

Senior High School Students and Drugs Abuse, a Mathematical Survey for Educators and Policy Makers

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Abstract

The effects of drugs abuse on the youth have been widely documented by researchers. Many governments and non-governmental organizations that exist educate the youth about the dangers associated with drug abuse. Nonetheless there are still evidences of drug abuse among the youth including students at the Senior High Schools (SHSs) level in Ghana.

The use of drugs like tramadol, “wee”, alcohol and other illegal drugs has been commonly noticed among students in some schools in Ghana including the SHSs. The syndrome has both immediate and lasting negative effects in the lives of culprits such as, poor performance, fights among others.

Previously, punishments, suspension and canning were used to deter students from the practice but the recent relaxation of these rules in the education sector have paved way for drug abuse in some senior high schools in Ghana. While the situation is worrying not much has been researched to ascertain the situation amidst these relaxed school rules. This study was therefore conducted to determine the rate of drug abuse at the SHS, the factors causing it and suggest effective ways aimed at curbing the menace.

To achieve this, different SHS students were contacted during the holidays and administered a questionnaire that solicits the needed information from students regarding the practice. The results are expected to inform educators and policy on descent school administration as well as provide insights as to how drug abuse could be reduced if not eradicated in the senior schools. The study first identified the common drug that student’s abuse, the causes of drug abuse as well as assess the measures that could help reduce drug abuse among SHS students in the Kassena Nankana municipality.

Keywords: Drugs abuse, students, causes, common drugs

1. Introduction

According to medicine, a drug is any chemical agent used for the treatment, cure, prevention and diagnosis of diseases (Hansen, 2000). For drug abuse, The World Health Organization (WHO, 2006) has defined drugs as any substance that when taken into the system of a living organism, may modify one or more of its functions. Also, according to (Plested, 2007) drug abuse is the use of illegal drugs or the misuse of prescription or over-the-counter drugs for the purposes other than those for which they are meant to be used.

The most common illicit drugs or substances mostly abused include cannabis, amphetamines, ketamine, methamphetamines, cocaine, ecstasy and heroin (Peacock, 2018). Even though these drugs are often illegal in many countries like Ghana, there is an increasing incidence of its occurrence in many sections of the country including students in the senior high schools.

History has it that, in pre-colonial West Africa, long before the independent nations we have today, there were concerted efforts by western prohibitionists to control the production and consumption of alcoholic beverages. The Brussels's Act of 1890, which sought to put an end to the slave trade, also included bans on the importation into Africa of dangerous products, including "spirituous liquors".

Substance abuse has been described as a "chronic relapsing disease", with extremely high relapse rates that range from 56.8% to 81.8% (Cherry, 2018) and (Peacock, 2018)

In 2012, it was projected that between 162 million to 324 million people which corresponds to 5.2 per cent (between 3.5% and 7.0%) of the global population aged 15-64 years had been using an illegal substance mostly a drug which belongs to the opioids, cannabis, amphetamine or cocaine. Also, an estimated of 183,000 (range of 95.00 to 226.00) deaths related to drug use were recorded. The figure corresponds to a death rate of 40.0 (range of 20.0 to 49.3) deaths per million among the population aged 15-64 years. Recently, the United Nations report in 2017, gave an estimated 271 million people, or 5.5 per cent of the global population aged 15-64, had used substances in the previous year (United Nations World Drug Report 2019 p.7). This is 11.5% higher than the estimated number of substance-using people in 2012 (United Nations ,World Drug Report, 2012)

According to (UNODC, World Drug Report, 2023) the incidence of drug issues remain stable throughout the globe and 246 million people slightly over 5% of the worldwide population have used an illicit drug in 2013. Base on the report, globally, almost 27 million individuals or nearly a total population of a country like Ghana remains problem of substance users, which means that a lot of people are suffering from substance use and dependence according to global drug report. It also revealed that over 35 million people, representing 0.8% of adult population worldwide use heroin, cocaine or both.

