

FAMILY BACKGROUND VARIABLES AND NIGER DELTA UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES' ATTITUDE TOWARDS DRUG ABUSE

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Abstract

The family contributes both risk and protective factors to the lives of adolescents; it affects both vulnerability and resilience to drug abuse. This study investigated background variables that can influence undergraduates' drug abuse. A survey research involving 624 undergraduates selected through multi stage proportionate technique from Niger Delta University was utilized in this study. Data was collected with a questionnaire whose reliability coefficient is .78, while percentage, mean and Pearson product moment correlation coefficient were used to analyze data. The result of the study revealed that undergraduates representing 51.9 percent of respondents revealed that permissive parenting style can influence students to abuse drugs, low parental socio – economic status can also influence undergraduates to abuse drugs; the result of data analyses also revealed that there is a significant relationship between parental marital status and undergraduates' attitude towards drug abuse. Based on the findings recommendations and implications for professionals were made.

Keywords: Drug abuse, attitude, undergraduates, parenting styles, parental marital status

1. Introduction

The family can have a powerful influence on shaping the attitudes, values and behavior of children. The family is viewed as the basic source of strength, providing nurturance, and support for its members as well as ensuring stability. The family may be seen as protecting and sustaining both strong and weak members. The family may be viewed as a mechanism for family members to interact with larger society, such as peer groups, schools, work colleagues and supervisors. The family may also be seen as an important point of intervention that is a natural organizational unit for transferring and building social and community values. In the same vein the family may be a source of tension, problem and pathology. Stability of relationship, environment and expectations are powerful forces in helping people manage their lives, particularly important children,

teenagers and young adults. The problem of balancing discipline and control of children with nurturing support to encourage their exploration, understanding of the world and self – realization may be complicated by drug abuse problems (UNDCP, 1995).

Drug abuse also known as substance abuse means harmful use of alcohol or other drugs. It is a poorly adaptive behavior pattern, lasting more than one month, in which a person continues to use a substance after knowingly being harmed by it or uses it repeatedly in a hazardous situation. Abuse can lead to substance dependence (addiction) which may be physiological or psychological, or both, and is likely to continue into adulthood (Papalia, Old & Feldman, 2001). The broader context of addictive substances

includes tobacco, alcohol and solvents. All these substances have several important characteristics in common. They alter the function of the human brain and have an impact on behavior. The most widely used addictive substances alcohol and tobacco are harmful with extensive damage to the individual, family and the community (Harrison & Gfroerer, 2002)

According to Fatoye and Morakinyo (2002) in their study of drug abuse among secondary school students in rural and urban communities in south Western Nigeria found out that the most commonly abused drugs were salicylate analgesics (48.7 %), stimulants (20.9 %), antibiotics (16.6 %) alcohol (13.4 %), hypnotic sedatives (8.9 %) and tobacco (3.0 %) They equally found out that the current and lifetime use of alcohol and tobacco was significantly more common among the males and among those in the rural school for the majority of the students, initiation into drug use started at a very early age (under 14 years) and from parental influenced Otieno and Ofulla (2009) showed in their study that majority of students who were abusing drugs were aged between 16-18 years. They also indicated by the age of 15 years some of the respondents were already abusing drugs.

Collins (2004) points out three factors that can affect the likelihood of alcohol to include:

- (a) Parental models: How parents behave often influences the subsequent behaviour of children when parents drink excessively or abuse drugs, children sometimes vow to completely abstain. More often however they follow the parental example. It has been estimated that 40 to 60 percent of children of alcoholic parents become alcoholics themselves.
- (b) Parental Attitudes: Parental permissiveness and parental rejection can both stimulate chemical use and abuse when parents don't care whether or not the children drink, there is no concern about dangers of drugs or alcohol and misuse often follows.
- (c) Cultural Expectations: If a culture has clear guidelines about the use of alcohol or drugs abuse is less likely, in Nigeria culture is tolerant of drunkenness since 'getting high' is the 'in' thing to do, conditions are set up which lead many to drug and alcohol abuse.

In the same vein a report of the son Diego country Grand Jury stated that "it is difficult for children to say no to drugs and alcohol when they find that their parents and relatives are using them" Sander (2004) quotes the sentiments of a teenager who Leonard, Elden, Wong, Zucker, Puttler, Fitzgerald, Hussong, Chassin and Mudar who said, "My parents drink booze every time they go out to dinner or have friends over so I drink and do dope what's the difference".

