



PREVALENCE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN OWERRI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF IMO STATE

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ABSTRACT: Substance abuse can be described as any chemical abuse, implying the use of one or more substances in a manner that its user excessively and progressively consumes the substance in large quantities or in a manner detrimental to themselves or to those around them. The study examined the prevalence of substance abuse among secondary school adolescents in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. Two research questions and hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study comprised all 4,435 Senior Secondary School II students in the ten public secondary schools in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State. A sample of 420 students was drawn for the study using the simple random sampling technique (balloting) and proportionate sampling technique. A self-structured questionnaire titled “prevalence of substance abuse among adolescents in secondary schools” (POSAASS) and interview question on students’ substance abuse for teachers, principals and counsellors were used to obtain data. The questionnaire was designed on a four-point Likert scale. The face and content validity of the questionnaire was ensured. The test-retest method and Cronbach alpha method was used to establish the internal consistency and a reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained. Responses to the research questions were answered with mean and standard deviation, while the hypothesis was tested with independent t-test statistics. The findings of the study revealed that there is a high prevalence of substance abuse among the adolescents in secondary schools in Owerri Municipal council of Imo state, with alcohol rating as the most used and abused substance (100%) and stimulants the least used and abused substances (20.71%). Other substances that are used and abused among adolescents’ in secondary schools in Owerri Municipal council of Imo state include cigarettes (89.76%), and menthol sweet melted in carbonated drinks (98.1). Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that there should be constant regulation and monitoring by parents of the kind of company their children keep, counselling and health education of the adolescents in schools by the school health nurse and counsellors.

KEYWORDS: Prevalence, Substance abuse, School adolescents.



INTRODUCTION

The menace of substance abuse is gradually advancing towards becoming an established part and parcel of our present-day society. More worrisome is the recent increase in the rate at which the young population, especially secondary school children, get involved in this destructive phenomenon. In times past, as noted by Agberotimi (2018), cases of substance use and abuse were more frequently associated with the adult population. However, in recent times, researchers have revealed various incidents in the use of substances among younger populations, with potential propensity to lead to addiction (World Health Organization, cited in Agberotimi, 2018). As reported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNODC, (2013), youths engage in the use of different kinds of psychotropic substances. Likewise, the West Africa Commission on Drugs (2014) reported that there is a recent rise particularly among young people in the rate of intake and dependence on substances in the West African countries.

Adolescence is a period of change over from childhood to adulthood and this critical developmental period is marked by several physical, psychological and social changes. Adolescents are a segment of population within the age range of about 12-20 years. Most students in secondary schools in Nigeria are usually within this adolescent age range (Olugbenga, Adebimpe & Abodunrin, 2009). According to Sue, Sue and Sue (2009), adolescence may be said to be a time of experimentation, exploration, curiosity and identity search. Part of such a quest involves some risk-taking, including the use and abuse of substances that apply their major effects on the brain resulting in sedation, 'highness', negative or positive encouragement or general change in mood of an individual. Adolescents are faced with the huge task of establishing a sense of identity (Abdu-Raheem, 2013).

A drug refers to a substance that could bring about a change in the biological function through its chemical actions (Ewuziem, 2015). It is considered as a substance that modifies perceptions, cognition, mood, behaviour and general body functions (Balogun, 2006). This could thus be considered as chemical modifiers of the living tissues that could bring about psychological and behavioural changes. Substance abuse, as opined by (DSM-IV), the fourth edition of the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorder issued by the American Psychiatric Association, is a maladaptive pattern of substance use resulting in a failure to fulfil major role and obligation at work, school or home.

According to Sambo (2008), substance is said to be abused when its use is not pharmacologically necessary especially when used in the face of legal prohibition or when a socially acceptable beverage is used excessively. Chronic use of substances can cause serious and sometimes irreversible damage to adolescent's physical and psychological development. National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control, NAFDAC, (2004) explained the term substance abuse as excessive and persistent self-administration of a substance or substances without regard to the medically or culturally accepted patterns. It could also be viewed as the use of a substance to the extent that it interferes with the health and social function of an individual.

Substance abuse is a major public health problem all over the world. The use and abuse of substances by adolescents have become one of the most disturbing health related phenomena in Nigeria and other parts of the world. Several school-going adolescents experience mental health problems, either temporarily or for a long period of time. Some become insane, maladjusted to school situations and eventually drop out of school (United Nations Office for



Drug and Crime, UNODC, 2005). In the same vein, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, NDLEA, (2013) noted the alarming evidence in the prevalence of substance abuse, its effects and consequences among students, have called for concern and challenge all professions to mount strategies of equipping youths with skills of living devoid of substance use and abuse.