According to (UNODC, World Drug Report, 2023) in 2021, 1 in every 17 people aged 15-64 in the world had used a drug in the past 12 months. The estimated number of users grew from 240 million in 2011 to 296 million in 2021 (5.8 per cent of the global population aged 15-64). This is a 23 per cent increase, partly due to population growth. Cannabis continues to be the most used drug, with an estimated 219 million users (4.3 per cent of the global adult population) in 2021. Use of the drug is increasing and although globally cannabis users are mostly men (about 70 per cent), the gender divide is reducing in some sub regions; women account for 42 per cent of cannabis users in North America. It is estimated that in 2021, 36 million people had used amphetamines, 22 million had used cocaine and 20 million had used "ecstasy"-type substances in the past year. The proportion of female users is higher in the case of amphetamine-type stimulants (45 per cent of users are women) and non-medical use of pharmaceuticals (between 45 and 49 per cent of users are women), whereas the highest share of men is found in users of opiates (75 per cent) and cocaine (73 per cent). Opioids continue to be the group of substances with the highest contribution to severe drug-related harm, including fatal overdoses. An estimated 60 million people engaged in non-medical opioid use in 2021, 31.5 million of whom used opiates (mainly heroin).

We choose to talk about only 2012, 2013 of the World Drug Report and compare with that of 2023 report (10, 11 years interval) and it is obvious that drug abuse has become common with people with school going age especially the SHS level.

Statistics from the (International Narcotics Control Board, 2015) shows that more than 35,000 youths in

Ghana engage in the use of drugs and a large chunk of this number of these youth are in SHS level. Issues related to drug use as well as abuse among the youth especially SHS students should not be seen as only health problem because it affects not only physical but cognitive and intellectual developments and can also affect work output when they finally join the work force. For instance, some people have it that it is due to drug abuse is responsible for a lot of rioting among SHS students in the Navrongo municipality in which it was reported that, the district police commander was injured in one of the incidence, we are not even talking about the loss of property which is adding to the cost of our already debts as a country. The situation of drug use among SHS students in Ghana has become one that is difficult to handle and control due to relaxation of discipline in the school. Also, partly because most drug users and drug sellers are very close to them. Consequently, the health implications, behavioral changes as well as academic effects for the engagement of our future leaders in this malpractice is not well understood by educators and most parents, most especially the Navrongo community. Regardless of this, very little studies have been conducted in the Municipality to ascertain the impacts of drug use on SHS student's academic performance, why they abuse drugs and more importantly how to stop or reduce the menace. What is worrying is that, most youth are at risk of being affected by the use of drugs while in school or even after school. Considering this problem, there is the need to unearth some knowledge in Navrongo concerning the effects of drug abuse on SHS students. The present study thus seek to address this significant gap and give possible means of restoring hope in our schools by first identifying the common drug that student's abuse, identify the causes of drug abuse as well as assess the measures that could help reduce drug abuse among SHS students in the Kassena Nankana municipality.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study Area, Design and Sampling

The study was carried out among public Senior High Schools (SHS) students in the Navrongo Municipality during the holidays. The Municipality is located in the upper east region of northern Ghana. It is adjacent to Kasena Nankana west district which is close to the border with Burkina Faso.

The municipality has six public Senior high schools. One male sex and one female sex school while the remaining four are mixed sex schools. The study was conducted during the holidays and so SHS students who are residents of Navrongo but are schooling outside the municipality were also involved.

The study employed a cross sectional research design to solicit information from students specific, socioeconomic and institutional variables that are relevant in explaining drug abuse among students of SHS in the Navrongo municipality.

The study was conducted in compliance with ethical principles among the students of different schools. The study protocol was discussed with students and all possible measures were taken to ensure the confidentiality of all respondent. Verbal informed consent was obtained from the students.

Four hundred and fifty students were conveniently selected in Navrongo town and the information was collected by the help of questionnaire with the duration of one months. The questionnaire was developed on the basis of thorough literature reviews and personal teaching experience at the senior high school. Convenient sampling was used because it the efficient and simple to implement base on the research aim of creating fear free environment to enable responders give accurate information.

Informal interviews and verbal counseling was done to enhance our understanding of previous and existing ratio of drug abuse in students. The eligibility criteria were adjusted in such a way that both genders (male, female) were studied.