McDowell and Hosteller (1996) posited that dysfunctional family environment can influence a young person's abuse of drugs. Leonard, Elden, Wong, Zucker, Puttler, Fitzgerald, Hussong, Chassin and Mudar (2000) asserted that limited parental control can influence children drug abuse. Also Waldron (1998) opened that parents drug use can influence adolescents directly through a genetic predisposition and through modeling the behaviour, it can also influence adolescents indirectly through impaired parenting and limited control when the parent is under the influence of substance.

Broody, Ge, Katz and Arias (2000) posited that parents attitudes toward alcohol and drug use, and especially father's attitudes towards alcohol and drug use are associated closely with young children's attitude toward alcohol and drug use.

Fletcher and Jefferies (1999) posited that parenting style can influence drug abuse. Authoritative parenting style that is warm, nurturing interactions combined with age – appropriate structure and limits is associated with decreased likelihood of drug abuse in adolescents; while permissive parenting style can influence adolescents drug abuse Teichman and Kefir (2000) posited that Parental rejection is associated with adolescents favourable attitudes towards both substance use and abuse. They went further to state that adolescents who feel rejected by their fathers are at even greater risk for substance use and abuse than adolescents who feel rejected by their mothers.

Phares (2003) posited that family environment, particularly, parenting deficits such as inconsistency, harsh discipline, marital conflict, financial constrain, ritual disruption and conflicted siblings relations are factors that can influence adolescents' drug abuse. Otieno and Ofulla (2009) in their study of 458 students of Kasimu town revealed that students from low social economic class of Kisumu town were more involved with drug abuse 28.0 % compared to

those from high socio – economic class areas of the town 21.5 %. Their study also showed that family influence has an influence on drug abusers in that students who abused drugs came from families where other family members abuse drugs. These included immediate family members' like parents and siblings. In the same vein, Lafinhan and Arowolo (2002) carried out a study among students of selected secondary schools in Ile-Ife, Osun State of Nigeria; they found that the reasons for drug abuse among students were that cigarette and alcoholism were common problems among students, lack of parental care and too much freedom contributed to the problem of drug abuse. Students whose parents had television sets, radio and video were more involved in the abuse of drugs.

Drug abuse by adolescents has potentially serious negative ramifications, within the family environment, adolescents who abuse drugs often experience poor parent – child communication, poor parental supervision and discipline and interpersonal conflict with their parents and siblings (Gilvarry, 2000). Within the peer network, adolescent substance abusers often are involved with development peer group and are encouraged in conflict with peers. (Dishion, McCord & Poulin, 1999). Within the larger community adolescent behaviours are often involved delinquent behaviours and illegal activities (Gilvarry, 2000). Within the school environment, adolescent drug abusers often show inadequate academic performance and increased levels of emotional and behavioural problems (Buksteina Vanttaselt, 1995).

2.Rationale for the study

The increasing numbers of young alcoholics and drug abusers have risen to the level of causing education sector much concern. The problem become more sever when students start relying on drug and think that they need it to escape from problems at school. This problem constitutes one of the greatest factors that hinder educational excellent in today's schools. According to Nwachukwu and Ekanem (2007), the following are risk factors in adolescents as activators of alcohols and other drug abuse (a) positive family history of alcohol (b) Parental loss of control (c) Poor family moral values and (d) tolerance of alcohol and cigarettes use in the family. Consequently, this study sought to resolve the following questions:

- (1) Does parenting style have any influence on Niger Delta University students' attitude towards drug abuse?
- (2) Does parental socio – economic states have any influence on the attitude of undergraduates towards drug abuse?

The hypothesis guiding this study states that is there any relationship between parental marital relationship and undergraduates' attitude towards drugs abuse?

3 Method of study

3.1Research Design: *The research design used for this study is the Ex- post- facto design. It is aimed at investigating possible course and effect of relationships.*

3.1.1Participants

The population of this study consisted of 7, 221 undergraduates. A total of 624 undergraduates drawn through multi stage proportionate sampling technique was used to collect the sample from the population.

3.1.2 Measures

The instrument used for this study is titled: "Background Variables and Undergraduates Attitude towards Drug Abuse". The instrument is divided into four (4) sections. Section A of the instrument requested students' personal background data, section B requested students of their parental marital relationships, section C of the instrument requested students of their background parenting style and section D of the instrument requested students attitude towards drug abuse.

The instrument was validated by experts in Test and Measurement, psychology, Guidance and counselling, Sociology and Education. These expert ensured face and content validity of the instrument.

The reliability of the instrument was carried out by conducting a pilot test; this was conducted by using 50 students of university of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. A test re –test method was used. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co – efficient formula was used to analyze data and a reliability index of .78 was obtained.