According to Afuwai (2016), there are several numbers of drugs which are used and abused among adolescent students. They include: depressants, examples include barbiturates, tranquillisers and alcohol; hallucinogens, examples are the LSD (Lysergic acid diethylamide) and marijuana; and stimulants. The most widely used stimulants are caffeine, nicotine (tobacco), amphetamines and cocaine.

Abudu (2008) averred that amphetamines and barbiturates are used by students with suicidal tendencies rather than for addictive purpose. However, cannabis (marijuana) appears to be the most commonly abused substance by our youths. He stated that marijuana is everywhere: in our cities, motor parks, street corners, joints on campuses, uncompleted buildings, under flyovers, among others. From a survey of Ring Road outlets in Benin City, Ajegule in Lagos, Mabushi in Abuja, under flyover in Onitsha etc will amaze you of the number of youths involved in the intake of cannabis. Cannabis is popularly known as 'igbo', 'ganja', 'weed', 'morocco', 'Indian hemp', or 'marijuana'. In 2005, the NDLEA raised an alarm over a new discovery in the use of marijuana, the NDLEA in Bayelsa State Command pointed out that there is a new substance called MONKEY TAIL. According to the Commander of the Agency, Monkey Tail is a combination of Indian hemp (Marijuana) and illicit gin-ogogoro. This combination is common on the streets and among youths and sold for a paltry sum of money which makes it very popular and can easily be purchased even by students.

According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services (2000), alcohol is the most abused psychoactive drug in the United States. About 90% of the students use it before they leave high school. In Kenya, a report by National Agency for the Campaign against Drug Abuse NACADA (2008) indicated that alcohol is the most commonly abused drug by about 61% of the population of developing countries. These percentages indicated that students are abusing drugs and it is important to address this issue with the seriousness it deserves. Afuwai (2016) explained that alcohol is basically a central nervous system depressant and dulls the brain, making learning a difficult task. When students get to the behaviour of abusing alcohol, their reasoning gets impaired and education becomes of less priority in the student's life.

The consequences of substance use are diverse, including acute and chronic health issues, social as well as psychological problems. Usually there is disruption of interpersonal relationships particularly within the family, marginalisation, criminal behaviour, vocational problems and failure to achieve normal adolescent milestones. Most intuitively, substances abused may have some detrimental effects on students' cognitive abilities by decreasing their ability to concentrate, undermining students' progress by making them less likely to attend classes or keep up with their studies and school failure (Ajala, 2012). Therefore, based on the above, it becomes preminent to find out the prevalence of substance abuse among secondary school adolescents in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State.



Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study examined the prevalence of substance abuse among secondary school adolescents in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following;

1. Determine the prevalence of substance abuse among male and female secondary school adolescent students in Owerri municipal council of Imo state.
2. Identify the commonest type of substances secondary school adolescent students in Owerri municipal council of Imo state usually abuse.
3. Ascertain the frequency of abuse of these substances by adolescent students in secondary schools in Owerri municipal council of Imo state.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the prevalence of the substances abused among male and female secondary school adolescents in Owerri municipal council of Imo state?
2. What are the commonest types of substances the secondary school adolescents in Owerri municipal council of Imo state usually abuse?
3. What is the frequency to which the different substances are abused among secondary school adolescents in Owerri municipal council of Imo state?

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant difference in substance abuse among secondary school adolescents in Owerri municipal council of Imo state based on their gender.

METHODOLOGY

The study used the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised all 4,435 Senior Secondary School II students in the ten public secondary schools in Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State. A sample of 420 students was drawn for the study using the simple random sampling technique (balloting) and proportionate sampling technique. A self-structured questionnaire titled “prevalence of substance abuse among adolescents in secondary schools” (POSAASS) and interview question on students’ substance abuse for teachers, principals and counsellors were used to obtain data. The questionnaire was designed on a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. The face and content validity of the questionnaire was ensured. The test-retest method and Cronbach alpha method was used to establish the internal consistency and a reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained. Responses to the research questions were answered with mean and standard deviation, while the hypothesis was tested with independent t-test statistics.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: What is the prevalence of the substances abused among male and female secondary school adolescents in Owerri municipal council of Imo state?

