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Patterns of Alcohol Use and Abuse among Adolescents in Makurdi Metropolis

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Abstract The study examined the patterns of alcohol use and abuse among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis using a cross sectional survey method. A sample size of 188 participants comprised of 104 (55.3%) males and 84 (44.7%) females were randomly selected from five secondary schools in Makurdi metropolis. Data was collected using the Alcohol Use Inventory (AUI). Pearson r and Independence t-test were employed for data analysis. Findings from the hypotheses indicated that, the urge to make friends and the urge to be alert by adolescents significantly relates to the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs r(171 df)=.33, P<.05. Further findings indicated that the urge to attain higher goals and the urge to reduce tension by adolescents significantly relates to the use and abuse of alcohol and other drugs. r(180 df)=.27, p<.05. Findings also indicated that there was no significant difference between male and female adolescents on gregarious drinking t(172 df)=.24, p>.05. Results were discussed in the light of the literature reviewed. The implications of the study were discussed as well as recommendations made.

Keywords Pattern of alcohol use, Alcohol use, Alcohol abuse, Adolescents

1. Introduction

Adolescence is the developmental period of highest risk for the onset of problematic alcohol and other drug use. During early adolescence, psychological development is characterized by identity formation and the quest for independence. Young adolescents experience two stages of identity formation: (a) industry versus inferiority when 10- to 11-year-olds identifies themselves by the tasks and skills they perform well, and (b) identity versus role confusion when 12- to 15-year-olds explore and experiment with various roles and experiences [1]. Identity development depends on the degree of exploration and commitment to an identity [2]. During these years, young adolescents seek their own sense of individuality and uniqueness [3]. They may experience an increased awareness of their ethnic identity as well [4]. As young adolescents search for an adult identity and adult acceptance, they strive to maintain peer approval [5]. As young adolescents expand their affiliations to include family and peers, feelings of conflict may arise due to competing allegiances [6]. The search for identity and self-discovery may intensify feelings of vulnerability, as they become attuned to the differences between self and others [4].

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Typically, early adolescence is intense and unpredictable [4]. Young adolescents have a tendency to be moody, restless, and may exhibit erratic and inconsistent behavior including anxiety, bravado, and fluctuations between superiority and inferiority [5, 4, 6]. They are often self-conscious and highly sensitive to criticism of their perceived personal shortcomings [4]. Young adolescents' self-esteem levels are generally adequate and improve over time, while self-competence in academic subjects, sports, and creative activities decline [4]. Emotionally-charged situations may trigger young adolescents to resort to childish behaviors, exaggerate simple events, and vocalize naive opinions or one-sided arguments. Their emotional variability makes young adolescents at risk of making decisions with negative consequences [7] and believing that their experiences, feelings, and problems are unique [4].

During adolescence, young people are presented with opportunities to develop their ideas, attitudes and self-image. Participation in different kinds of learning environments (both school and non-school) exposes them to new influences, particularly those associated with peers, teachers, the learning institution itself and the local community. Research indicates that young people often start to experiment with substances during early adolescence [8]. Some experimentation with alcohol may be considered normal during adolescence; however, people who engage in binge drinking or who have developed alcohol use disorders typically also engage in other drug use, most frequently cigarettes and marijuana [9].

Substance use and abuse has been categorized into five general patterns [10]. The first pattern of drug use is the experimental pattern. This is a short term non-patterned trial of one or more drugs motivated primarily by curiosity or desire to experience an altered mood state. Experimental use most often occurs among young persons in company of one or more drugs among experimenting friends or acquaintances. Drug taking is a social experience usually in company of others and is not a solitary affair and male adolescents drink more during their initial drinking experience than females. More so, males tended to report a shorter latency before the second drinking than females and females were more likely to drink with their family members while male adolescents were more likely to first drink with friends at bars and parties [11, 12].

