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INFLUENCE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE ON CLASS ATTENDANCE AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NASARAWA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to investigate the Perceived Influence of Substances Abuse on class attendance of Senior Secondary School Students in Nasarawa State of Nigeria. The study was guided by two objectives, two research questions to guide the study and one hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Descriptive survey design with the population of one hundred and forty eight thousand, four hundred and ninety seven (148,497) persons and a sample size of seven hundred and forty four (744) participants were used for the study. The study employed questionnaire as an instrument for data collection and the data were analyzed using chi-square test statistics of mean and standard deviation. Findings showed that substance abuse has significant influence on class attendance among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, these negative influence on participation indices such as note taking, study time. In conclusion, it is therefore, clearly a need for specific intervention programs for substance abusers among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State to discourage substance abuse and improve on their academic performance. It is recommended that there should a need for constant awareness programs on the dangers of substance abuse on academic performance of senior secondary school students if required action/education would be taken or given on time the students of Senior Secondary Schools may perform well academically without taking any substances.

INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as an important instrument for national development and individual growth because it equips learners with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values

needed for productive living. Secondary schools in Nigeria are established to provide students with academic and social experiences that prepare them for higher education and responsible citizenship. In achieving these educational goals, schools expect students to participate actively in classroom and school-related activities that enhance effective teaching and learning. Active involvement of students in classroom activities is therefore considered essential for meaningful learning and educational success. According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014), education should encourage the development of individuals into effective and useful members of society through active participation in learning activities.

The emphasis on active involvement in learning activities makes class attendance an important aspect of the educational process. Class attendance refers to the degree to which students engage in classroom activities such as answering questions, asking questions, contributing to discussions, expressing opinions, and interacting with teachers and classmates during lessons. Active class attendance enhances understanding of subject matter, improves communication skills, and promotes critical thinking among students. Students who participate effectively in classroom activities are more likely to develop confidence, remain attentive during lessons, and achieve better learning outcomes (Fassinger, 2015). Effective class attendance, however, depends largely on students' behaviour, emotional stability, concentration, and willingness to learn.

Students' behaviour and emotional stability are strongly influenced by their developmental stage, particularly during adolescence. Most senior secondary school students fall within the adolescent age bracket of approximately fourteen to nineteen years, which is characterized by physical, emotional, cognitive, and social changes. Adolescents are often curious, adventurous, and eager to experiment with new behaviours and experiences. During this stage, peer influence and the desire for social acceptance may expose students to risky behaviours such as substance abuse. Such behaviours may negatively affect students' concentration, emotional balance, and level of participation in classroom activities (Santrock, 2018). One of the risky behaviours increasingly observed among adolescents today is substance abuse.

Substance abuse has become a major social and educational problem affecting adolescents across the world. Substance refers to psychoactive drugs such as alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, heroin, nicotine, amphetamines, opioids, and other harmful substances that affect the functioning of the brain and alter behaviour (World Health Organization [WHO], 2014). Substance abuse refers to the repeated or excessive intake of these substances in ways that

negatively affect an individual's physical, psychological, emotional, and social functioning. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2023), substance abuse among adolescents has continued to increase globally, thereby posing serious threats to students' educational development and future productivity. The growing involvement of adolescents in substance abuse has therefore become a source of concern to parents, teachers, school administrators, and society at large.

The concern about substance abuse among adolescents arises from its numerous negative effects on students' behaviour and academic engagement. Students who abuse substances often experience poor concentration, emotional instability, aggression, lack of motivation, memory problems, and poor interpersonal relationships. These behavioural and psychological problems interfere with students' ability to function effectively in school and participate actively in classroom activities. Bagley (2023) noted that adolescents involved in substance abuse frequently become inattentive during lessons, lose interest in academic activities, and exhibit disruptive behaviours that hinder effective learning. Such behavioural challenges therefore have direct implications for students' class attendance.

Class Attendance and Academic Performance

Class attendance is widely recognized as one of the most important behavioural determinants of students' academic performance. It refers to the regular physical presence of students in the classroom throughout the scheduled instructional period, where they actively participate in teaching and learning activities. Regular attendance provides students with the opportunity to receive firsthand instruction, engage in classroom discussions, ask questions for clarification, participate in collaborative learning activities, and benefit from interactions with teachers and peers. These experiences collectively enhance students' understanding of course content and improve their academic achievement.

