

Health Awareness on Causes and Prevention of Drug Addiction for Biology

Students in Tertiary Institution in Nigeria

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Abstract

It was observed that drug addiction has gone a long way to create several health problems and dangers in our societies., also students in Nigeria like many other countries of the world are developing addiction to psychoactive substances. This paper tends to create health awareness on causes and prevention of drug addiction for Biology Students in Tertiary Institution in Nigeria. The Presentation involved the conceptual framework which includes meaning of drug, concept of drug addiction, classification/ kinds of drug addiction, factors that increase the risk of addiction, symptoms of drug addiction, causes of drug addiction, effects /consequences of drug addiction, prevention of drug addiction. While the theoretical framework includes: theory of addiction, self-esteem theory, Psychosocial Theory, an ego/self-theory of substance dependence, somatosensory affectional deprivation (SAD) Theory of Drug Bad-habit theory, educational implication of drug addiction. Several recommendations were made among which are Parent should educate their children on effects of drug addiction on their health, society and human dignity, tertiary institution management, including the school counsellor should be involved in awareness programme that will prevent drug addiction in school, also government should set up rehabilitation centers to aid victims of drug addiction.

Keywords: health awareness, causes and prevention, drug addiction.

Introduction

A drug refers to a substance that could bring about a change in the biological function through its chemical actions It is also considered as a substance that modifies perceptions, cognition, mood, behavior and general body functions. This could thus be considered as chemical modifies of the

living tissues that could bring about psychological and behavioral changes. A drug is a chemical substance capable of altering the physical and psychological function of the body. It is any substance used as a medicine or used in making medicines for internal or external use, altering the body's actions. It is also a chemical substance used in the treatment, cure, prevention or diagnosis of disease or used to otherwise enhance physical or mental wellbeing.

Drug addiction as defined in Davison and Neal in Amao-Kehinde (2008) refers to physiological process by which the body responds to certain drugs. It is therefore the continuous use of drugs, which produce psychological and physiological habit formation in the process by which it responds to body mechanism. A drug is a chemical substance capable of altering the physical and psychological function of the body. It is any substance used as a medicine or used in making medicines for internal or external use, altering the body's actions. It is also a chemical substance used in the treatment, cure, prevention or diagnosis of disease or used to otherwise enhance physical or mental wellbeing. The students in Nigeria like many other countries of the world are developing addiction to psychoactive substances. In 2012, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) collected drugs use and abuse data from schools, records of patients admitted at mental health institutions for drug related problems and interview of persons arrested for drug offenses. The result showed that students constitute the high-risk group for drug trafficking and abuse. Friends and school mates account for about 90% of the source of influence of the use and abuse of various psychoactive substances. In Nigeria, alcohol and cigarette are legal but these substances have also said to be "gateway drugs" to other more potent drugs like heroin and cocaine. Drug addiction has gone a long way to create several health problems and dangers in our societies. Such health problems include mental illness, cancer of the lungs, school drop-outs, and juvenile delinquency.

Objective

The Objective of this paper is specifically to create health awareness on causes and prevention of drug addiction for Biology Students in Tertiary Institution in Nigeria.

Concept of Drug Addiction

Drug addiction is defined as a chronic, relapsing brain disease that is characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences. It is considered a brain disease because drugs

change the brain, it changes the structure and how it works. These brain changes can be long-lasting and can lead to the harmful behavior seen in people who abuse drugs (Volkow, 2013).

“Drug addiction” is the continuous uncontrolled, compulsive use of a drug not only to include intoxication but also to avoid the tortures of withdrawal. Despite the unrelenting effort of individuals, agencies, mass media and the government at different levels against drug addiction, the prevalent practice among post-primary school students, tertiary institutions, teenagers and even adults in the community have not decreased but rather continued to increase geometrically. Drug addiction (also called substance use disorder) is a brain disease. The addict becomes dependent on the drug. The addict becomes dependent on the drug. The addict uses it, despite having full knowledge of its harmful effect on health. The young generation, particularly teenagers are the most victims of evils of drug addiction. (Nnachi, 2007)

Causes/ Reasons for Drug Abuse

The major causes/ reasons for abuse of drugs by our undergraduates may include the following amongst others:

