



COMMUNITY BASED INTERVENTION IN CURBING DRUG ABUSE AMONG STUDENTS OF TERTIARY INSTITUTION IN DEVELOPING NATION

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Abstract: Drug is a substance that interact the biological system to alter its physiology for good or bad if abused. It is readily available substance that exist in various forms and abused in several forms popularly among the youth with reference to students in tertiary institution in developing nation. Community interventions is discussed as an interplay of stakeholders' responsibility at community level or firsthand influence on the psyche of the student populace. This review aims to bring to fore the various community based strategies and how their effectiveness could minimally curb the abuse of drug abuse among the youth student population in institutions of higher learning. Factors noted to be responsible for the alarming abuse rate include peer pressure, parental role, availability, stress relief, environmental and cultural influences. The effects of drug abuse is noted to be demonstrated on both individual and society as well as in short term and long term basis, seen in signs such as appetite irregularities, insomnia, increased heart rate, slurred speech, changes in cognitive ability, euphoria, loss of coordination depression, anxiety, increase aggression, paranoia, hallucination, assault, violent crime. The community intervention strategies involve coordinated approach from family, religious and university stakeholders in intensifying the right messages on drug abuse to their members, with partnership support for rehabilitation, capacity, designs and implantation. It is concluded that through expedient modification of existing intervention strategies and its effectiveness on implementation from all community based stakeholders curbing drug abuse can be substantially be achieved. Recommendation by stakeholders to have an effective, coordinated, robust advocacy programme and for government to strengthen required legal framework to support strategies and abusers will formulated, reviewed and amended.

Keywords: Community intervention, Developing nation, Drug abuse, University stakeholders, Students

Background

Drugs in various forms have been part of human on daily application used by all categories of individuals but greater usage on the youth especially student category. While it is universally known to great biological effects with huge physiological benefits on

the body, its abuse can equally have adverse effects thereby altering the normal physiology and psychology of a user.

Drug or substance abuse is described as the use of certain chemicals for the purpose of creating measureable effect on the brain (1). Dorwick et al., (2)

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also see drug as any natural or artificial Substance other than food that by its chemical or physical nature alters structures or functions in the living organization.

Within the scope of this review being the developing nation with particular focus on Nigeria as a case study, the common abused drugs include; tramadol, opiate, cannabis, amphetamines, barbiturate, benzodiazepines (Valium) and bromazepam as noted (3); usually in various forms such as being smoked or vaped it, consumed as ingredient in food, brewed, tea or oils. Individual and groups use and abuse these drugs not minding the health challenges associated with it. Perhaps with the larger figures of drug abusers as youth within student classification it has also contributed significantly to the part of the problem facing the university community in terms of civil disobedience and related crimes seen and manifested in school disengagement and other questionable character.

The community based interventions is a collective and synergized approach by stakeholders such as University communities, religious bodies and family based institutions where greater influence on these category of youths is been exerted. The collective interplay of roles by each of these groups can largely stimulate a new orientation in the concept of the way forward around the consumption of drugs for the good of the individual and society both in the present and future.

The aim of this review is to bring to fore the various community based strategies and how their effectiveness could minimally curb the abuse of drug abuse among the youth student population in institutions of higher learning.

DISCUSSION

Factors Responsible for Drug Abuse

Several factors have spur students into taking and abusing this substance in tertiary institutions in Nigeria irrespective of their age, gender and cultural background. The desire to be agile at all times in order to face any academic exercise that requires classroom presentation and recreational exercise has necessitated students into abusing marijuana which originally is displayed as low self- esteem. A study conducted (4) opines that Peer pressure, the belief that drug is harmless, and the relief from mental condition as well as its availability and opportunity has made it common. Similarly, (5) uncovered that student abuse drugs for fun, to improve on academic performance and to cope with stress without being overwhelmed. (6) see environmental factors such as parental, cultural factors as possible triggers. Lohmann (7) stated that curiosity and boredom are part of the reasons students' abused drug. In a research work done (8) on psychoactive substances among students, it was stated that availability of drugs was given as 9.5% was significantly responsible. In the long run the list of causative factors could be exhaustive as new excuses are constantly been given as the basis for indulgence in drug abuse.

