

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NIGERIA: REPORT OF 2022 WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY IN OGUN STATE, SOUTH WEST, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Background:

Several studies have shown a high prevalence of drug and substance abuse across the Universities and Secondary schools in Nigeria.

AIM:

To conduct an awareness program among Secondary School students in commemoration of Mental Health Day 2022

Methodology:

Three (3) Secondary Schools were selected within Abeokuta, the capital of Ogun state, Southwest Nigeria. An awareness program was organized through health talks on the effect and prevention of drug/substance abuse. It was a didactic and interactive session with the students.

Result:

Some students who abuse substances were discovered and a drug abuse ring was also discovered. Through the management of schools visited there was easier networking with other schools and appeal for regular visits solicited by the schools.

Conclusion:

Appreciation to the Sebastian Family and the University of Wisconsin for their great work on mental health advocacy globally. Likewise, all the staff of the visited schools are highly appreciated for their cooperation, while not unmindful of the efforts of all team members who have put in their best to see that this year's program was successful.

Recommendation:

There is a need for continuous sensitization to other schools and working with school authorities in the area of rehabilitation of identified drug/substance abusers.

Keywords: Substance abuse, mental health, Ogun State, South West, Nigeria, Submitted: 2023-04-27 Accepted 2023-05-27

1. Background of the study:

Prevention activities aimed at educating and providing support for individuals and communities to prevent the use of drugs and the development of Substance Use Disorder. It can make

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daily activities difficult and impairs interpersonal relationship with family and community members. It is among the top conditions that cause disability worldwide. Prevention of the disorder is critical to maintaining and promoting mental and physical health. (Brounstein, et al 2001)

School-based education is one of the notable ways of prevention as it helps to understand how the disorder develops, avoid temptation and peer pressure, seek help for possible effects of substance use problems and, examine the risk factors with the ultimate goal of keeping a well-balanced life (UNODC Handbook 2019)

The cause of substance use disorder is unknown but genes, the action of the drug, emotional distress, depression, anxiety, and environmental stress are possible predisposing factors to developing this disorder

There has been a steady increase in the prevalence of substance use disorder in Africa. This has been linked to the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic which has increased community anxiety, depression, and environmental stress. (Natalia C, Chacon 2021). Many people use substance as a coping strategy and eventually develop a substance use disorder due to maladaptive consumption.

Africa especially the West Coast has been the route passage for most of these substances to other European and Asian Countries. The pandemic of Covid-19 has hindered the movement of substances to the other Continents and has resulted in its accumulation in Africa. This was as a result of the lockdown of most countries worldwide. The excess availability of drugs/substances in Africa, especially Nigeria has led to the high prevalence of drugs/substances in circulation. The economic challenges and the increase in development in the prevalence of mental disorders and initiation of substance use have also contributed immensely.

Nigeria is currently faced with the menace of substance use amongst its teeming youth despite the 1990 National Drug Policy adopted to guard against the availability, supply, and distribution of substances of abuse. A report from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Nigeria

indicates that 14.4% of people aged 15-64 years abuse drugs.

A study by Olarenwaju J.U (2022) showed a notable rise in the use of drugs of abuse among students in the Nigerian University. It is therefore very important to intensify school-based drug education to prevent substance use disorder among youths.

Aim: To conduct an awareness program among secondary school students in commemoration of the mental health day of 2022.

2. Methodology:

The Year 2022 Mental Health Day Theme "COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC AROUND THE GLOBE" was celebrated in collaboration with the Sebastian Family in conjunction with the University Of Wisconsin U.S.A. The program was held on the 4th and 5th of October 2022 in Abeokuta, Nigeria. Abeokuta is the capital city of Ogun State Southwest Nigeria with a population of 571,499 (2023 World Population Review) The focus of the two days was to create community sensitization and organized school lectures and health talks for some selected schools in Abeokuta metropolis of Ogun State, Nigeria.

This was done by wearing a customized T-shirt by all team members showing the caption "MENTAL HEALTH FOR ALL". The lecture/health talk was on "Effect and Prevention of Drug/Substance Abuse among Secondary School Students in Nigeria".

TEAM: The team was multi-disciplinary comprising of: Medical Doctors, Psychiatric Consultant, Clinical Psychologist, Medical Social Workers, Teachers, Psychiatrist Nurses, Students, Artisans, Drivers and Media Crew.ss

The team members were in high spirits on the day and everyone made an impact.

Three (3) secondary schools were visited where lectures/health talks were delivered. They were;

- (1) CLEMOFAD Comprehensive College.
- (2) Baptist Boys High School.
- (3) St. Peters College.