- (1) **Peer Group Influence:** The peer group is second only to the parents in socializing the child. Parents and peer group seem to extent almost equal importance by the time children are well grown up into adolescence. Thus, the peer group provides the providing child with a broad range of behaviors and cultural and sub-cultural values
- (2) **The Need to Feel High:** University undergraduate in Nigeria especially in Calabar abuse drugs or alter the way they feel “to feel happier or better, to avoid pains stress or frustration”. They want to forget or to remember, to be accepted or be sociable sometimes to escape from burden or just to satisfy curiosity. However, in the long run, people who abuse drugs in the hope of solving one problem or the other run the risk of getting trapped in a spiral of increasing drug use that created new problems and finally leads to drugs dependence which worsens already worse situation.
- (3) **Social Structural Influence:** The particular factor is associated with relentless harshness of life. In this case, life itself is one big hell of hand ball to kick. Academic frustration, rivalry, poverty, family problem, inherent physical deformities, widening gap between the rich and the poor make life one long stretch of mental future.

Hence, to summon up courage to face such situations and the task ahead. “University undergraduates find solutions in smoking, drinking, drug taking of all sorts on the firm conviction that these drugs provide euphoria release, great spur and a monetary escape from reality because of this, taking drugs becomes a habit to face life.

(4) **The Craze for Easy Wealth:** Another reason often cited for undergraduates’ indulgence in drug abuse is that drug abuse/trafficking is a quick and easy way to make money. Trafficking of drugs has become a multi-millionaire business.

(5) **The Mass Media:** Evidence abounds that children, youths and undergraduates who watch a lot of television programme learn to rely on stereotypes of the various groups presented by the media. These children then transfer what they have learned from television to real life situations. This, if the stereotype was presented and always watched by a child favors drugs taking the child will imbibe the culture of drug taking.

(6) **Personality Factors:** Finally, it appears that personality factor is another main factor responsible for the canker worm on Nigeria society. In this aspect, it is connected with distinctive personality traits associated with drug abuse. The “independent personality” is a major element in profiles of drug addicts, a drug abuser, that is a drug dependent person, has difficulty handling frustration, anxiety and depression.

Types of Drugs Abused in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the most common types of abused drugs according to NAFDAC (2000) as cited by Haladu (2003) are categorized as follows:

1. **Stimulants:** These are substances that directly act and stimulate the central nervous system. Users at the initial stage experience pleasant effects such as energy increase. The major source of these comes from caffeine substance.
2. **Hallucinogens:** These are drugs that alter the sensory processing unit in the brain. Thus, producing distorted perception, feeling of anxiety and euphoria, sadness and inner joy, they normally come from marijuana, LSD etc.
3. **Narcotics:** These drugs relieve pains, induce sleeping and they are addictive. They are found in heroin, codeine, opium etc.

4. **Sedative:** These drugs are among the most widely used and abused. This is largely due to the belief that they relieve stress and anxiety, and some of them induce sleep, ease tension, cause relaxation or help users to forget their problems.

5. **Miscellaneous:** This is a group of volatile solvents or inhalants that provide euphoria, emotional disinhibition and perpetual distortion of thought to the user. The main sources are glues, spot removers, tube repair, perfumes, chemicals etc.

6. **Tranquilizers:** They are believed to produce calmness without bringing drowsiness, they are chiefly derived from Librium, Valium

Factors that Increase the Risk of Addiction

Volokow, (2013) identified some factors that increase the risk of addiction to drugs. They include the following:

1. **Home and Family:** The influence of the home environment, especially during childhood, is a very important factor. Parents or older family members who abuse alcohol or drugs, or who engage in criminal behavior, can increase children's risks of developing their own drug problems.

2. **Peer and School:** Friends and acquaintances can have an increasingly strong influence during adolescence. Drug-using peers can sway even those without risk, factors to try drugs for the first time. Academic failure or poor social skills can put a child at further risk for using or becoming addicted to drugs.

3. **Biological Factors:** Scientists estimate that genetic factors account for between 40 and 60 percent of a person's vulnerability to addiction, this includes the effects of environmental factors on the function and expression of a person's genes. A person's stage of development and other medical conditions they may have been also factors. Adolescents and people with mental disorders are at greater risk of drug abuse and addiction than the general population

Other Factors that Increase the Risk of Addiction

1. **Early Use:** Although taking drugs at any age can lead to addiction, research shows that the earlier a person begins to use drugs, the more likely he or she is to develop serious problems. This may reflect the harmful effect that drugs can have on the developing brain; it also may result from a mix of early social and biological vulnerability factors, including unstable family relationships, exposure to physical or sexual abuse, genetic susceptibility, or mental illness. Still, the fact remains that early use is a strong indicator of problems ahead, including addiction.

