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## Psychosocial factors affecting adolescent alcohol abuse in Edo State, Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

*The need for youths to seek the indulgence of alcohol in coping with the psychological aspect of life is of growing concern. The study was carried out to identify the psychosocial factors predicting towards adolescent alcohol abuse. A non experimental descriptive design was used for this study, purposive /convenience and cluster sampling was used to select a sample frame of one hundred youths in Edo state, Nigeria. Data was collected via a self developed questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data with a 5% level of significance. The result of the study revealed that there was significant association ( $P<0.05$ ) between peer group influence and a tendency towards adolescent alcohol abuse, the study also revealed that significant associations ( $P<0.05$ ) also exist between instability, parental consumption of alcohol and adolescent alcohol abuse. It is recommended that parents and care providers should understand the factors affecting adolescent alcohol abuse. An understanding of these factors could help reduce the incidence of this phenomenon in the society.*

**Key Words:** Psychosocial, Adolescent, Alcohol abuse.

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### INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse is a maladaptive pattern of continuing substance use despite knowledge of impaired social, occupational, psychological or physical functioning caused or exacerbated by the use (Benzer, 2006). Substance abuse among teenagers usually occurs on a spectrum from experimentation to total dependence. The abused substance may be nicotine, alcohol or an over the counter (OTC) prescription or illegal drug. The Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorder (DSM IV) 2007 *ed*, defines alcohol abuse as repeated use of alcohol despite recurrent adverse consequences. The issue of substance abuse is a psychological and biological problem (Brown, 2009). Laurie (2001) stated that alcohol impairs both mental and motor functions including hand-eye coordination. Vacoules (1997) noted that alcohol is a central nervous system depressant. He further stated that although most people think that alcohol makes an individual intoxicated, at high levels of its concentration in the blood it can cause death by depressing the respiratory centre.

Adolescence is a span of years during which boys and girls move from childhood to adulthood, developing mentally, physically and socially. Okubanjo (1998) stated that this developmental stage is characterised by wanton curiosity, this curiosity leads to the experimentation of these adolescents on various substances such as alcohol, marijuana and over the counter drugs (OTC). Alcohol abuse in adolescents begins mostly at eighth grade then increases with age and reaches its peak between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two (18-22) years (Marley *et al*, 2004). Zucker and Goldberg (1996) stated that the average age when teenagers first try alcohol is 13 years for girls and 11 years for boys, thus indicating that boys are more liable to come in contact with alcohol before their female counterparts. Grant (2002) reported that two (2) out of three (3) students at age of 21 years are alcoholics, with men most likely to engage in heavy drinking than women. Fifty percent (50%) of high school students surveyed reported they had at least one drink in the last 30 days and 31% reported having up to five drinks on at least one occasion in the past 30 days (Laurie, 2001).

Adolescent abuse of alcohol is actually motivated by certain factors which can be traumatic or degenerative in nature; these factors threaten the physical integrity of a teenager and can make the individual have a sense of insecurity, aggression, lack of independence and frustration (Laurie, 2001). The strongest and most researched correlate of adolescent alcohol abuse is peer pressure (White and Jackson, 2005). Peer pressure can be defined as pressure by a social group to adopt a particular style or attitude in order to belong to such group (Encarta, 2009). Ting-Kai (2002), states that the societal demand of peer group pressure on them mainly by the group of friends leads to societal pressure on them. Borsari and Carey (2001), maintain that peer influence is exerted directly (e.g., overt drink offers or urges to drink) and indirectly (e.g., modelling perceived social norms). Jackson *et al* (2005) further opined that one of the strongest correlates of drinking among emerging adults is perceived norms. Many college students may drink more because of their misperceptions about the norms of drinking on their campuses; they may increase their drinking to facilitate peer interactions. Donovan *et al* (2007) found that it was best friend's alcohol use and not the alcohol use of the larger friendship group that predicted initiation of alcohol use among 6th, 8th, and 10th grade students.