Research has consistently demonstrated a strong positive relationship between class attendance and academic performance. Credé, Roch and Kieszczyńska (2010), in a comprehensive meta-analysis involving over 30,000 students, found that class attendance is one of the strongest predictors of academic success, surpassing several traditional predictors such as study habits, standardized admission test scores, and even prior academic achievement. Their findings indicate that students who attend classes regularly are more likely to obtain higher grades and grade point averages than those who are frequently absent. Similarly, Devadoss and Foltz (1996) established that regular attendance significantly

improves students' academic performance because it increases exposure to classroom instruction and promotes greater engagement in learning activities.

Regular class attendance enables students to keep pace with the curriculum, complete assignments on time, and receive immediate feedback from teachers. Students who attend classes consistently are also more likely to develop positive study habits, maintain academic discipline, and remain motivated throughout the school term. In contrast, students who frequently miss classes often experience learning gaps, reduced understanding of subject matter, poor participation in classroom activities, and difficulty preparing adequately for examinations. Consequently, chronic absenteeism or truancy is associated with lower academic achievement, poor examination performance, and an increased likelihood of school dropout.

Empirical evidence further suggests that the benefits of attendance extend beyond mere physical presence in the classroom. Kassarnig et al. (2017) observed that students who attended classes consistently throughout the semester achieved significantly better academic outcomes than those with irregular attendance patterns. Likewise, Latif (2014) reported that, even after controlling for students' ability and effort, regular class attendance remained a significant predictor of higher examination scores. These findings underscore the critical role of attendance in facilitating effective learning and improving students' academic outcomes.

Educational concern about substance abuse is increasingly evident in many parts of Nigeria, including Nasarawa State. In recent years, teachers, parents, counselors, and school authorities in Nasarawa State have expressed concern about the growing involvement of secondary school students in the use of harmful substances such as alcohol, cigarettes, cannabis, opioids, and other psychoactive drugs. Observations by the researcher as a teacher indicate that some students involved in substance abuse often demonstrate poor classroom behaviour, lack concentration during lessons, and contribute less to classroom discussions. Some students also appear emotionally unstable and uninterested in learning activities, which negatively affects effective classroom participation and interaction.

Despite increasing awareness about substance abuse among adolescents, many students still engage in the practice without fully understanding its educational consequences. Several previous studies have examined substance abuse and students' academic behaviour in different parts of Nigeria. However, limited studies have specifically focused on the influence of substance abuse on class attendance among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State. This gap in literature therefore creates the need for the present study to investigate the

influence of substance abuse on class attendance among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

Statement of the Problem

Substance abuse among adolescents has become a major concern in many societies across the world because of its negative effects on students' behaviour, health, and educational development. In Nigeria, the increasing involvement of secondary school students in the use of substances such as alcohol, cannabis, cigarettes, opioids, and other harmful drugs has generated concern among parents, teachers, school counselors, and government authorities. The abuse of these substances among students poses serious threats to their emotional stability, social adjustment, and effective attendance in school.

The concern about substance abuse becomes more serious when its effects on classroom behaviour and class attendance are considered. In Nasarawa State, many students who abuse substances appear to demonstrate poor concentration, inattentiveness, emotional instability, and low interest in classroom activities. Some students become withdrawn during lessons, while others display disruptive behaviours that interfere with effective teaching and learning. Such behaviours reduce students' willingness and ability to participate actively in classroom discussions and other learning activities.

The researcher has also observed increasing adventurous behaviours among senior secondary school students, which may expose them to substance abuse and negatively affect their level of classroom participation. Despite efforts by parents, teachers, and school authorities to discourage substance abuse among students, the problem appears to persist in many secondary schools within the state. There is therefore the need to investigate the influence of substance abuse on class attendance among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to assess the influence of substance abuse on class attendance among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Identify the substances commonly abused by senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.
2. Ascertain the perceived influence of substance abuse on class attendance among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

Research Questions

1. What are the substances commonly abused by senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State?
2. What is the perceived influence of substance abuse on class attendance among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant influence of substance abuse on class attendance among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the influence of substance abuse on class attendance among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State. The design was appropriate because it allows the collection of data from a large population to describe existing conditions and respondents' perceptions. According to Emaikwu (2015), descriptive survey design is useful for explaining variables within a defined population. It was therefore used to obtain information on commonly abused substances and their perceived influence on students' class attendance.

