



Prevalence of Substance Abuse Among Adolescents During The Covid-19 Schools Closure In Sokoto State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, the COVID-19 pandemic led to the total shutdown of all educational institutions in the country. This resulted to children having more unutilized time available for recreation, sundry activities and in some instances substance abuse. This study therefore sought to identify the type of substances abused by adolescents before and during the COVID-19 schools closure in Sokoto State. A null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the prevalence of substance abuse by adolescents between the period before the COVID-19 schools closure and the period during the closure in Sokoto State was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Cluster random sampling was used to select 80 adolescents across Sokoto State while purposive sampling was used to select five psychologists, five medical doctors and five pharmaceutical drug vendors in the State. Adolescent's Substance Abuse Questionnaire (ASAQ) was used to collect data from the adolescents. Findings from this study reveals that the substances abused by the adolescents were expectorants, tranquilizers, pain killers, marijuana, tobacco, glue, wine, and local alcohol. T-test analysis showed that there is a significant difference in the prevalence of substance abuse by adolescents between the period before the COVID-19 schools closure and the period during the closure in Sokoto State. The study finally recommends that law banning sell of controlled drugs without doctor's prescription should be enforced to the letters and Parents/guardians should properly monitor every activity of their ward.

Keywords: substance abuse, adolescents, and covid-19

INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 happens to be unique in the history of the world. This is because it is the period at which Novel Corona Virus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic spread across the width and breadth of the entire earth. The virus originated from Wuhan, China. It spread fast because of the simplistic method by which it is transmitted between humans. As at April 2020, over 2.1 million infected people including more than 139,000 casualties were recorded in the world (World Health Organisation, 2020). In an effort to curtail the spread of the deadly virus and flatten its curve, the Nigerian government (like many other governments across the world) enforced a lockdown that closes many sectors including all educational institutions. Students in secondary schools stayed at home for at least five months (March-August 2020) when students at exit classes were allowed to resume back to school for their final exams (Federal Ministry of Education, 2020).

This prolonged idle stay at home without attending school has proved to be very effective in reducing to minimal the number of children and adolescents that were infected by COVID-19 (UNESCO, 2020). But then, the stays have also exposed adolescents to a number of behaviours that previously they had no time for. Preliminary investigations by the researchers revealed that before the COVID-19 schools closure, in a typical Sokoto home, the daily routine of a school child usually has less than 4 hours of free-time daily. The child wakes at 5:30am, prays, bath, eat and prepare for school. The child remains at school between 7:30am – 2:00 pm. Between 2:00pm – 4:00pm, the child returns home from school, prays, eat, perform domestic chores and again prepare for Islamic school. Between 4:00pm – 6:30pm, the children attend Islamic school where he also performs late afternoon prayer. Upon returning home, the children perform two evening prayers and eat between 7:00pm – 8:30pm and at the end are expected to retire to bed at most by 10:00 pm. This altogether lives the child with very little free time that could be used for unruly behaviours.

However, when the COVID-19 schools closure was done, the children and adolescents had ample time for frivolities because the primary, secondary and Islamiyya schools were closed. Of course there are a lot of other students who used the period to review their schools work and even at some point read ahead, there were also parents who opted to hire private tutors to teach their children at home. Nonetheless, during interviews by the researcher with some pharmaceutical retailers in Sokoto metropolis, they assert that there is a difference in the number of adolescents purchasing abused drugs within the period under review; an indication of a possible substance abuse by the adolescents. Within the context of this study, substance abuse is the inappropriate (unprescribed) use of drugs and other chemicals which are none drugs that causes adverse psychological and physiological effects to an individual.

It is true that adolescence period is associated with more active endocrine systems which can affect the adolescent's behaviour (Feldman, 2011), for example, becoming more prone to risky activities such as substance use. But when this increased activity is shrouded with sufficient cognitive or physical activities, the tendency of the adolescents being engrossed in such risky behaviours becomes diminished.

While the government and medical professionals battle to keep the populace safe from COVID-19, it is also important that parent and other caregivers keep an eye on their children to ensure that the children are not only free from the pandemic but also free from other social vices such as substance abuse that usually comes up when children are having more free and under-utilised time. This study therefore sought to determine the prevalence of substance abuse among adolescents within Sokoto metropolis vis-à-vis before and during the COVID-19 schools closure.

Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of this study were to determine the prevalence of substance abuse among adolescents during the covid-19 schools closure in Sokoto State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study is designed to:

- i. Identify the type of substance abused by adolescents before and during the COVID-19 schools closure in Sokoto State.

- ii. Determine if there is any difference in the prevalence of substance abuse by adolescents between the period before the COVID-19 schools closure and the period during the closure in Sokoto State.

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the prevalence of substance abuse by adolescents between the period before the COVID-19 schools closure and the period during the closure in Sokoto State.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey design was used in this study. The design allows for collection of data from representative samples and the generalization of findings to the entire population (David, 2009). Cluster random sampling was used to select 80 adolescents across Sokoto State while purposive sampling was used to select five psychologists, five medical doctors and five pharmaceutical drug vendors in the State. Adolescent's Substance Abuse Questionnaire (ASAQ) was used to collect data from the adolescents while interviews were conducted with the psychologists, medical doctors, and pharmaceutical drug vendors. Quantitative data was analyzed using the mean while interview findings were used to corroborate the results of the quantitative analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Type of Substances Abused by Adolescents before and during the COVID-19 Schools Closure in Sokoto Metropolis