Parental drinking patterns have been shown to affect drinking by offspring over the life course. Young people model their own behaviour on their parents' patterns of consumption (including quantity and frequency), situations and contexts of use, attitudes regarding use, and use expectancies (White *et al*, 2000). Young adult offspring from the families with alcoholism had elevated levels of alcohol problems compared with peers with no family history of alcoholism. The likelihood of starting to drink was also found to relate to adolescent perceptions of greater mother's and father's permissiveness and to lower levels of adolescent identification with the mother. The structure and environment of the family unit, as well as parent-child relationship attributes (e.g. parenting style, attachment and bonding, nurturance, abuse or neglect, conflict, discipline, and monitoring), have been found to correlate with adolescent alcohol use (White and Jackson, 2005). Adolescent alcohol abuse is very rampant in Edo state Nigeria; it became expedient to identify the major factors affecting adolescent alcohol abuse in Edo state, Nigeria.

#### **Objectives:**

The main objective of the study is to identify and assess the impact of various psychosocial factors on adolescent alcohol abuse in Egor local government area of Edo state, Nigeria.

#### **Research Hypotheses:**

- There is no significant association between peer group influence and adolescent alcohol abuse
- There is no significant relationship between emotional instability and adolescent alcohol abuse
- There is no significant association between parental consumption of alcohol and adolescent alcohol abuse

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### **Research Methodology**

This is a descriptive non-experimental study conducted in Egor local government area of Edo state, Nigeria. Egor local government area is a highly urbanized community with a population of about 15000 people. The study population consisted of all the students of a public secondary school aged between 13-19 years. This population was chosen majority of the students of the secondary school were within ages 13 -19 years. Convenience and cluster sampling was used to select a sample frame of a hundred adolescents from the population. The instrument for data collection was a self structured questionnaire engineered to suit the purpose of the study. Data collected was analysed and results were presented using descriptive statistics in the form of percentages and frequency and inferential statistics in form of chi square with level of significance set 0.05(5%).

### **RESULTS**

Table I showed that 62% of the respondents are males while 38% of them are females, the study also revealed that 33% of the respondents are between ages 12-15 years while 67% of the respondents are between 16-19 years. 94% of the respondents are Christians, 5% Muslims and 1% Traditional worshippers. 66% of the respondents are from monogamous families, 30% from polygamous homes and 4% from single parent homes

Table II showed that majority (94%) of the respondents agreed that peer group influence affected adolescent alcohol abuse, 69% of the respondents disagreed that the economic status of parents played a significant role in adolescent alcohol abuse, 51% of the respondents agreed that the prevailing environmental conditions affected the rate of adolescent alcohol abuse, 84% of the respondents believed that frequent family conflicts drove adolescents to alcohol abuse, 96% of the respondents agreed that low parental supervision was a major factor affecting adolescent alcohol abuse and 69% of the respondents believed that children with alcohol consuming parents were more prone to adolescent alcohol abuse.

Table I: Socio-Demographic Status of Respondents (n = 100)

VARIABLES	PERCENTAGE
<b>SEX</b>	
Male	62
Female	38
<b>AGE</b>	
12-15years	33
16-19years	67
<b>RELIGION</b>	
Christian	94
Muslim	5
Traditional	1
<b>FAMILY BACKGROUND</b>	
Monogamous	66
Polygamous	30
Single parent	4

Table II: Factors Affecting Adolescent Alcohol Abuse (n =100)

VARIABLES	RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE (%)
Peer groups	Strongly Agree	60
	Agree	34
	Undecided	0
	Disagree	5
	Strongly Disagree	1
Economic status of parents	Strongly Agree	3
	Agree	22
	Undecided	6
	Disagree	58
	Strongly Disagree	11
Environmental condition	Strongly Agree	10
	Agree	41
	Undecided	11
	Disagree	33
	Strongly Disagree	5
Emotional Instability	Strongly Agree	20
	Agree	50
	Undecided	4
	Disagree	15
	Strongly Disagree	11
Frequent family conflict	Strongly Agree	27
	Agree	57
	Undecided	0
	Disagree	13
	Strongly Disagree	3
Low parental supervision	Strongly Agree	38
	Agree	58
	Undecided	2
	Disagree	2
	Strongly Disagree	0
Parental consumption of alcohol	Strongly Agree	32
	Agree	37
	Undecided	0
	Disagree	23
	Strongly Disagree	8

Table III: Association between Variables and alcohol abuse

VARIABLES	Chi SQUARE	REMARKS
Peer group influence	139.1	Significant
Emotional instability	63.1	Significant
Parental alcohol consumption	48.2	Significant

$Df = 4; X^2_{tabulated} = 9.49$

Table III showed that there were significant associations ( $P < 0.05$ ) between peer group influence, emotional instability and parental alcohol consumption respectively and adolescent alcohol abuse.