Table 1: Showing the prevalence of the substances abused among male and female secondary school adolescents in Owerri municipal council of Imo state (N=420)

S/No	Abused substance	Gender		Over all total unabused	Over all total abused
		Total Male abusers	Total Female abusers		
1	Alcohol	225 (100%)	195 (100%)	0%	420 (100%)
2	Tobacco including cigarettes	192 (85%)	185 (94.87%)	43 (10.24%)	377 (89.76%)
3	Narcotic drug (Opium Heroin)	33 (14.66%)	57 (29%)	330 (78.57)	90 (21.43%)
4	Cannabis sativa (Bhang. Hashish)	220 (97.7%)	193 (98.87%)	4 (0.95%)	416 (99.05%)
5	Stimulants (Cocaine Miraa)	48 (21.3%)	39 (20%)	333 (79.29%)	87 (20.71)
6	Menthol sweet and carbonated drinks	221 (98%)	191 (97.9%)	8 (19%)	412 (98.1%)
7	Cannabis sativa blended with alcohol	222 (98.66%)	192 (98.46%)	6 (1.43)	414 (98.58%)
8	Amphetamine (Mkpurummiri)	57 (25%)	32 (16%)	331 (78.81)	89 (21.19)

Table 1 revealed the prevalence of substances abused by the 420 adolescents (225 males and 195 females in Owerri municipality. For alcohol, it was revealed that (100%), that is, all the 225 males used for the study abused it. This is the same for all the 195 females used for the study. That means all the 420 adolescents used for the study abused alcohol.

For tobacco it was revealed that of 192, 85% males out of 225 abused it; and out of 195 females, 185 (94.87%) of them abused tobacco. That means, 377 adolescents in secondary schools that make 89.76% of the total sample of 420 used for the study abused tobacco while the remaining 43 which is equivalent to 10.24% of the sample did not abuse tobacco.

For narcotic drugs, 90 adolescents equivalent to 21.43% of the samples abused it; while 330 (78.57%) do not abuse narcotic drugs. Specifically, 33 (14.66%) are male while 57 (29%) are



females that abused narcotic drugs. The results in Table 4.2 further revealed that a total of 416 adolescents representing 99.05% of the samples abused cannabis sativa while the remaining 4 (0.95%) do not. Considering the result based on their gender, Table 4.1 revealed that the abused adolescents are constituted from 220 (97.7%) males and 193 (98.87%) females.

Again, for stimulants cocaine, a total of 87 which is equivalent to 20.71% of the 425 adolescents abused it while the remaining 333 (79.71%) of the adolescents did not abuse the substance. Specifically, 48 males (21.3%) and 39 females (20%) abused the substance.

Considering the substance menthol sweets melted in carbonated drinks, it was revealed that 412 (98.1%) of the adolescents abused it. This was made up of 221 (98%) males and 191 (97.9%) females. On the other hand, 8 adolescents, which is equivalent to 19%, did not abuse menthol sweets malted in carbonated drinks.

Furthermore, for cannabis sativa blended with alcohol, the results revealed that 414 (98.58%) of the adolescents abused it while the remaining 6 adolescents equivalent to 1.43% of the adolescents did not abuse it. Based on their gender it was found that 222 (98.66%) males and 192 equivalent to 98.46% of the females abused it.

Finally in Table 1 it was revealed that only 89 (21.19%) adolescents abused amphetamine (*Mkpurummiri*) while the remaining 331 (78.81%) adolescents did not abuse it. Specifically on gender it was found that 57 equivalent to 25% of the samples are males while 32, which is equivalent to 16% of the samples, are females who abused the substance, amphetam ;[ine (*Mkpurummiri*).

Research Question 2: What are the commonest types of substances the secondary school adolescents in Owerri municipal council of Imo state usually abuse?

Table 2: Showing the commonest types of substances the secondary school adolescents in Owerri municipal council of Imo state usually abuse.