The second pattern of substance use is referred to as the recreational or social use. Most non-experimental drug using behavior can be classified as recreational or social, which occurs in social setting among friends or acquaintances who desire to share an experience which they define as both acceptable and pleasurable. Generally, recreational use is both voluntary and patterned and tends not to escalate to more frequent or intense use patterns. This type of behavior is not sustained by virtue of the dependence of the user on the drug. Reinforcement for continued use is strengthened by non-drug factors. A person's history of experience with drugs, his or her beliefs, knowledge and attitudes, as well as other thoughts about drugs are part of his or her uniqueness and personality [13]. These non pharmacological variables can exert powerful influences on the drug experience. These experiences could be direct (that is, the person has used the substance) or indirect (that is, the person has been expose to the substance through instruction, friends, television, advertising, reading and so on). Adolescents hold positive expectancies that alcohol and other drugs transform experiences, that it increases performance, it increase power and aggressiveness and that it facilitates social assertiveness [14]. Variables such as acquisition of friends through drug use, proportion of friends who use drugs, satisfaction of alcohol, using friendship, proportion of the community who disapprove of its use and situation where use of drugs occur. The result indicated that alcohol and other drugs increases with the proportion of friends who use it. That is, the more the individual use the substance the more he or she acquires new friends. The offering and acceptance of substances among persons is a gesture of friendship, joint alcohol or drug consumption symbolizes unity, an individual who is taking part with others in alcohol or drug use feels accepted by his peers [9].

The third pattern of drug abusing behavior which has grown significantly during the last decade is circumstantial drug use. This behavior is generally motivated by the user's perceived need or desire with a specific problem, situation or condition of personal or vocational nature [15]. This classification would include students who utilize stimulants during examination. Adolescents have the belief that alcohol and other drugs can elevate their set goal. They form this belief from watching movies, advertisement on the television or listen to a popular song on the radio and wonder if the drugs described can provide them with unique, profound experiences. Adolescents have this conception that alcohol and other drugs may help them to be alert, have better thoughts and work better [16].

A fourth pattern which comprises of a much smaller group of drug users may be regarded as having escalated from recreational or circumstantial use patterns into intensified drug using behavior. Although this is the most amorphous of the behavioral categories, it is generally referred to as drug use which occurs at least daily and is motivated by an individual's perceived need to achieve relief from persistent problem or stressful situation or his desire to maintain a certain self prescribed level of performance [17]. All of us have our share of troubles, anxiety, self-doubt, depression, guilt and annoyance and in the process of trying to reduce our psychological discomfort some of us take a drink or take other drugs such as cigarette and if this works, then drug use becomes associated with the alleviation of psychological pain and is likely to be repeated. The salient feature of this class of behavior is that, the individual still remains integrated within the larger social and economic structure. However, the regular use of one or more drugs may constitute dependence in a broad sense and may threaten to impair individual or social functioning [18].

The fifth and most disturbing pattern of drug behavior encompassing the smallest number of users is compulsive use which consists of a patterned behavior at a high level of intensity, characterized by a high degree of psychological dependence and perhaps physical dependence as well. The distinguishing feature of this behavior is that drugs dominate the individual's existence and preoccupation with drugs taking precludes other social and legal conditions [19].

1.1. Objectives

1. To determine if there will be a significant relationship between the urge to make friends and the urge to be alert by adolescents who use and abuse alcohol.
2. To determine if there will be a significant relationship between the urge to attain higher goals and the urge to reduce tension by adolescents who use and abuse alcohol.
3. To explore if male and female adolescents will differ significantly on gregarious drinking.

2. Methods

2.1. Design

The study employed a cross sectional survey approach in assessing the patterns of alcohol and other drugs use and abuse among adolescents in Makurdi metropolis.