2.2 Method of analysis

To be able to answer the research questions and for that matter achieved the objectives of this study, a Likert type questionnaire was developed to collect data from students for analysis. Likert scaling is a psychometric scale that was invented by a psychologist named Rensis Likert (Lobsy J, 2014). It is commonly used by researchers particularly in social science researches. Likert type questionnaire was used because it is easy for students to answer and it also a scale that has received a wide range of acceptance in the research community. The questions were developed with the objectives of this paper in mind. The questionnaire and its content was validated by experts before it was administered.

2.3 Results Analysis

Table 1. Sex, Age and Class level distribution of responders

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
SEX	Male	310	68.9	68.9
	Female	140	31.1	100.0
	Total	450	100.0	
AGE	12- 15 Yrs	291	64.7	64.7
	16-20Yrs	159	35.3	100.0
	Total	450	100.0	
Form	Form one	66	14.7	14.7
	Form two	89	19.8	34.4
	Form three	22	4.9	39.3
	Completed SHS 2021	273	60.7	100.0
	Total	450	100.0	
Do you use drugs like alcohol, etc?	Yes	203	45.1	45.1
	No	247	54.9	100.0
	Total	450	100.0	

Table 2. Knowledge and drug use distribution of responders

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Are there students on campus	Yes	302	67.1	67.1
	No	148	32.9	100.0
	Total	450	100.0	
Number of students who used drugs on Campus	About 1-10	201	44.7	44.7
	about 21-30	148	32.9	77.6
	31-100	52	11.6	89.1
	about 100	29	6.4	95.6
	Greater than 100	20	4.4	100.0
	Total	450	100.0	

How often do you think or see students use such drugs.	Very often	136	30.2	30.2
During entertainment	167	37.1	67.3	
During weekends	78	17.3	84.7	
During preps	14	3.1	87.8	
During free exeat	55	12.2	100.0	
Total	450	100.0		

Table 3. Statistics on common drugs used by students

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somehow Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somehow Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Alcohol	282	92	51	16	0	9	0
Cigarette	37	125	95	73	91	9	20
Wee/Marijuana	101	126	82	77	36	11	9
Tramadol	88	79	87	102	63	22	9
Methamphetamine	26	49	18	71	51	142	93
Cocaine	46	79	17	57	29	93	129
Pito	66	66	60	72	111	42	33