Types of substances the secondary school adolescent students in Owerri municipal council usually abuse.	SA F (%)	A F (%)	D F (%)	SD F (%)	\bar{X}	SD
Menthol sweets melted in carbonated drinks	284(67.6)	127(30.2)	7(1.7)	2(0.5)	3.65	0.451
Tobacco including cigarettes	255(60.7)	129(30.7)	34(8.1)	2(0.5)	3.52	0.664
Narcotic drug (Opium Heroin)	-	-	78(18.6)	342(81.4)	1.19	0.389
Cannabis sativa (Bhang. Hashish)	152(36.2)	180(42.9)	88(21)	-	3.15	0.741
Stimulants (Cocaine Miraa)	-	-	16(3.8)	404(96.2)	1.04	0.192
Alcohol	301(71.7)	119(28.3)	-	-	3.72	0.539
Cannabis sativa blended with Alcohol	142(33.8)	182(43.3)	91(21.7)	5(1.2)	3.10	0.771
Amphetamine (<i>mkpurummiri</i>)	-	-	77(18.5)	343(81.3)	1.18	0.388



Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation of the commonest types of substances usually abused by the secondary school adolescent students in Owerri municipal council of Imo state. From the mean response to the items, it was found that alcohol ($\bar{X} = 3.72$, $SD = 0.539$) was the most usually abused among secondary school adolescents. This is followed in descending order by 'Menthol sweets melted in carbonated drinks' ($\bar{X} = 3.65$, $SD = 0.451$), tobacco including cigarettes ($\bar{X} = 3.52$, $SD = 0.664$), Cannabis sativa (Bhang, Hashish) ($\bar{X} = 3.15$, $SD = 0.741$), Cannabis sativa blended with alcohol ($\bar{X} = 3.10$, $SD = 0.771$), Then, narcotic drug (Opium Heroin) ($\bar{X} = 1.19$, $SD = 0.389$), and amphetamine (Crack or *mkpurummiri*) ($\bar{X} = 1.18$, $SD = 0.389$). The least commonly abused substance among secondary school students were Stimulants (Cocaine Miraa) ($\bar{X} = 1.04$, $SD = 0.192$).

Research Question 3: What is the frequency to which the different substances are abused among secondary school adolescents in Owerri municipal council of Imo state?

Table 3: Showing the frequency of abuse of these substances by adolescent students in Owerri municipal council of Imo state.

Rate of abuse of these substances by adolescent students in Owerri municipality	Daily F (%)	3-5 times in a week F (%)	Once in a week F (%)	2-3 times in a month F (%)	Non at All F (%)	\bar{X}	SD
Alcohol	252(60)	87(20.7)	47(11.2)	34(8.1)	-	4.35	1.020
Tobacco including cigarettes	22(5.2)	48(11.4)	142(33.8)	165(39.3)	43(10.2)	2.62	0.993
Narcotic drug (Opium Heroin)	-	-	12(2.9)	78(18.6)	330(78.6)	1.24	0.492
Cannabis sativa (Bhang. Hashish)	22(5.2)	206(49)	164(39)	19(4.5)	9(2.1)	3.51	0.758
Stimulants (Cocaine Miraa)	-	1(0.2)	8(1.9)	78(18.6)	333(79.3)	1.23	0.480
Menthol sweets melted in carbonated drink	250(59.5)	88(21)	48(11.4)	26(6.2)	8(1.9)	3.84	0.784
Cannabis sativa blended with alcohol	19(4.3)	105(25)	223(53.1)	68(16.2)	6(1.4)	3.15	0.788
Amphetamine (<i>mkpurummiri</i>)	-	-	10(2.8)	79(19.6)	331(78.7)	1.23	0.490



Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation for the frequency of abuse of these substances by adolescent students in Owerri municipality. From the response to the items, it was found that a majority (60%) of the students used alcohol daily; about 21% of them use it 3-5 times in a week; 11% use it once in a week and 6.2% use it 2-3 times in a month. For tobacco including cigarettes, about 39% of the secondary school adolescents use it 2-3 times in a month, 34% use it once in a week, 11% use it 3-5 times in a week, 10% do not use it at all, while only 5% use it daily.

For Narcotic drugs (Opium Heroin), 79% of the secondary school adolescents do not use it at all, while about 19% use it 2-3 times in a month, and the rest (2.9%) use it once in a week. For Cannabis sativa (Bhang. Hashish), 49% of the secondary school adolescents use it 3-5 times in a week, 39% use it once in a week, 5.2% use it daily, 4.5% use it 2-3 times in a month, and only 2% do not use it at all

For Stimulants (Cocaine Miraa), majority (79.3%) of the secondary school adolescents do not use it at all, 18.6% use it 2-3 times in a month, 1.9% use it once in a week, and less than 1% (0.2), use it 3-5 times in a week.

