

The Benefits of Students' Support Follow-Up Program on Students Involved In Substance Abuse: Empirical Evidence from Babcock University Community.

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to assess the benefits of Babcock University Student Support Center follow-up program to students involved in substance use and abuse. In this inquiry, a survey study design of quantitative employed. The registered students tested positive for drugs were 57 in total. A deliberate (purposive) sampling technique was adopted for this study. The total sample was used. The data were gathered mainly by using self-developed questionnaire. The data collected were tabulated and analyzed using statistical tools mean, percentage and frequencies. The outcome of this study revealed that 98.5 per cent of the participants were aware of and knowledgeable of substance abuse, while 93.6 per cent of the participants of this study adequately rated the effectiveness okay. Also, it was revealed that the perceived attitude towards the Student Support Centre (SSC) follow-up service(s) was positive; and the perceived views of the students involved in substance abuse in relation to improving the Student Support Centre (SSC) follow-up program was mixed. Therefore, it was concluded that those students involved in substance abuse need high quality and cost effective treatment as well as proper monitoring. It was recommended that the university should make effort to handle issues of students with the assistance of the Student Support Center before making any critical decision of suspension by the disciplinary committee.

Key words: Student Support Center, substance use and abuse, Babcock University, follow-up program

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I. INTRODUCTION

The improvement of students' mental health is difficult without addressing the use and abuse of psychoactive substances that occurs in schools. The schools are a reflection of the lack of civility in society. In such environments, students cannot learn because they are not physically, mentally, and emotionally connected. Frequently, the propensity of drug use and abuse in a community spills into the schools. Although the situation in some schools and neighbourhood is more serious than others, the goal of educators is to create a safe and disciplined learning environment that will promote civility and drug free students. Olaore (2010) noted that total abstinence from alcoholic beverages, narcotics and other illicit drugs is one the basic principles of the Seventh-day Adventist. This rule influenced the policy on a drug-free environment with no tolerance for alcohol in its slightest form regardless of the students' and their families' values and beliefs on alcohol or other substance use.

However, the growing and increasing rate of substance use among the youths is alarming. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2015) defined substance abuse as the "harmful" or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs. In a psychoactive substance use and misuse study, the results revealed that lifetime proportions of drug use as: alcohol 58%, tobacco 17%, sedatives 14%, stimulants 2.4%, and cannabis 3% (Gureje, *et al.*, 2007). In another study among undergraduate students in the United States, the prevalence of alcohol use was 84.7%, marijuana 32.8% and cocaine 6% (Johnston, *et al.*, 2004). Alcohol and drug abuse is a widely recognized problem on college campuses (Dejong, *et al.*, 2009).

The problem of drug use among youths in Nigeria has a unique slant because Nigerian Universities admit students who are still in mid-adolescence. The minimum age of entry into Nigerian Universities is 16 (JAMB, 2006/2007), which lowers the average age of students in tertiary institutions. The rates of substance use are higher in adolescence than during childhood, possibly due to the fact that in the second decade of life, young people encounter a rapidly widening world of opportunity, accompanied by rapid changes in all areas of their lives (Olaore, 2010).

The literature on college student mental health clearly stated that college students experience various life transitions and stressors that increase their risk of mental disorders i.e., depression, anxiety, eating disorders, substance use disorders, and suicidal behavior (Hunt, *et al.*, 2010). It was reported that the rates of psychiatric disorders are much higher among adolescents with current substance abuse and have been replicated in many studies (Igwe and Ojinnaka, 2010). They concluded that substance-abusing adolescents seem to have a high prevalence of mental health symptoms compared to their peers who do not use substances.

The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2009) reported that risk of exposure to substance abuse has become one of the factors that influence the development of the burden of disease. It was also noted that one-third of the disease burdens of adults can be associated with behaviours that began in adolescence. WHO (2009) further stressed that alcohol may have more immediate and severe effects on young people because their muscle mass is smaller than that of adults. Oshodi, *et al.* (2010) also stated that extensive use of caffeine has been associated with brain fatigue syndrome, a culture-bound syndrome among West African students. They noted that brain fatigue syndrome usually presents poor study assimilation, functional somatic complaints involving the head and neck region, and visual disturbances.

A report by NAFDAC (2008) noted that the abuse of licit and illicit drugs is forming a student sub-culture in Nigeria. This development is a significant concern for Nigerian society and immediate attention is required. When a drug is abused it causes injury to the brain and often irreversible alterations in the central nervous systems. When psychoactive substances destroy several thousand neurons, the consequences are fatal and a number of students have died from drug overdoses.

Substance use and abuse has been a crucial issue among undergraduates while some universities such as Babcock University has found a way of curbing substance use and abuse by the establishment of the Student Support Centre (SSC) follow-up program. It is a program that seeks to keep the sign up students from relapse. This research seeks to examine the benefits of the SSC follow-up program on students involved in substance abuse.