2.2. Participants

One hundred and eighty eight (188) participants drawn from five secondary schools (Tilley Gyado College, Anglican Secondary School, Air Force Base Secondary School, Government Day Senior Secondary School, and Government Model Secondary School) in Makurdi metropolis took part in the study. The participants selected from these schools consisted of 104 (55.3%) males and 84 (44.7%) females. 11 (5.9%) participants were Hausa, 17 (9.1%) participants were Ibo, 12 (6.5%) participants were Yoruba, 44 (23.7%) participants were Idoma, 92 (49.5%) participants were Tiv, and 10 (5.4%) were from other ethnic groups.

2.3. Instrument

The instrument used for the study was the Alcohol Use Inventory (AUI) [20]. The first part of the questionnaire assessed the demographic characteristics of the participants; these include, sex, age, ethnic group, occupation, and class. The second part of the questionnaire comprised of five subscales (socialim, mentalim, magmood, gregarious, and compulsive) out of the 17 primary scales of the AUI. Socialim measures the urge to drink in order to improve sociability (items: 1, 20, 39, 58, 77, 96, 115, 134, 153), Mentalim measures the urge to drink in order to improve mental functioning (items: 2, 21, 40, 59, 78), Magmood measures the urge to drink in order to manage mood (items: 3, 22, 41, 60, 79, 98, 117), Gregarious measures the urge to drink in the company of friends (items: 5, 6, 24, 25, 43, 62, 81, 100, 119) and Compulsive measures the constant thoughts about alcohol (7, 26, 45, 64, 83, 102, 121). The AUI is in a two way question response structure (Yes and No responses). To each yes response the score of one was assigned and to each no response the score of two was assigned. The validity and reliability coefficient of the instrument (AUI) was 0.70 Cronbach's alpha and the stability overtime measurement test re-test reliability was 1.0.

2.4. Procedure

The researchers administered the Alcohol Use Inventory (AUI) questionnaire to participants individually in their classroom with the aid of two research assistants. The nature of the study and the need for sincere responses were explained to the participants. Administration and collection were completed within 45 minutes. A total number of 200 copies of questionnaire were administered but only 188 copies were returned and considered for analyses.

2.5. Data Analyses

Data were analyzed using simple percentages and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 18.0) for the sole purpose of ensuring accuracy. The independent t-test and the Pearson correlation (Pearson r) were used to test the postulated hypotheses.

3. Results

Table 1. Pearson r showing the relationship between the urge to make friends (socialim) and the urge to be alert (mentalim) by adolescents on the use and abuse of alcohol

Variables	x	r-cal	df	p	Remarks
socialim					
	13.13	.33	171	.05	significant
mentalim					

Result from table 1 showed that the urge to make friends and the urge to be alert by adolescents significantly relates to the use and abuse of alcohol. $r(171\ df) = .33$, $p<.05$.

Table 2. Pearson r showing the relationship between the urge to attain higher goals (mentalim) and the urge to reduce tension (magmood) by adolescents on the use and abuse of alcohol

Variables	x	r-cal	df	p	Remarks
mentalim					
	7.17	.27	180	.05	significant
magmood					

Results from table 2 showed that the urge to attain higher goals and the urge to reduce tension by adolescents significantly relates to the use and abuse of alcohol. $r(180\ df) = .27$, $p<.05$

Table 3. Independent t-test showing the differences between male and female adolescents on gregarious drinking

Variables	N	x	r-cal	df	p	Remarks
Males	97	12.21				Not
			.24	172	.05	significant
Females	77	12.14				

Results from table 3 showed that male and female adolescents did not differ significantly on gregarious drinking. $t(172\ df) = .24$, $p>.05$.

4. Discussion

The first hypothesis which stated that, there will be a significant relationship between the urge to make friends and the urge to be alert by adolescents who use and abuse alcohol was confirmed and supports the study [9] that considered variables such as acquisition of friends through drug use, proportion of friends who use drugs, satisfaction of alcohol, using friendship, proportion of the community who disapprove of its use and situation where use of drugs occur. The result indicated that alcohol and other drugs increases with the pro portion of friend who use it. That is, the more the individual use the substance the more he or she acquires new friends. The offering and acceptance of substances among persons is a gesture of friendship, joint alcohol or drug consumption symbolizes unity, an individual who is taking part with others in alcohol or drug use feels accepted by his peers.