For Menthol sweets melted in carbonated drinks, 60% of the secondary school adolescents use it daily, 21% use it 3-5 times in a week, 11% use it once in a week, and 8.1% use it 2-3 times in a month, while only 1.9% do not use it at all.

For Cannabis sativa blended with alcohol, 53% of the secondary school adolescents use it once in a week, 25% use it 3-5 times in a week, 16.2% use it 2-3 times in a month, and 4.3% use it daily while less than 2% do not use it at all. For amphetamine (*mkpurummiri*), 2.8% of the secondary school adolescents use it once in a week, 19.6% use it 2-3 times in a month, while 78.7% do not use it at all.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in substance abuse among adolescents in secondary schools in Owerri municipal council of Imo state based on their gender.

Table 4: Showing Independent t-test on the mean responses of the male and female adolescents on substance abuse in Owerri municipal council of Imo state.

stage	N	Mean	SD	Mean diff	Df	t	p-value	Result
Male	225	61.21	16.40	10.41	418	7.74	0.000	Significant
Female		50.81	9.86					

In Table 4, it is shown that the summated mean values of the male and female adolescents on substance abuse are 61.21 (SD = 16.40) and 50.81 (SD = 9.86) respectively. These yielded a mean difference of 10.41 which indicated that the male adolescents are more involved in substance abuse than their female counterparts. Again when this mean difference was subjected to an independent t-test analysis, it was found that the calculated t-value of 7.74 was significant at 0.000 level, which is less than 0.05, the chosen alpha level. Thus it is concluded that a



significant difference existed in the substance abuse of the male and female adolescents. Specifically, the males are more involved than the females.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Prevalence of substance abuse by adolescents in secondary schools in Owerri municipality based on gender

It was found that adolescents in Owerri municipality abuse different substances such as alcohol, tobacco including cigarettes, and others. However, the prevalence irrespective of their gender in descending order is alcohol 100%, cannabis 99.05%, cannabis sativa blended with alcohol 98.58%, tobacco including cigarettes 89.76%, narcotics (opium, heroin), amphetamine (*mkpurummiri*), and stimulants (cocaine mira) recorded below 22%. These results indicated that alcohol is the most commonly abused among adolescents, while the least abused is the stimulants (cocaine mira). The reason for this could be the easy accessibility and cost implication of the substances. This study to some extent did not support the findings of Al-Alawi and Shaith (2018). This is because the previous researchers, Al-Alawi and Shaith (2018), found that stimulant was the major abused substance. This is followed by sedatives, while the present study found out that alcohol was the major abused substance. On the other hand, this study supported that of Anyanwu et al. (2016); they found that alcohol was the most commonly abused substance.

Furthermore, when gender was considered, the result obtained implies that male and female have almost the same urge and interest in taking the substances. This could be attributed to the campaign of gender equality, so the females felt that whatever the males can do, they can equally do it. The present study found that male and female adolescents majorly abuse alcohol, while they less abuse the narcotic drug. It is good to note that for the males, alcohol is followed by cannabis sativa blended with alcohol, menthol sweets melted in carbonated drinks, cannabis sativa (Bhang, Hashih), tobacco including cigarettes, amphetamines (*mkpurummiri*), stimulants (cocaine miraa) and narcotic drug (heroin, opium). For the females, after alcohol and cannabis sativa (Bhang, Hashish) are cannabis sativa blended with alcohol, menthol sweets melted in carbonated drinks, tobacco including cigarettes, among others. The reason behind the result in the researcher's view may be due to the cost implication of the substance which made them to be easily accessible.

This result is not in line with that of Anyanwu et al. (2016); they reported that substance abuse was more among male especially from divorced homes and orphans. The disparity in the findings from the previous and the current study may be attributed to the variables under study. For instance, the present study did not consider the adolescents home variables while the previous work of Anyanwu et al. (2016) considered home variables as divorced homes, and orphanages.

Types of commonly abused substances among adolescents' students in Owerri municipality

Findings on the types of substances abused by the secondary school adolescent students in Owerri municipality indicated that alcohol is the most usually abused among secondary school adolescents. It is followed in descending order by menthol sweets melted or blended with



carbonated drinks, tobacco including cigarettes, and cannabis sativa respectively. But the least commonly abused substance among secondary school students were Stimulants (Cocaine Miraa). This result corroborates that of Anyanwu, Ibekwe and Ojinnaka (2016) who stated that alcohol was a commonly abused substance. In furtherance to this, findings by Martens, O'Connor and Beck (2006) averred that an estimated 9% of the global population aged 12 or older are classified with dependence on psychoactive substances such as alcohol. Similarly, the National Agency for the Campaign against Drug Abuse, NACADA, (2008) in Kenya, also supported this finding and reported that alcohol is one of the most commonly abused substances by about sixty-one percent of the population of developing countries, with students deeply involved.