From the aforementioned, this research work is on the evaluation of the benefits of Babcock University Student Support Center follow-up program to students involved in substance use and abuse.

Research Questions

1. What is the participants' knowledge of substance use and abuse?
2. What is the perceived attitude of the students involved in substance use towards the Student Support Centre (SSC) follow-up program?
3. What is the effectiveness of the Student Support Center follow-up program to the Participants?
4. What factors will improve the Student Support Centre (SSC) follow-up program?

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design: Cross-sectional descriptive study design was used to carry out this study because it studies a section of the population and the result can be generalized to everyone in that population.

Study Area: This study was carried out in Babcock University, situated in Ilishan Remo, Ogun State, South-Western zone of Nigeria. Babcock University is a Seventh-Day Adventist institution of higher learning established June 17th 1999. Babcock University currently has nine schools and one college, they are 1) School of Agriculture & Industrial Technology Babcock Business School, 2) Benjamin Carson School of Medicine, 3) Veronica Adeleke School of Social Science, 4) School of Basic & Applied Science, 5) School of Computing & Engineering Sciences, 6) School of Education and Humanities, 7) School of Nursing 8) School of public and Allied Health.

Population of Study: The target population of this study is made up of the students involved in substance abuse that are registered in the Student Support Center (SSC) follow-up program of Babcock University, Ogun State.

Sample Size and Technique: For the sample size, the study was carried out on registered students in the SSC follow-up program. The registered students are 57 in total. A deliberate (purposive) sampling technique was adopted for this study. The total sample was used.

Research Instruments: Researcher developed questionnaire was employed to collect data about demographic characteristics of the respondents, as well as for the variables of the study. This include knowledge on substance abuse; perceived attitudes of the participants to the program; the effectiveness of the SSC follow-up program; and perception in regards to SSC follow-up program's improvement. Pilot test was conducted with objective to assess the relevance of the tools used in collecting the data for the investigation. Its aim was to find out ambiguities, omissions, and misunderstanding of each item before they are administered to the main study. A reliability index of 0.73 was obtained.

Data Collection Procedure: A close-ended questionnaire was administered by a research assistant to the 57 registered students of the Student Support Center follow-up program due to confidentiality. It was administered in the morning and afternoon during their counselling sessions and retrieved the same time.

Ethical Consideration: Informed consent of the respondents was obtained before administering the questionnaires. The questionnaire was structured in a way the respondents will not reveal identity like names. Filling of the questionnaire was voluntary and had no negative effect on the respondent. Clearance and permission of study was gotten from the Student Support Centre.

Data Analysis: the collected data was analyzed and interpreted using percentage/frequency and t-test. Before proceeding to the actual statistical analysis, assumptions associated with the use of each of the analysis were checked.

III. RESULTS

Preliminary Results

In the age bracket as shown in the figure 1 below, 4 (7%) of the respondents claimed they are between the ages of 14 and 16 years. Seven (12.3%) of the respondents were 17-19 years of age, 32 (56.1%) were between 20 and 23 years of age, and 12 (21.1%) were between 23 and 25 years. It should be noted that 2 of the participants failed to give their ages. This distribution is not too surprising because the most of the respondents of this study were still young adults.

The result of the analysis of the demographic variable as regards participants' religious affiliation revealed that 48 (80.7%) of the participants were Christians, 10 (17.5%) were Muslims, and 1 (1.8%) was rated as others. The participants' ethnic group revealed that 26 (45.6%) of the participants were Yoruba, 6 (10.5%) were Hausa, 23 (40.4%) were Igbo, and the remaining 2 (3.5%) were from other tribes. The reason for the high population observed among the Yoruba is because the study area is situated in Yoruba land.

The participants' parental background revealed that 9 (15.8%) were divorced, 20 (35.1%) were separated while the remaining 28 (49.1%) of the parents were still living together. However, the class level of the students show that 8 (14%) students were in 100 level, 7 (12.3%) in 200 level, 18 (31.6%) were in 300 level and 400 level respectively, 5 (8.8%) were in 500 level, and 1 (1.8%) in 600 level. The duration of program engagement by the SSC for the students ranges from 1 week to 2 years. The participants' level of engagement revealed that 13 (22.8%) of the participants were engaged for 1-3 weeks, 4 (7%) for 1-2 months, 23 (40.4%) for 3-6 months, 4 (7%) for 7-11 months and the remaining 13 (22.8%) 1-2 years.

