use. Technical college students often face high-stress levels from academic work and skills training, and some may turn to drugs as a way to cope or perform better. This can lead to addiction and mental health problems.

Recommendation

Given the findings of this study the following recommendations are given to serve as reliable ways to mitigate the impact of substance abuse among TVET students in technical colleges:

- i. Parents/guardians should spend enough time with their wards. They should monitor their movements, the associations they keep and how they spend their free time. They should serve as a living example of abstinence from drug use.
- ii. Rules prohibiting drug use within the school premises should be strictly upheld. School administration and counselling units should from time to time continue to organize programs, symposiums, debates and any other co-curricular programmes that will help in further discouraging the use or abuse of drugs among technical colleges.
- iii. Since a large number of drug abusers are young people from various localities where the technical schools are situated, to protect the students of these technical colleges, the Government at all levels needs to do more than lip service in the fight against drug and psychoactive substance abuse. Mass media sensitization, community-to-community awareness, symposiums for youth, help centres, and community counselling. Sales of psychoactive sales should be strictly regulated and defaulters prosecuted.
- iv. Universities and colleges where teachers are trained should have a course on drug prevention education, prevention and counselling techniques. This will equip teachers, educational administrators and school counsellors with modern and scientific ways of providing drug education, prevention and assistance techniques
- v. Non-governmental organisations, private sector and philanthropic bodies should partner with the government especially the local government which is the closest to the people, and community leaders, associations, and schools to organise orientations, sensitisation programmes, youth-centred events and intervention for youth battling drug addiction and those displaced due to drug-related situations.

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