Aden, Dimlo, Ndolo and Chinda (2006) stated that adolescents are found taking poisonous substances, and sniffing other inhalants such as cobbler's gum, paint, dried faecal matters, among others, which are believed to be addictive and may lead to more involvement with higher substances in future. However, abuse of these substances may greatly depend on its availability within the affected areas. People tend to be influenced by what they see; therefore if these substances are available and accessible to these students, there is a high tendency of abuse. Ezekwe and Onyereri (2017) opined that availability and accessibility of these substances make the tendency for abuse very high. The researcher is of the opinion that laws prohibiting the sales, handling and consumption of those substances by adolescents be put in place.

Frequency of substance abuse among adolescents in Owerri Municipal council of Imo state

Results on the rate of substance abuse by the secondary school adolescent students in Owerri municipality revealed that majority of the students, up to about 60%, used alcohol daily, about 21% of them use it 3-5 times in a week, 11% use it once in a week, and only about 8.1% uses it 2-3 times in a month while all are found to have taken alcohol. Also menthol sweets recorded 60% for its daily usage, 21% for 3-5 times in a week, 11.4% for once in a week, 6.2% for 2-3 times in a month, and 1.9% for none at all. Findings by Adeyemo, Ohaeri, Okpala and Ogodo (2016) lend credence to this result. Their studies also revealed that 46.6% of students in Benin City have taken substances for non-medical purposes at least once. In the same vein, Vincent, Vincent, and Vincent (2019) confirmed the result and found out that the rate of substance abuse among public secondary students in Imo State is high. Watson (2012) also backed up this claim and indicated that there seems to be a dramatic increase especially in developing countries on the use of substances, mostly alcohol, chewing khat and smoking cigarettes. Likewise, Martens, O'Connor and Beck (2006) asserted that an estimated 9% of the world population whose age was 12 or older are gripped with reliance on psychoactive substances such as alcohol. Supportive studies also showed that a greater number of students across all age groups have been exposed to alcohol, tobacco, "Igbo" (Marijuana), glue, and even hard substances such as heroin and cocaine. Study by Sampou (2013) equally affirmed the result and found out that more than 22.7% of the primary school children in Nigeria have taken alcohol, a figure that rises to 57.9% in secondary schools and to 68% among university students. Findings by Nweke (2013) equally align with this finding and assert that over 815,000 students were abusing substances out of which 367,050 were girls. A shocking statistics was revealed during the annual general meeting of Secondary Schools Principals in Imo State, Nigeria in 2009, on the rate of substance abuse in secondary schools in the country. It was documented that 33.3% take alcohol, 8.3% smoke cigarettes, 3.0% to 9.1% smoke marijuana/igbo (Anyachie, 2009).



However, Vincent, Vincent, and Vincent (2019) declared that one major reason for the high rate of substances among adolescents is the fact that most of these substances, especially alcohol, are almost always readily available and accessible than most other substances. During occasions for instance, people promote the use of alcohol, so everybody, including adolescents who are present at such occasions, may most likely have unrestricted access to it. With this current trend, most of them tend to have the feeling that consumption of alcohol is good and socially acceptable. In the views of the researcher, adolescents often get involved in constant consumption of substances, then get deeply immersed in it and addicted most likely because of unrestricted access to it by society. It is therefore opined that there should be some kind of restrictions on consumption of substances by unqualified groups.

CONCLUSION

Substance abuse, based on the findings of this study, is noticeable among male and female adolescents in secondary schools in Owerri Municipality. There is a high prevalence of substance abuse among the adolescents in secondary schools in Owerri Municipality with alcohol rating as the most used and abused substance and stimulants the least used and abused substances. Other substances that are used and abused among adolescents in secondary schools in Owerri Municipality include cigarettes, menthol sweet melted in carbonated drinks, among others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. There should be constant regulation and monitoring by parents, of the kind of company their children keep.
2. Parents should lead good lives and become shining examples to their children, because parents who themselves are substance abusers, may influence their children negatively.
3. Government should criminalise the act of selling narcotics, alcohol and psychoactive substances, especially to children and adolescents.

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