

The pattern and risk of alcohol and cannabis use among tertiary institution students in Northwestern Nigeria

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Background

In the past decade, WHO has indicated that 8.9% of total burden of disease is accounted by psychoactive substance use. Tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug use are factors that contributed to 12.4% of all deaths worldwide in the year 2000. The extent of worldwide psychoactive substance use is estimated at 2 billion alcohol users, 1.3 billion tobacco users, and 185 million illicit drugs users.

The level of industrialization, urbanization and increased exposure to modernized lifestyle have contributed to the spread of substance use with alcohol and tobacco acting as the “gateway drugs” to the use of other psychoactive substances. Globally, youths have been identified as a risk group for its use and dependence but there is knowledge gap in Northern Nigeria. This study aimed to determine the pattern and risk of psychoactive substance use among university students in northwestern Nigeria.

Methods

A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted among Kaduna State University students from January to April 2015 in Kaduna, Northwestern Nigeria. Kaduna State University is a state-owned tertiary educational institution that was established in May 2004. During the 2013-14 academic session, the university had 6,000 registered students. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the university authority and informed consent from each participant. The WHO Students’ Drug Use Questionnaire that had been previously validated in Nigeria was used to obtain the drug use information from the subjects. Analysis of the data was conducted using SPSS version 21.

Results

A total of 354 students were evaluated: males (68.5%) and females (31.5%); mean age was 22 years (± 4.04). The prevalence of alcohol use was 29.7% with a distribution of 33.9% and 20.6%, respectively for males and females (OR=1.98, CI=1.15-3.41; $p=0.012$). Overall, the prevalence of cannabis use was 10.7% with

significant difference (OR=4.31; CI=1.49-12.48; p=0.00) between males (14.0%) and females (3.6%).

Conclusion

Alcohol and cannabis use is prevalent especially among male students. We provide recommendations within the context of existing challenges and opportunities to deploy effective health promotion interventions including a review of academic curriculum to include modules on substance abuse.

Key words: Nigeria; Prevalence; Psychoactive substance use; Risk; Sub-Saharan Africa

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