Table 1: Participants' level of awareness and knowledge of substance use and abuse

| Knowledge and Awareness of Substance Abuse | Yes | No |
|---|--------------|-------------|
| Do you know about substance abuse? | 57 (100%) | nil |
| Do you know that the abuse of alcohol and drugs can be injurious to health? | 57 (100%) | nil |
| Do you know the abuse of alcohol and drugs can have a negative impact socially, spiritually, academically and physically? | 57 (100%) | nil |
| Do you know the excessive use of alcohol and drugs can lead to addiction? | 57 (100%) | nil |
| Do you know the abuse of alcohol and drugs influences negative behaviour? | 57 (100%) | nil |
| Do you know the hazardous use of alcohol and drugs can damage target organs in the body and eventually lead to death? | 57 (100%) | nil |
| Do you know the effect of alcohol and drugs vary from individual to individual depending on the genetic make-up? | 51 (89.5%) | 6 (10.5%) |
| Weighted percentage | 98.5% | 1.5% |

The outcome of the first research question that stated "What is the level of awareness and knowledge of substance abuse of the students involved in substance abuse" was revealing. It was found out that 98.5 percent of the participants were well aware of and knowledgeable of substance abuse and abuse. This finding is not accidental because those students who participated in this study were in one support program or the other at the Student Support Centre of Babcock University.

This section was also measured on a 7-points rating scale, where 0 to 3.5 indicated low level of knowledge and 3.6 to 7 indicated high level of knowledge. It was observed that participants had 6.89 (SE=0.41) with an SD of 0.30, which indicates a high level of knowledge.

Table 2: Perceived Attitudes of the Respondent Involved In Substance Abuse

| Perceived Attitudes of the Respondent Involved on Substance Abuse | SA | A | D | SD |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| The use of alcohol and drugs is the best remedy for stress | Nil | 9 (15.8%) | 32 (56.1%) | 16 (28.1%) |
| Alcohol and drugs should be allowed on campus | 1 (1.8%) | 2 (3.5%) | 26 (45.6%) | 28 (49.1%) |
| The SSC follow-up program is the best thing that has ever happened to me | 23 (40.4%) | 24 (42.1%) | 8 (14.0%) | 2 (3.5%) |
| The SSC follow-up program should never have existed | 1 (1.8%) | 2 (3.5%) | 28 (49.1%) | 26 (45.6%) |
| The counselling and therapy sessions is a waste of time | 4 (7.0%) | 3 (5.3%) | 21 (36.8%) | 29 (50.9%) |
| The program is effective in curbing my substance intake | 21 (36.8%) | 29 (50.9%) | 5 (8.8%) | 2 (3.5%) |
| The program has added valuable knowledge to my life | 35 (61.4%) | 19 (33.3%) | 1 (1.8%) | 2 (3.5%) |

In answering the question that stated “What is the perceived attitude of the students involved in substance abuse towards the Student Support Centre (SSC) follow-up program?” The findings presented in Table 2 showed that 56.1 per cent of the respondents disagreed that the use of alcohol and drugs is the best remedy for stress, 28.1 per cent strongly disagreed, while 15.8 per cent claimed that drug use is the best remedy. On whether alcohol and drugs should be allowed on campus, 49.1 per cent strongly disagreed, 45.6 per cent disagreed, 3.5 per cent agreed and 1.8 per cent strongly agreed. Item 3 shows that 42.1 per cent agreed that the SSC follow-up program is the best thing that has ever happened to them, 40.4 per cent strongly agreed, 14 per cent disagreed while 3.5 per cent of the participants strongly disagreed. 49.1 per cent disagreed that the SSC follow-up program should never have existed, 45.6 per cent strongly disagreed, 3.5 per cent agreed and 1.8 per cent strongly disagreed. “The counselling and therapy session is a waste of time” was 50.9 per cent strongly disagreed rated, 36.8 per cent of the participants disagreed, 7 per cent strongly agreed, and 5.3 per cent agreed. Also, 50.9 per cent of the participant affirmed that program is effective in curbing their substance intake, 36.8 per cent strongly agreed, 8.8 per cent disagreed while 3.5 per cent per cent of the participants strongly disagreed. Lastly, 61.4 per cent strongly agreed that the program has added valuable knowledge to their lives, 33.3 per cent agreed, 3.5 per cent strongly disagreed, and 1.8 per cent disagreed. However, it could be deduced from all the responses of the participants that their perceived attitude towards the Student Support Centre (SSC) follow-up service(s) is positive. Therefore, the follow-up services rendered by the SSC on drug use and abuse to a great extent are effective in discouraging abuse and use of drugs of any form among Babcock students irrespective of gender, class or race.

This section was also measured on a 21-points rating scale, where 0 to 10.5 indicated negative attitude and 10.6 to 21 indicated positive attitude. It was observed that participants had 12.59 (SE=0.37) with an SD of 2.82, which indicates a positive attitude.