Hypothesis two which stated that there will be a

significant relationship between the urge to attain higher goals and the urge to reduce tension by adolescents who use and abuse alcohol and other drugs was confirmed. Adolescents are attracted to alcohol or other drugs because drugs help them to adapt to an ever changing environment, smoking, drinking and taking drugs reduce tension and frustration, relieve boredom and fatigue and in some cases help adolescents to escape the harsh realities of life. This finding is in line with that of [14] who reported that adolescents hold positive expectancies that alcohol and other drugs transform experiences, that it increases performance, it increase power and aggressiveness and that it facilitates social assertiveness. In a related study, [16] found that, adolescents have the belief that alcohol and other drugs can elevate their set goal. They form this belief from watching movies, advertisement on the television or listen to a popular song on the radio and wonder if the drugs described can provide them with unique, profound experiences. Adolescents have this conception that alcohol and other drugs may help them to be alert, have better thoughts and work better. [18] reports that, all of us have our share of troubles, anxiety, self-doubt, depression, guilt and annoyance and in the process of trying to reduce our psychological discomfort some of us take a drink or take other drugs such as cigarette and if this works, then drug use becomes associated with the alleviation of psychological pain and is likely to be repeated.

The third hypothesis which stated that male and female adolescents will differ significantly on gregarious drinking was not confirmed. This is in contrast with the findings of [12] who stated that male adolescents drink more during their initial drinking experience than females. More so, males tended to report a shorter latency before the second drinking than females and females were more likely to drink with their family members while male adolescents were more likely to first drink with friends at bars and parties. Also, [11] found that drug taking is a social experience usually in company of others and is not a solitary affair. Furthermore, the mean difference of 12.21 (male) and 12.14 (female) implies that male and female adolescents differ on gregarious drinking. One obvious reason why this hypothesis was not significant was that, it may be that the participants sampled were not prone to going to parties or clubs.

5. Implications for Practice

Teachers need to support young adolescents' quest for identity formation through curricular experiences, instructional approaches, and opportunities for exploration. Young adolescents need frequent opportunities to explore and experiment with various roles and experiences within the classroom context. Teachers can provide educative experiences such as role-playing, drama, and reading that foster identity formation. These experiences can help young adolescents realize that their challenges are not unique [5]. In addition, teachers can incorporate opportunities for student choice and self-assessment. Teachers can also describe how self-esteem affects many aspects of their development and design experiences that build young adolescents' self-esteem. Likewise, teachers can acknowledge the importance of friendships and explain that shifting peer allegiances are normal [4].

To foster successful experiences for every young adolescent, schools need to provide organizational structures such as teaming and advisory programs. These structures help to ensure that every young adolescent is known well by at least one adult and has regular occasions to experience positive relationships with peers. Young adolescents need opportunities to form relationships with adults who understand them and who are willing to support their development. Educational programs and practices can be used to promote an atmosphere of friendliness, concern, and group cohesiveness (Kellough & Kellough, 2008). Young adolescents deserve school environments that are free from harsh criticism, humiliation, and sarcasm.

6. Recommendations

Most adolescents who use and abuse alcohol and other drugs are unhappy with who they are. It is important for educators to help adolescents to feel good about themselves, develop interest and talents, and help them to believe in themselves, so that they do not have to change who they are (self image).

Parents should spend time on training and monitoring their children to ensure that, they develop physically, psychologically and socially by developing their problem solving skills and coping abilities rather than relying on drugs. Parents should also examine their own use and abuse of drugs as this will be a consequential role model for their children. Advertising agencies should not only portray the positive effects of the drugs they advertise but they should as well highlight the negative effects of the drugs on the users.

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