The study was conducted in Nasarawa State, located in North-Central Nigeria, consisting of thirteen Local Government Areas under three senatorial zones. The study area was selected due to increasing concerns about substance abuse among secondary school students and its possible impact on classroom participation.

The population of the study comprised 148,497 teachers and students from 284 public senior secondary schools in Nasarawa State (Nasarawa State Ministry of Education, 2019). A sample of 744 respondents, made up of 369 teachers and 375 students from 166 schools, was selected using the Taro Yamane sampling formula. A multi-stage sampling technique was used, while simple random sampling ensured equal opportunity of selection for respondents across the senatorial zones.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled *Perceived Influence of Substance Abuse on Class attendance of Senior Secondary School Students Questionnaire*. The instrument contained 20 items divided into sections. Section A covered demographic data, while Section B addressed substance abuse and its perceived influence on class attendance, grades, assignment completion, and class attendance. A four-point Likert scale (SA = 4 to SD = 1) was used.

The instrument was validated by experts in Guidance and Counselling and Measurement and Evaluation. A pilot study involving 84 respondents from Nasarawa Eggon Local Government Area established reliability using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, yielding a coefficient of 0.90.

Data were collected by the researcher with the help of trained assistants and analyzed using mean and standard deviation, with a 2.50 cut-off point. Chi-square was used to test hypotheses at 0.05 significance level.

RESULTS

The data collected for each research question is analyzed using Mean and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions.

Research Question One

What are the commonly abused substances among secondary school students in Nasarawa State?

Answer to this research question is presented in Table 1

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Commonly Abused Substances among Secondary School Students.

S/N	Items	N	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Std.D.	Decision
1.	Codeine is commonly abused by students	744	377	330	12	35	3.44	0.56	Accept
2.	Heroin is commonly taken by students	744	60	103	306	275	1.93	0.83	Reject
3.	Students in my school abuse madrax	744	33	12	530	169	1.88	0.41	Reject
4.	Students commonly abuse opium	744	43	120	306	276	1.90	0.75	Reject
5.	Benylin is commonly abused by students	744	620	120	3	1	3.83	0.16	Accept
6.	Tradyl is commonly abused by students	744	48	248	432	16	2.44	0.42	Reject
7.	Tramadol is abused by students	744	638	96	9	1	3.84	0.16	Accept
8.	Students commonly abuse Tutolin	744	536	181	22	5	3.68	0.46	Accept
9.	Valium is commonly taken by students	744	520	180	39	5	3.63	0.38	Accept
10.	Students commonly take designer drugs	744	74	150	417	103	2.26	0.46	Reject
11.	Cocoa leaf is commonly abused	744	20	60	530	134	1.95	0.37	Reject

12.	Students commonly abuse Marijuana	744	570	155	11	8	3.31	0.47	Accept
13.	Tradyl is commonly abused by students	744	523	186	8	35	3.63	0.55	Accept
14.	Students commonly sniff solution	744	207	300	175	62	2.88	0.83	Accept
15.	Cigarette is commonly taken by students	744	375	211	152	6	3.28	0.66	Accept
	Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation						2.82	0.50	

The data presented in Table 1 shows the commonly substances among secondary school students in Nasarawa State. Responses on item 1 showed that, codeine having mean scores with corresponding standard deviations of 3.44 (0.56) was commonly abused among students. Item 5 indicated that, benylin having mean scores with corresponding standard deviations of 3.83 and 0.16 was among commonly abused substances. Item 7 showed that, tramadol with mean of 3.84 and standard deviation of (0.16) is another substance commonly abused among students. Similarly, respondents indicated on item 8 that, tutolin having mean scores with corresponding standard deviations of 3.68 and 0.46 was also commonly abused by students, Item 9 showed that, Valium having mean scores with corresponding standard deviations of 3.44 (0.56) was commonly abused among students. Responses regarding items 12 on marijuana (hemp), 13 on solution, 14 on alcohol and 15 on cigarette with respective means and their corresponding standard deviations of 3.31 (0.47); 3.63 (0.55); 2.88 (0.83) and 3.28 (0.66) all maintained that marijuana, solution, alcohol and cigarettes were commonly abused among students. The table shows that items 2 on heroin, 3 on madrax, 4 on opium, 6 on tradyl, 10 on designer drugs and 11 on cocoa leaf with mean scores and corresponding standard deviations of 1.93 (0.83); 1.88 (0.41); 1.90 (0.75); 2.44 (0.42); 2.26 (0.46); and 1.95 (0.37) respectively were all rejected by respondents as common among the students. This means that, codeine, benylin, tramadol, tutolin, Valium, marijuana, solution, alcohol and cigarette are substances commonly abused among secondary school students

4.1.2 Research Question Two

What is the perceived influence of substance abuse on class attendance among secondary school students in Nasarawa State?