Table 3: Perceived Effectiveness of the SSC Follow-Up Program in Curbing Substance Abuse

| S/N | Perceived Effectiveness of the SSC Follow-Up Program | Yes | No |
|-----|--|--------------|-------------|
| 1 | Are you comfortable around your counsellor? | 53 (93.0%) | 4 (7.0%) |
| 2 | Do you often reach your counsellor when you need help? | 48 (84.2%) | 9 (15.8%) |
| 3 | Have there been any positive changes in your life since you got engaged in this program? | 55 (96.5%) | 2 (3.5%) |
| 4 | Have you gained any new knowledge about substance abuse in this program? | 54 (94.7%) | 3 (5.3%) |
| 5 | Are you treated appropriately by the staff? | 57 (100%) | Nil |
| 6 | Do you feel better physically, socially and spiritually since you got engaged in this program? | 53 (93.0%) | 4 (7.0%) |
| | Weighted percentage | 93.6% | 6.4% |

Comfortability around the counsellor was rated 93 per cent okay by the participants of this study. 84.2 per cent agreed that they often reach out for help from their counsellor when the need arise. On the benefits of

the program, 96.5 per cent confirmed that there have been positive changes in their life since they got engaged in SSC program; 94.7 per cent acquired new knowledge and skills of coping, while 93 per cent agreed that they feel better physically, socially and spiritually since their engagement with the program. It should be noted that all the participants agreed that they were treated appropriately by the staff of SSC. The outcome of the third research question that stated “What is the effectiveness of the Student Support Center follow-up program to the students involved in substance abuse” was not surprising because the attitude of the participants towards the program was positive. It was found out that 93.6 per cent of the participants of this study adequately rated the effectiveness okay.

Table 4: SSC Follow-Up Program's Improvement as perceived by the participants

| S/N | SSC Follow-Up Program's Improvement | Yes | No |
|-----|--|--------------|--------------|
| 1 | Do you have any suggestion in regards to improving the SSC follow-up program? | 26 (45.6%) | 31 (54.4%) |
| 2 | Do you think there should be a book giving a detailed description of SSC follow-up program? | 43 (75.4%) | 14 (24.6%) |
| 3 | Do you think the Student Support Centre should be located away from school due to confidentiality of identity? | 19 (33.3%) | 38 (66.7%) |
| 4 | Do you think it is a bad idea to involve parents in this program with regards to signing the behavioural consent form and letter of undertaking? | 27 (47.4%) | 30 (52.6%) |
| 5 | Do you think students in substance abuse should be in-patients in order to monitor and prevent relapse? | 19 (33.3%) | 38 (66.7%) |
| 6 | Do you think students involved in substance abuse should be restricted from leaving school without the consent of their parents? | 21 (36.8%) | 36 (63.2%) |
| | Weighted percentage | 44.4% | 55.6% |

The perceived views of the participants in relation to improving the Student Support Centre (SSC) follow-up program revealed that 45.6 per cent have suggestions on program improvement, while 75.4 per cent were of the opinion that there should be a book giving a detailed description of SSC follow-up program. On the location of the SSC, 66.7 per cent agreed that the Student Support Centre should remain where it is located and there is no need to move it away from school due to confidentiality of identity.

The involvement of parents in this program with regards to signing the behavioural consent form and letter of undertaking was 52.6 per cent agreed upon. 66.7 per cent of the participants disagreed that students with substance abuse should be in-patients in order to monitor and prevent relapse, and 63.2 per cent agreed that students involved in substance abuse should not be restricted from leaving school with or without the consent of their parents.

IV. CONCLUSION

Substance abuse and chemical dependency among young people has been a social problem and continues to be one of the most significant medical, social and economic problems facing mankind (Obianwu, 2005). Substance abuse among adolescents generally continues to be a societal problem which requires high quality and cost effective treatments (Smith and Hall, 2008). Therefore from this study, the researcher was able to conclude that these students involved in substance abuse need high quality and cost effective treatment as mentioned by Smith and Hall, 2008 because one-third of the disease burdens of adults can be associated with behaviours that began in adolescence (WHO, 2009). According to the findings, the Student Support Center follow-up program was established to prevent relapse of substance abuse in Babcock University is positively effective and the result of this research shows that there is hope for the youths if appropriate attention and care is provided to them.

V. RECOMMENDATION

From the findings in the study, it was discovered that even though the target population have a general knowledge of substance abuse and the SSC follow-up program is beneficial, it is best that students learn how to say “NO” to the use and abuse of these substances. It is therefore recommended that:

1. The Student Support Center should provide more information of the follow-up program in a book
2. Students should feel free to consult any counsellor at the Student Support Center if they are faced with challenges that they cannot handle themselves
3. The university should make effort to handle issues of students with the assistance of the Student Support Center before making any critical decision of suspension by the disciplinary committee

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