2. Method of Administration: Smoking a drug or injecting it into a vein increases its addictive potential. Both smoked and injected drugs enter the brain within seconds, producing a powerful rush of pleasure. However, this intense “high” can fade within a few minutes, taking the abuser down to lower, more normal levels. Scientists believe this starkly felt contrast drives some people to repeated drug taking in an attempt to recapture the fleeting pleasurable state.

Physical and Behavioral Indicators of Drug Addiction

There is no single indicator for a diagnosis of alcohol or drug addiction. If an indicator is present, then others are usually present also.

Personal

- Deteriorating personal hygiene
- Multiple physical complaints
- Accidents
- Personality and behavior changes
- Many medication prescriptions for self and/or family members
- Emotional or mental crises
- Deceit, lying, or denial
- Using behaviors excused by family and friends

Home and Family

- Drinking or using activities are a priority
- Emotional outbursts, arguments or violence
- Hiding use of alcohol or drugs
- Fragmentation of family and eventual withdrawal from family
- Neglect or abuse of children
- Abnormal, illegal, or anti-social actions of impacted children
- sexual problems or misbehavior
- Unexplained absence from home
- Extramarital affairs
- Separation or divorce
- Observable decline in physical or emotional health

Medical / Physical

- Atypical weight changes
- Pupils either dilated or constricted, face flushed or bloated
- Drug seeking behaviors, such as seeking medical treatment for migraines, back or other pains or illnesses.
- Emergency-room treatments: overdose, cellulitis, gastrointestinal problems, systematic infections, unexplained injuries and accidents.
- Inability to mentally focus and keep track of a conversation
- Shakiness, tremors or hands, agitation
- Slurred speech
- Unsteady gait, falls
- Runny nose and constant sniffing
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- Isolation from normal social relationships

Friends and Community

- Embarrassing social behavior
- Driving while intoxicated or drug impaired
- Alcohol/drug related legal problems
- Neglect of social commitments
- Unpredictable behavior, such as impulsive spending or missing dates with friends
- Workable behavior

Office/ Health Care Practice Setting

- Disorganized schedule
- Unreasonable workplace behavior
- Inaccessibility to patients and staff
- Frequent trips to the bathroom or other unexplained absence
- Decreased workload or workload intolerance
- Excessive drug prescriptions and supplies
- Excessive ordering of drug supplies
- Frequent complaints by patients or clients regarding the professional's behavior, such as professional manners or treatment disputes

- Prolonged Breaks from work station or work setting
- Frequent absence or illness
- Sporadic punctuality
- Unsatisfactory documentation performance
- Withdrawal from professional committees or organizations
- Defensive if questioned or confronted
- Less creativity, coasting on reputation from previous work
- Questionable practice judgment
- Short absence from the work setting followed by inadequate or elaborate explanations
- Alcohol on breath with attempts to cover with mints or mouthwash
- Observed occurrences of intoxication, drowsiness, or hypersensitivity during work hours
- Deadline barely met or missed altogether
- Increased interest in patient pain control
- Patient complaints of ineffective pain medications
- Frequent incorrect medication or narcotics count
- Appearing at the workplace on days off
- Frequent job changes or relocations

Other Professional Problems

- Unusual medical history
- Vague letters of reference
- Inappropriate or inadequate qualifications
- Deterioration of professional reputation
- Increasing malpractice claims
- Licensures issues

How Drug Addiction Can Develop

There is a fine line between regular use and drug abuse and addiction. Very few addicts are able to recognize when they have crossed that line. While frequently or the number of drugs consumed do not necessarily constitute drug abuse or addiction, they can often be indicators of drug-related problems