(1) CLEMOFAD Comprehensive College: This is a privately owned co-educational secondary school with a population of 128 students.

(2) Baptist Boys High School: it is an all-boys school with a population of over 1000 students in Senior Secondary School (SS1- SS2). This is a government-owned school.

(3) St. Peters College: it is a co-educational school with a population of 1,600 students and it is also a government-owned school with special students with physical challenges.

The lectures/health talk was delivered in the school hall where students were comfortably seated, and well controlled, and an interpreter for the hearing impaired students was provided and supervised by the teachers of the school.

The lectures were very impactful as they became interactive sessions. Several questions were asked by the student and the participating teachers. Relevant and appropriate answers were also provided by the team members. Some students were referred to the Clinical Psychologist and Medical Social Workers for counseling. Some were referred to the Psychiatric Hospital for proper assessment and rehabilitation.

3. Results:

The effects of the lectures were impactful as students and staff were very enthusiastic in their response to the question and answer aspect of the discussion. The lecture/health talk was didactic in approach. Students were able to own up to a particular drug abuse ring close to one of the schools, which was busted by the appropriate agency days after the sensitization. Some students who have been abusing substances were identified and referred for rehabilitation at the neuropsychiatric Hospital Aro, Abeokuta, The management of the school visited and called on neighboring school management for a meeting where he also shared what was learned with other school management. The management of the schools was happy about the impact of the lectures and appealed for regular visits.

4. Discussion:

This report has established the great impact of educating the community in the prevention of mental and physical disorders. It also demonstrated the fact that approaching youth in a didactic manner can be very impactful.

Health education has been recognized as the first stage of prevention in the public health domain. It is defined as the principle by which individuals and groups of people learn in a manner conducive to the promotion, maintenance, or restoration of health. It involves the use of a broad and positive health concept, participation and involvement, action and action competence, and a setting of perspective and equity in health. This is in keeping with the objective of mental health day which is to create awareness through health talks, health jingles, road works, etc. to educate the general public and especially the predisposed group in a community about the relevant health issues.

Based on this report it is established that the lecture/health talk in the selected schools was able to recognize some of the abusers and eventually have the opportunity of being referred for treatment in a specialized center. It also helped to discover a drug abuse ring close to the school which could be contagious to the student. Breaking this ring will ultimately help to prevent students from having access to substances of abuse and also prevent the peer pressure influence. This report has equally demonstrated a snowballing effect by encouraging neighboring schools with similar problems with their students to appreciate the impact of the lectures and also show an eagerness for such.

5. Sources of funding:

Sebastian Family and Larry Olawunmi Salako

6. Challenges.

1. Lack of personal media and ICT equipment by the group
2. Transportation of team members and equipment was also challenging.

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3. Inability to reach out to as many schools as possible due to inadequate resources and man power.

7. Recommendation

1. The under-listed are our vision for the future:
2. Continuous sensitization to other schools within Abeokuta metropolis and Ogun State in general
3. Working with school authorities in the area of rehabilitation of identified drug/substance abusers.
4. Establishing an NGO to partner with the Sebastian Family and University of Wisconsin.
5. Raising funds to procure equipment for a media and ICT department

8. Conclusion:

At this juncture, I would like to thank the Sebastian Family and the University of Wisconsin for their great work on mental health advocacy globally. Likewise, all the staff of the visited schools is highly appreciated for their cooperation, while not unmindful of the efforts of all team members who have put in their best to see that this year's program was successful.

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11. Pictures taken during the activities





Author biography

Larry Olawunmi Salako is a Nigerian social worker with over 16 years of experience. She had her national certificate of education in languages (1994 – 1997) OSIELE ABEOKUTA NIGERIA, after her secondary school education in Nigeria. She proceeded to the University of Ibadan Nigeria to obtain her 1st degree in (B.A) YORUBA. Of her passion for caring for people and community welfare, she went back to the University of Ibadan Nigeria to obtain her Master’s Degree in Social Work (MSW 2003 – 2006). Also had another Master’s Degree in drug and alcohol studies from Universita del Piemonte Orientale, Italy. She was employed in the service of Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital Aro, Abeokuta in the year 2007 and has risen to the post of Chief Social Welfare Officer. She equally works with several Non-governmental organizations as their Community Liaison Officer. Some of the NGOs include Tunde and Friends (TAFF), and HOPE INITIATIVE RESOURCES. She had attended several conferences both locally and internationally. She is happily married with children.

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