3.1.3Procedures

The instrument was administered by the researcher with the aid of research assistants. The completed copies of the questionnaire were collected on the spot and 100 percent of return was recorded. Person product movement correlation percentages and frequency count were used to analyze data.

4 Results

Research Question one: Does parenting style have any influence on NDU students attitude towards drug abuse? To answer this question, the respondents scores on parent style were analyzed as presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Parenting style and attitude towards drug abuse

Parenting style	N	%
Autocratic	60	9.6
Democratic	240	38.5
Permissive	324	51.9
Total	624	100

The result of data analysis indicated that 60 respondents representing 9.6 percent were from autocratic parenting style, 240 respondents representing 38.5 percent were from democratic parenting style and 324 respondents were from permissive parenting style.

Research Question two: Does parental socio – economic status has any influence on Niger Delta University undergraduates’ attitude towards drug abuse? To answer this question, the respondent scores on parental socio – economic status are presented in Table 2

Table 2

Parental socio – economic status and attitude towards drugs abuse.

Parental socio– economic status	N	Mean
Low	382	28.32
Average	124	20.42
High	18	14.41

The result of data analysis reveal that 382 respondents with mean 28.32 were from low parental socio – economic status, 124 respondents with 20.42 mean were from average parental socio – economic status and 18 respondents with mean 14.41 were from high socio – economic status.

Hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between parental marital relationship and Niger Delta University undergraduates’ attitude towards drug abuse. This presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Pearson Product Moment correlation of relationship between marital relationship and students' attitude towards drug abuse

Variable	Mean	SD
Marital relationship(X)	23.53	4.83
Students attitude towards drug abuse (Y)	24.67	4.93
Total	48.2	6.91

variable	ΣX	ΣX^2	ΣXY	DF	r-value
Marital relationship (X)	23.53	5536609	5804851	622	1000.00*
Students' attitude towards drug abuse (Y)	24.67	6086089			

*Significant at .05; df=622; critical r- value=.195

The result of data analysis indicated that parental marital relationship has a significant positive relationship with students' attitude towards drug abuse .The null hypothesis was rejected. The positive r – value in the result implies that the more favourable the parental marital relationship influence students attitude. This result simply means that parental marital relationship influences students' attitude towards drug abuse.

5 Discussion of Results

From the findings of this study it is reveal that 324 respondents representing 51.9 percent were influenced by their parents' permissive parenting style into drug abuse. This evidence that permissive parenting style is a warm, but lax pattern of parenting in which adults make relatively few demand and permit their children to freely express their feelings and impulses. Indicating that parents do not closely monitor their children activities and rarely exert firm control over their behaviours. The finding of this study is in agreement with the studies of Waldon (1998), Fltcher and Jefferies (1998), Leonard, Elden, Wong, Zucker, Puttler, Fitzgerald, Hussong,

Chassin and Mudar (2000) and Phares (2003) where they found that permissive parenting style can influence children and adolescents drug abuse.

The findings of this study showed that parental socio – economic status influence children attitude towards drug abuse. 382 undergraduates from low socio – economic status affirmed that low socio – economic status influence undergraduates' into drug abuse. This is in line the study of Phares (2003) revealed that family environment particularly in the area of financial constrain influences children and adolescents into drug abuse. This study is also supported by the study of Fatoye and Morakinyo (2002) that found that students who abuse drugs in Western Nigeria are mostly from the rural areas and from low socio-economic status, equally from the slum areas of the urban areas.

The findings revealed that parental marital relationship influence undergraduates attitude towards drug abuse. This is so because conflicts in the home affect the adjustment of children. dysfunctional family environment can influence a

young person's abuse of drug McDowell & Hosteller (1996).

6 Implications for counselling

This study found that undergraduates are influenced by family background variables towards drug abuse particularly in Niger Delta University it is therefore imperative to make the following recommendations:

Counselors should create awareness of negative influence of familial factors on students towards drug abuse. Counselors should give family counseling in matters relating to drug abuse and the negative effects of drug abuse.

Counselors should educate parents that early childhood is an important time so it is important to dialogue with their children, by getting closely involved with their children's lives as they go through primary school and into secondary schools. Parents should monitor their children and supervise them closely because the primary teaching of a healthy lifestyle in children usually begins at home rather than school. The teaching of proper attitudes and behaviours in school may be adjunctive, but cannot replace the home.

Counselors should carry out workshops, seminars, conferences on drug abuse and its consequences.

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