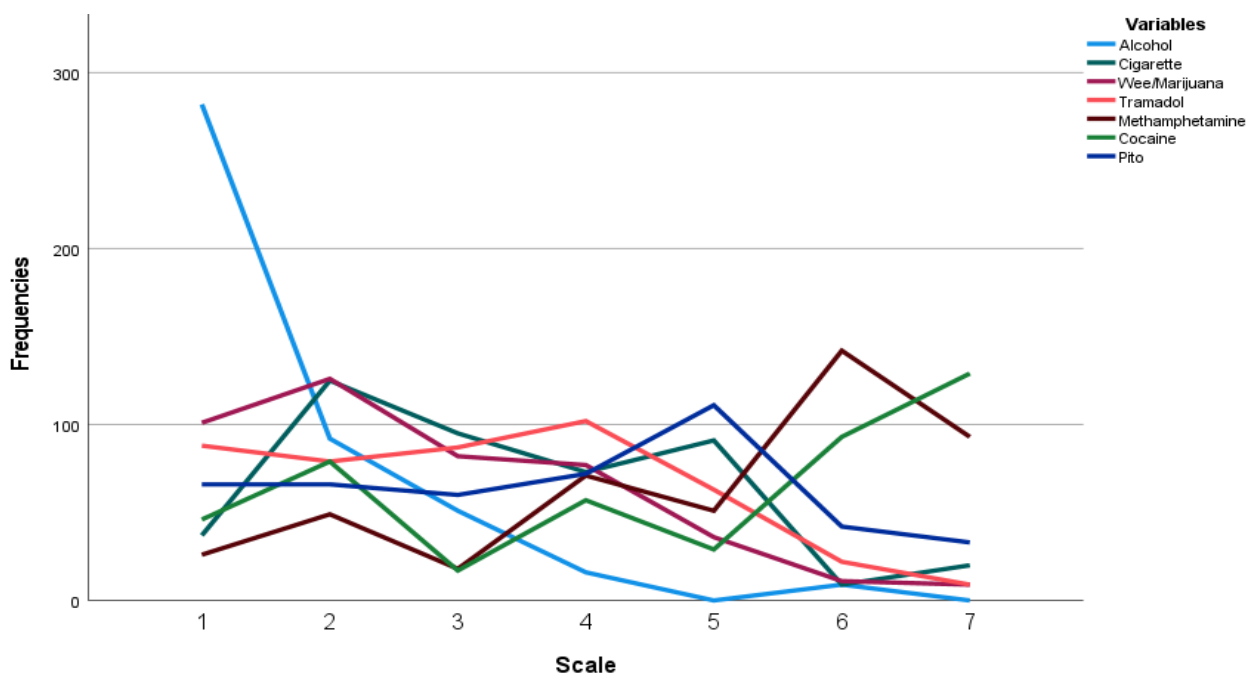


Figure1: Trends of different drugs abused by students

Table 3. Statistics on drugs related issues

	SA		A		D		SD		DK		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	Me an	Standa rd Deviat ion
There are students on this campus that often use at least one of the drugs in	209	(46.4%)	129	(28.7%)	60	(13.3%)	0	(0.0%)	52	(11.6%)	2.02	1.28
The use of such drugs by students affect other students around them.	258	(57.3%)	113	(25.1%)	18	(4.0%)	32	(7.1%)	29	(6.4%)	1.80	1.20
Students who take such drugs can leave school or classes in order to use o	167	(37.1%)	148	(32.9%)	42	(9.3%)	13	(2.9%)	80	(17.8%)	2.31	1.44
Who take such drugs are usually among those who engage in	188	(41.8%)	199	(44.2%)	45	(10.0%)	9	(2.0%)	9	(2.0%)	1.78	.86

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It is not difficult for students to get the drugs they use.	143	(31.8 %)	149	(33.1 %)	108	(4.0 %)	609	(15.3 %)	701	(15.8 %)	250	1.46
Students learn how to use drugs on this campus	218	(48.4 %)	155	(34.4 %)	0	(0.0 %)	106	(3.6 %)	601	(13.6 %)	199	1.36
Some know the effects of drugs abuse yet they still abuse drugs	222	(49.3 %)	152	(33.8 %)	20	(4.4 %)	400	(8.9 %)	106	(3.6 %)	184	1.09
Drug use/abuse is very common in the SHS now a days	203	(45.1 %)	184	(40.9 %)	106	(3.6 %)	209	(6.4 %)	108	(4.0 %)	183	1.04
Relaxation of discipline in the SHS make's students abuse drugs.	243	(54.0 %)	120	(26.7 %)	34	(7.6 %)	404	(9.8 %)	909	(2.0 %)	179	1.07

Table 4. Statistics on reasons students abuse drugs

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somehow Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Somehow Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Peer Pressure	310	39	18	50	22	0	11
Seniors Pressure	77	140	62	42	40	40	49
Fun/Enjoyment	96	157	51	46	27	53	20
For studies	72	27	33	100	82	18	118
Because of social problems	80	59	75	56	80	58	42
Depression	57	58	90	40	114	82	9
Anxiety	69	62	51	102	22	71	73