## DISCUSSION

The Socio- demographic analysis of the respondents in this study revealed that 62% of the respondents are 38% female, 33% of the respondents were between ages 12 – 15 years while 67% of the respondents were within ages 16

-19 years. It also revealed that 66 % of the respondents were from monogamous homes, 30% from polygamous homes and 4% from single parented homes.

The study revealed that 69% of the respondents believed that adolescents with alcohol consuming parents are more prone to adolescent alcohol abuse than adolescent with teetotalers as parents. The study also revealed that there was a significant association between adolescent alcohol abuse and parental consumption of alcohol. This finding is in consensus with earlier findings of Zucker and Goldberg (1996), who stated that the personality of an individual develops as the person grows and develops into an adult and that traits frequently expressed during the developmental phase of an individual almost entirely manifests in adulthood. White et al (2000), also stated that Parental drinking patterns have been shown to affect drinking by offspring over the life course and that young people often model their own drinking patterns based on their parents' patterns of alcohol consumption. It also revealed that 51% of the respondents believed that adolescent drinking pattern was influenced by the dominating environmental conditions. This result is in support of Grant (2010), who stated that in an environment where excessive alcohol and drug use is accepted, the incidence of substance abuse is usually high. Willis and Cleary (1996), and Andrews et al (1997), further stated that the individuals who received more emotional support from their environment are less likely to turn to heavy drinking.

The study also revealed that 94% of the respondents believed that peer groups have a large influence on the drinking patterns of adolescents. It also revealed that a significant association ( $P < 0.05$ ) exist between peer group influence and alcohol abuse in adolescents. This corroborates with earlier findings of Jackson et al (2005), which stated that peer influences is one of the strongest correlates of adolescent alcohol abuse. Field (2002), and Akinboba (2009), also stated that peer pressure exerts the greatest impact on the life of adolescents. This usually occurs due to the fact that adolescents prefer friends to family during this period; they usually conform to the standards set by their peer group. Emotional instability was found to have a significant association ( $P < 0.05$ ) with adolescent alcohol abuse. 70% of the respondents believed that emotional instability has a relationship with adolescent alcohol abuse. This is in concordance with White and Jackson (2005), who stated that extremely high levels of negative affect, as seen in anxiety disorders, are associated with problem drinking in college students. Jackson and Sher (2003), found that alcohol use disorders were associated with psychological distress. Jackson *et al* (2005), further opined that children exposed to high levels of life stress are temperamentally hyper-reactive to stress. These children develop high levels of emotional distress and drink to relieve these feelings.

### CONCLUSION

The practice of using substances to make one feel better is as old as humans themselves. However, the indulgence of adolescents in this practice is of increasing concern. The causes of alcoholism have been widely debated for a long time. Probably the most popular theory is that alcoholism is a disease (Gitlow, 1973). According to this theory, the alcoholic sometimes differ from others who consume alcohol. Due to the fact that most people can control their drinking habit but the alcoholic cannot (Jellinek 1996).

This study shows that environment, parent drinking and drinking by peers are significantly related to onset of drinking habit in adolescents. In addition, the amount that a person drinks in a particular situation can be significantly influenced by the drinking behaviour of a model (parents, friends). Beyond this, there is also evidence that the likelihood of becoming an alcoholic is increased if the person has a history of deviant behaviour and lacks the social skills for dealing with distressed situation (Donovan, 2007).

Finally, it is important that parents and care providers should know and understand the factors affecting adolescent alcohol abuse, as a significant understanding of these factors can assist in reducing the incidence of adolescent alcohol abuse in the society.

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