- **Drug Abuse may Start as a way to Socially Connect:** Commonly, people try drugs for the first time in social situations with friends and acquaintances. A strong desire to fit into the group can make it feel like doing the drugs with them is the only option.
- **Problems can Sometimes Sneak up on you,** as your drug use gradually increases over time. Smoking a joint with friends over the weekend, or taking ecstasy at a rave, or cocaine at an occasional party, for example, can change from using drug's couple of days a week to using them every day. Gradually, getting and using the drug becomes more and more important to you.
- **If the Drug Fulfills a Valuable Need,** you may find yourself increasingly relying on it. You may take drugs to calm or energize yourself, or make you more confident. You may start using prescription drugs to cope with panic attacks or relieve chronic pain. Until you find alternative, healthier methods for overcoming these problems, your drug use will likely continue. If you are using drugs to fill a void in your life, you're more at risk of crossing the line from casual use to drug abuse and addiction.
- **As Drug Abuse takes hold,** you may miss or frequently be late for work or school, your job performance may progressively deteriorate, and you may start to neglect social or family responsibilities. Your ability to stop using is eventually compromised. What began as voluntary choice has turned into a physical and psychological need.
- **Eventually Drug Abuse Can Consume** your life, stopping social and intellectual development. This only reinforces the feelings of isolation that led to the drug use in the first place.

Signs and Symptoms of Drug Addiction

Although different drugs have different physical effects, the symptoms of addiction are similar. If you recognize yourself in the following signs and symptoms of substance addiction, consider talking to someone about your drug addiction. (Eze et al, 2000).

Symptoms of Drug Addiction

Scholars identified the following signs and symptoms of people who abuse drugs:

1. **Seduction:** Addicts prefer being secluded or in a company of friends. They prefer the privacy of their inner rooms uncompleted buildings or secluded places.
2. **Drowsiness:** Addicts feel drowsy always. Parents are therefore advised to constantly check on their children adolescents. If they display this characteristic.

3. **Constant feeling of apparent intoxication.** The third characteristic symptom is apparent intoxication without evidence of alcohol in a person but with reddish eyeball.
4. **Loss of appetite, weight and sudden change in mood:** when there is sudden loss of appetites, weight and mood without any disease symptoms is indication of addiction.
5. **Loss of interest in the opposite sex:** sudden loss of interest in the opposite sex is another symptom of addiction but before suspicion is made, careful observation must be made on the behavioral and physical changes of the individual.
6. **Poor personal cleanliness in appearance:** Addicts exhibits poor personal hygiene and careless appearance.
7. **Inability to regulate sleeping hours:** Addicts are unable to regulate their sleeping and prefer sleeping in the day while staying up at night

Theory of Addiction

Theoretical Framework

Different theories and proposals have been put forward by psychologist scientist to explain drug addiction These theories include:

i. Theory of Addiction

Addiction to a given drug is not constant from culture to culture. For example, debilitating alcoholism is almost unknown in certain rural Mediterranean societies The evidence is that a culture's attitudes toward a drug influence whether or not the drug will be abused. In particular, societies which have high alcoholism rates are those in which a premium is placed on power but in which its intoxication leads to fantasias of personal domination over other people. Behaviors which occur in line with this drinking are fighting, crime, reckless driving and other aggressive and antisocial acts. (Odejide,2002).

ii. Self Esteem Theory

Low self-esteem provide the basis for continuation of drug use since such use could be a coping mechanism for the inferiority, feelings marked by inadequate interpersonal relations are prime targets because they use drugs as a way of relating to each other, drugs are the bond for camaraderie, the cultural item around which the group revolves in this instance, the behavior defeats the very purpose for which it was intended because their already, fragile contact with reality will further impaired by the drug. Drug could move quickly, towards drug abuse and addicted

iii. Bad-habit theory of drug abuse

The drive behind continued heavy, destructive use of a substance results from the “addictive cycle” in which the individual is constantly seeking to relieve aversive effects from the substance rather than to reproduce initial positive reinforcing effects. In fact, continued use may be motivated by a need to do both “feel good and stop from feeling bad. The essential point is that continued abuse of a drug producing harmful effects suggest “addiction” and one theory of addiction is that the person uses the drug more to relieve bad feelings from the drug than to achieve food. In other words, during the period of drug use and for a time afterwards, the abuser is experiencing a series of mini-hangovers and what drives the use to destructive levels is the repeated attempt to relieve sub-clinical withdrawal symptoms (Thomas, 2003).