Respondents in this study indicated that the substances abused by the adolescents in Sokoto State before the COVID-19 schools closure are the same as those abused by them during the closure. These substances have been categorized into two. viz; pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical substances. The Pharmaceutical substances include; Expectorants (Codeine, Tutolein, Bennylein), Tranquilizers (Exol, Roci), and Pain Killers (Tramadol, Pentazocine) while the non-pharmaceuticals include (Marijuana, Tobacco, Glue, Wine, and Local Alcohol). None of the respondents indicate that there is any use of cocaine or heroin. The none usage of these substances could be attributed to their very high cost for which the adolescents in Sokoto State cannot afford. This is contrary to the other drugs that are available at cheaper rate in almost every pharmacy, chemist or drug vendor shop in the state. Similarly, only 17% of the respondents are involved in the use local alcohol (Burukutu). One of the respondents said;

“...actually burukutu is very pleasing and tend to take a person so high that he forget even his name, but the problem is that it is not readily available in Sokoto. You can only get it in two places. First at Mamy Market (Army Barrack) and at another place that I will not tell you. The cost of transportation from town to the barrack and that sometimes those soldiers can bully a lot makes burukutu less popular among the adolescents.”

Hypothesis Testing

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the prevalence of substance abuse by adolescents between the period before the COVID-19 schools closure and the period during the closure in Sokoto State.

The hypothesis was tested by subjecting the scores of the respondents to a t-test paired samples analysis. Paired samples t-test is used to compare the mean score of a measure of variable pairs (David, 2009). In the current study, the pair of scores analysed are the measure of substance abuse before the COVID-19 schools closure and the measure of substance abuse during the COVID-19 schools closure for the same group of respondents. The findings were as indicated in table 1.

Table 1: Paired Sample t-test for Adolescents’ Substance Abuse Measure before the COVID-19 schools closure and during the COVID-19 schools in Sokoto State

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t-cal	t-crit	Sig. (2 tailed)
Before the schools closure	80	32.22	6.04	158	5.35*	1.98*	.000*
During the schools closure	80	38.24	8.22				

*Significance level =0.05

Result of the analysis in table 1 indicate that the t-calculated (5.35) for the paired sample t-test was higher than the t-critical value (1.98). Hence, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the prevalence of substance abuse by adolescents between the period before the COVID-19 schools closure and the period during the closure in Sokoto State is hereby rejected. This implies that there is significant difference in the prevalence of substance abuse by adolescents between the period before the COVID-19 schools closure and the period during the closure in Sokoto State. Table 1 also shows that the mean score of the respondents before the closure (M = 32.22) was lower than during the closure (M = 38.24) an indication that the prevalence of substance abuse among adolescents in Sokoto State increased during the period under review. Furthermore, the *p value* (.000) as shown in table 1 does not only support the rejection of the null hypothesis but also indicate that the result did not occur by chance. This is because, the lower the *p value*, the more likelihood that the result obtained from a study did not occur by chance (David, 2009).

This finding that prevalence of substance abuse increased when adolescents are not on school was in tandem to the findings of Kavutha (2015) who explained that adolescents in Kenya were more involve in drug abuse during vacation than when school is in session and that drug abuse does not only lead to adolescents indisciplin but also results to poor academic performance at school.

CONCLUSION

Consequence to the completion of this study, the following conclusions were made;

- i. The major type of substances abused by adolescents in Sokoto State was pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical substances. The Pharmaceutical substances include; Expectorants (Codein, Tutolein, Bennylein), Tranquilizers (Exol, Roci), and Pain Killers (Tramadol, Pentazocine) while the non-pharmaceuticals include (Marijuana, Tobacco, Glue, Wine, and Local Alcohol).
- ii. Prevalence of substance abuse among adolescents in Sokoto State was lower before the COVID-19 schools closure than during the schools closure. An indication that the prevalence increased during the period under review.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that law banning sell of controlled drugs without doctor’s prescription should be enforced to the letters. This is the major reason why the pharmaceutical substances abused are readily available. Furthermore, when adolescents are found culpable in substance abuse, not only the adolescents are to be made to face the law, but also their source of getting the substance. Parents and guardians are also advised to properly monitor every activity of their ward both when schools are on and during vacations. Parents/guardians should be especially keen in identifying the friends of their wards. This will help in ensuring that the children do not associate with the wrong persons.

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Appendix I

ADOLESCENTS' SUBSTANCE ABUSE QUESTIONNAIRE (ASAQ)

All information received through this questionnaire will only be used for research purposes. Respondent's confidentiality is guaranteed.

1. Age (years): (a) 12-15 () (b) 16-19 () (e) 20and above()
2. Gender:(a) Male () (b) Female ()
3. Which of the following substances did you make use of before and/or during the COVID-19 schools closure?please tick where appropriate

Substance	Before COVID-19	During COVID-19
Marijuana	()	()
Codein	()	()
Tobacco	()	()
Tramadol	()	()
Pentazocine	()	()
Totolein	()	()
Glue	()	()
Heroin	()	()
Exol	()	()
Roci	()	()
Bennylein	()	()
Cocaine	()	()
Wine	()	()
Local Alcohol (Burukutu)	()	()
Others specify	()	()

4. On a scale of five, identify the possible frequency of your weekly usage of the mentioned substances in Q1

Substance	Before COVID-19	During COVID-19
Marijuana	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
Codein	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
Tobacco	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
Tramadol	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
Pentazocine	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
Tutolein	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
Glue	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
Heroin	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
Exol	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
Roci	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
Bennylein	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
Cocaine	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
Wine	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
Local Alcohol (Burukutu)	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)
Others specify	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)	(0) (1) (2) (3) (4)

Appendix II

1. What are the substances you observed your adolescent clients/patients/customers to be abusing before and during the COVID-19 schools closure?
2. On a scale of five, identify the mean possible frequency of your adolescent clients/patients/customers usage of the mentioned substances in Q1