Answer to research question two is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Influence of Substance Abuse on Class Attendance among Secondary School Students.

S/N	Items	N	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{x}$	Std.D.	Decision
20.	Irregular attendances to class by students who abuse substances negatively affects their academic performances	744	454	232	37	21	3.50	0.52	Accept
21.	Physical effects of substances result to irregular class attendances which negatively affect students' academic performances	744	402	283	48	11	3.45	0.38	Accept
22.	The low self-esteem of students who abuse substances makes them avoid classes leading to poor academic performances	744	418	289	31	6	3.50	0.38	Accept
23.	Students who abuse substances keep friends that encourage them to miss classes leading to low academic performance	744	425	312	0	7	3.56	0.30	Accept
24.	The low grades associated with missing classes further discourages attendance leading to poor performances among students	744	471	267	6	0	3.63	0.25	Accept
	Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation						3.53	0.37	Accept

The data presented in Table 2 shows influence of substances abuse on class attendance among secondary students in Nasarawa State. Responses on item 31 having mean scores of 3.50 with corresponding standard deviations 0.52 showed that, irregular attendances associated with abuse substances negatively affect students' academic performances. Responses on item 32 having mean scores of 3.45 with corresponding standard deviations of 0.38 indicated that, physical effects of substances on students result to irregular class attendances which negatively affect academic performances. On item 33 with mean scores of 3.50 with corresponding standard deviations of 0.38 respondents indicated that, low self-esteem of students who abuse substances makes them avoid classes leading to poor academic performances.

Also, responses on item 34 with mean of 3.56 and standard deviation of 0.30 showed that, Students who abuse substances keep friends that encourage them to miss classes leading to low academic performances. Similarly, respondents indicated on item 35 having mean scores

of 3.63 with corresponding standard deviations of 0.25 that, the low grades associated with missing classes further discourages attendance leading to poor performances among students. A cluster means of 3.53 with a corresponding standard deviation of 0.56 indicated that, substance abuse influences class attendance among secondary students.

Hypothesis One

Substance abuse has no significant influence on class attendance among secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

The result of this hypothesis is presented in Table 3.

Table 9: Chi-Square Test Of Significant of Influence of Substance Abuse on Class Attendance among Secondary School Students in Nasarawa State.

	N	χ^2	Df	Sig.	α	Decision
Substance abuse has no significant influence on class attendance among Senior Secondary School Students	744	116.27 ^a	12	.000	0.05	Rejected

($P < 0.05$)

Table 9 presents a summary of chi-square (X^2) test on influence of substance abuse on completion of assignments among secondary school students. The result shows that, X^2 calculated value of 116.27 is greater than the critical value of 21.03 at 0.05 level of significance at 12 degree of freedom. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that substance abuse has no significant influence on class attendance among secondary school students is rejected. This indicates that, substance abuse has significant influence on class attendance among secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings on hypothesis four revealed that substance abuse has significant influence on class attendance among secondary school students in Nasarawa State. This finding is consistent with the findings of Soares et al. (2019) who found out that, drug patterns of students significantly influenced their class attendance and academic performance. This finding also agrees with Chukwu et al. (2017) who revealed that there existed a link between drug abuse and truancy among students. This means that, substance abuse leads to increased absenteeism and dropout among students. The findings disagree with Abisola and Sani (2015) who observed that there is significant positive relationship between drug abuse, note taking, students' use of library, time allocation for study and students' academic performance. The

reason for the difference in the result of the studies could be that, there is the absence of basic school facilities or bias in the perception of the respondent on relationship between drug and substance abuse and academic performance of students in their areas. This means that there should be improvement in basic learning facilities and the urgent need to intensify awareness against drug and substance abuse among senior secondary school students in Nasarawa State.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are made: Substance abuse has been found to have significant influence on academic performance variables such as class attendance. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendation was made: Ministry of education officials through regular awareness campaigns should continue to emphasize the perceived influence of substance abuse on class attendance of senior secondary school students so that by avoiding such negative influence, they will achieve their goals of academic performance.

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