iv. An ego/self theory of substance dependence

Drug dependence is tied intimately to an individual’s attempt to cope with his or her internal emotional and external social and physical environment viewed from a contemporary psychoanalytic perspective, drug dependency can best be understood by examining how such a person’s ego organization and sense of self service or fail the individual’s attempts to cope and how the specific effects of various substances facilitate or impede such attempts. Although, early psychoanalytic investigators appreciated the presence of underlying depression tension and distress in addicts, most of the early psychoanalytic formulations of substance dependence emphasized the instructive, pleasure aspects of drug use to explain the complying nature of addiction. More recent psychoanalytic formulations have placed greater emphasis on problems in adaptation ego and self disturbances and related psychopathology as etiological factors in drug dependence (Borrifica, 2006).

v. Psychosocial Theory of Drug Abuse

Psychosocial theory has increasingly tended to reduce emotional illness to the consequences of social factors such as poverty, sex and race. In the case of drug problem social variables ranging from sexual activity to association with friends who use drugs have been shown to be related to drug use

Why do some people become addicted while others do not

No single factor can be predicted whether or not a person will become addicted to drugs. Risk for addiction is influenced by a person's biology, social environment, and age or stage of development. The more risk factors and individual has, the greater the chance that taking drugs can lead to addiction. For example:

- i. **Biology:** The genes that people are born within combination with environmental influences account for about half of their addiction vulnerability. Additional, gender, ethnicity and the presence of other mental disorders may influence risk for drug abuse and addiction.
- ii. **Environment:** A person's environment includes many different influences from family and friends to socio-economic status and quality of life in general. Factors such as peer pressure, physical and sexual abuse, stress and parental involvement can greatly influence the course of drug abuse and addiction in a person's life to affect addiction vulnerability, and adolescents experience a double challenge. Although taking drugs at any age can lead to addiction, the earlier than drug use begins, the more likely it is progress to more serious abuse.

Prevention is the key

Drug addiction is a preventable disease. Results from National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA, 2003) funded research have shown that prevention programs that involve the family, school, communities and the media are effective in reducing drug abuse trends, when youths perceive drug abuse as harmful, they reduce their drug taking. It is necessary therefore, to help youth and general public to understand the risks of drug abuse and for teachers, parents and health care professionals to keep sending the message that drug addiction can be prevented if a person never abuses drugs.

According to Ivowi (2010) in order to prevent drug addiction among students in any tertiary institution of learning: the student, parent and society must contribute their quota by laying their following roles:

- **Student role:** The student should say no to negative influence and self-esteem, choose friends wisely and introduce to their parent, avoid watching bad films and reading bad novel.
- **Parental role:** Parent should establish and maintain good communication with their children, be a role model to their children and spend time with their children.

- Societal role: Government, schools and NGO should provide counseling service, structured and educative leisure programmers for the youth establishment, anti-drug abuse group in schools and proper enforcement of drug laws.

In conclusion, drug addiction constitutes one of the major social problems in Nigeria because of the hazardous effect on the health of people and also psychologically, physically, socially, educationally etc. The problem appears to be endemic in Nigeria society to the extent that scholars, professionals, social workers, academicians, psychologists, sociologist have been trying to find solutions to the problem. Drug addiction is a social problem basically associated with young people. These young people involve themselves in taking hard drugs and excessive taking of some drugs which may alter the body system or may cause damage to the health. (Odejide, 2002)

Recommendation

Based on the finding the following listed below are recommended suggested to proffered a solution to curb drug addiction among tertiary institution students in Nigeria.

- Parent should give educate their children on effects of drug addiction on their health, society and human dignity, since charity, they say begins at home.
- The Ministry of Education (Federal and State) should ensure the teaching of drug related issue should be introduced in the curriculum in order to educate the students on the adverse effect of drug addiction
- Tertiary institution management, including the school counsellor should be involved in awareness programme that will prevent drug addiction in school
- Also, the media should create awareness through film shows for the Nigerian youth on the adverse effects of drug addiction.
- National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) must also intensify their anti-drug campaigns in order to have a drug free society with special focus on the Nigerian youths because they are the future leaders of this great country even beyond African countries.
- Government should set up rehabilitation centers to aid victims of drug addiction.
- The Non –Governmental Organization should also support in creating health awareness on danger of drug addiction
- Churches and mosques should be involved in educating people on the effects of drug addiction

- The health sector should also play a vital role to educate the youth on effects of drug addiction through seminar, workshop or conference on health programme.

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