Effects of Drug Abuse

The adverse effects of drugs is seen on both the individual and the society. Many researchers have highlighted these effects which among (9) enumerated some of the drastic negative effects as addiction, memory loss, testosterone, appetite irregularities, risk of greater potency, decrease in motor response and poor decisions. A research work (10) proved that the list of substance abuse by male



and female students shows that violent behavior like sexual assault, physical assault and violent crimes were common to students that had abused substance; the study also uncovered that 80.5% of violence in school was as a result of substance abuse. (11) opined that regular marijuana usage will increased risk of anxiety and depression. There are claims that acute intoxication with cannabis clearly produces cognitive impairment. The study of (12) disclosed the short - term effect of drug abuse as change in appetite, insomnia, increased heart rate, slurred speech, changes in cognitive ability, a temporary sense, euphoria and loss of coordination. Meanwhile the study indicated that expert has linked chronic drug use to the following health conditions: cardiovascular disease, respiratory problems, kidney damage. It is important to note that while drugs and addiction can pose serious health consequences, much of the damage can be affectively reserved with proper care and abstinence (13).

Generally, the long- term effects of abusing drugs can have numerous signs; such as depression, anxiety, panic disorder, increase aggression, paranoia and hallucination.

Intervention Strategies

The study (14) asserted that the essence of community based intervention is primarily on changing individual behaviour as a method for reducing the population risk of abuse. Several community based intervention strategies being put in place to curtail its use through vital awareness such as school based intervention strategy are educational programmes set up to promote and provide students with useful knowledge on the dangers associated to illicit drugs and its counterpart on the human body, through regular

advocacy via use of bill board, tracks and mass media platform as well as help students with the capacity of declining peer influence when it eventually occurs.

Religious based intervention strategy. These are programs developed to catch the youth and sensitize them on the implication of abusing drugs. Religious bodies should intensify their messages on drug abuse in most of their platforms to their members and equally partners with other liked mind faith-based and non-governmental organizations to provide rehabilitation centres to those who are already addicted to these drugs through extensive guardian and counseling, skill acquisitions and other functional programs so as to channel their mind into meaningful activities.

The family based intervention. The role of the family in the child socialization cannot be undermined as the good values inculcated will create opportunity to make and keep them well inform. The family is the most important and essential aspect in the child life from the moment of birth; thus, family members ought to provide friendly and safe environment to their wards. The magnitude of relationship a family provides is key in the child growth and upbringing, and will mark a reflection of what the child represent in and the outside of the environment. Hence Parents/ guardians needs to design suitable methods by which children will be taught and broaden on the importance and dangers associated to using and abusing drugs which marijuana is not excluded. Similarly, children should be discouraged from buying and patronizing proprietary drug that is responsible for adolescent exposure to drug use (6).

The community based approach to curbing drug abuse though have been in existence by most stakeholders



but the program initiated had failed to reduce the rate of substance use and associated harm as noted (15) due to varied challenges suppressing positive efforts. This observation could arguably be due to the weakness of the legislation and necessary legal framework as well as the issue of complicity on the parts of the law enforcers as observed (16). Likewise, a number of barriers have limited the widespread implementation of community interventions, including lack of resources, insufficient training on the right information and manpower shortages.

It therefore behooves on stakeholders to emphasize the active play of the custodians of these students which the University community is a key member to intensify the applications of regulation and enlightenment to control substance abuse and use as also noted (10).

CONCLUSION

The use of illicit drug in becoming vibrant and high among students in tertiary institutions is disturbing and destructive both to the individual and the society at large. Ameliorating this situation, all hands need to be on deck to save our youth and the society through expedient modification of existing intervention strategies and its effectiveness on implementation from all community based stakeholders such as school, religious and family in promoting healthy living among youths and students in particular.

It is therefore recommended that the Student leadership body could be co-opted into the intervention programme and be supported with necessary resources to help them carry out effective, tailored well monitored advocacy as well. This is be a kind of substance abuse preventive programme as

suggested by a paper on psychoactive substance (8). Government should formulate and amend if necessary the due legislation on strengthening the law on strategies and penalty abuser to curtail the excesses and illicit use of these drugs.

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