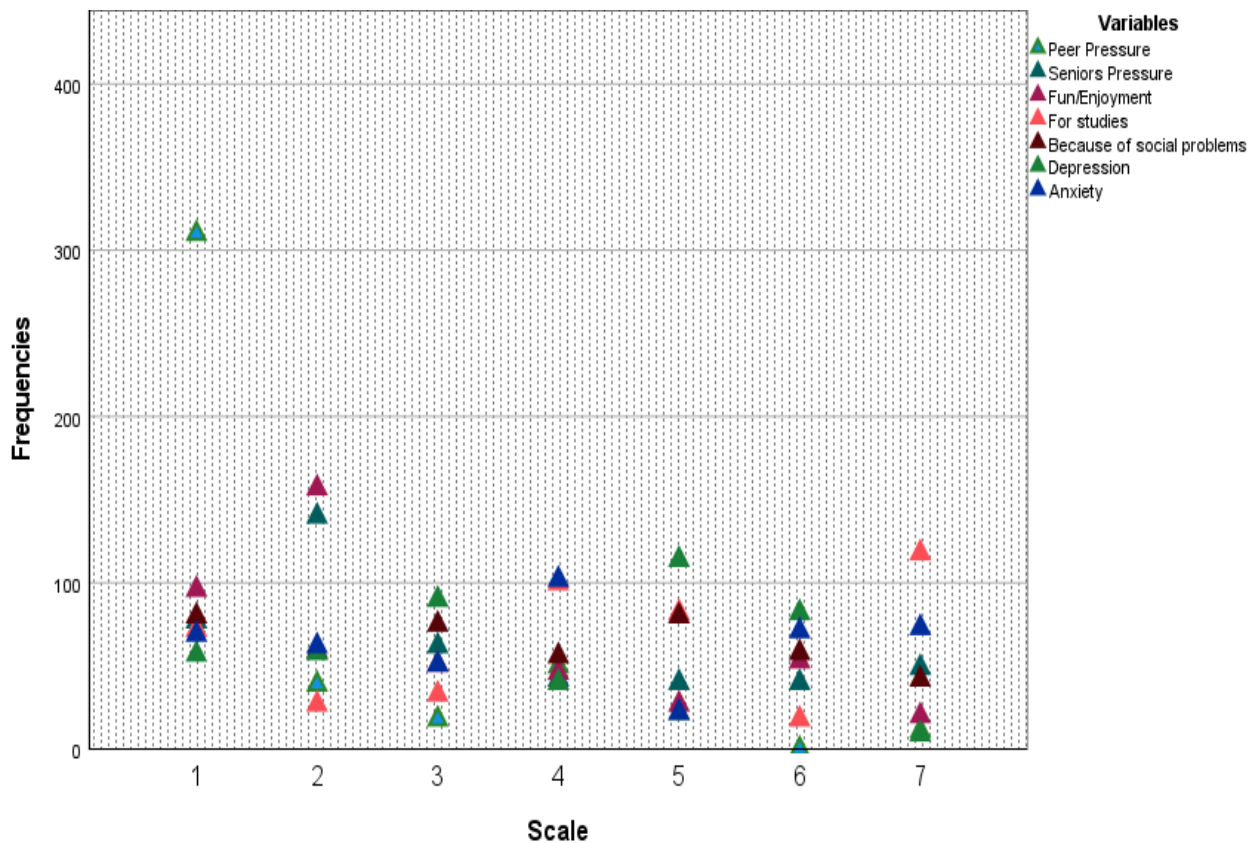


Figure2: Representation of reasons why students abuse drugs

Table 5. Statistics legalization of drug us on campus

Student should be allowed to abuse drugs on campus	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly agree	65	14.4	14.4	14.4
Agree	27	6.0	6.0	20.4
Disagree	62	13.8	13.8	34.2
Strongly disagree	261	58.0	58.0	92.2
Don't know	35	7.8	7.8	100.0
Total	450	100.0	100.0	

Table 6. Statistics on way of controlling drug abuse among responders

	Satisfied		Neutral		Dissatisfied		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	Mean	Standard Deviation
Punishment	207	(46.0%)	186	(41.3%)	57	(12.7%)	1.67	.69
Suspensions	55	(12.2%)	155	(34.4%)	240	(53.3%)	2.41	.70
Counselling	179	(39.8%)	148	(32.9%)	123	(27.3%)	1.88	.81

Discussions

A total of 450 responders responded to our questionnaire and out of this number, 309 are male whiles 141 are females. The wide gap was due to the fact that some female students were shy to answer the questionnaire. The age brackets of these responders are: 291 (age 12-15yrs) and 159 (age 16-20yrs). A total of 273 responders completed SHS in 2022 and the rest are 22, 89 and 66 for form 3, form 2 and form 1 respectively. From the data, 203 responders admitted that, they abuse drugs, 247 of the responders also indicated that there are at least 1to 10 students in their various campuses that abuse drugs. Thus from the statistics, there are at least 10 drugs abusers in our SHSs.

Even though substance abuse is never limited to particular social class or groups in human societies, its abuse at certain ages and stages especially school going age should be a worry to all. The study reveal that, generally students abuse drugs very often but it is increase by 18% during entertainments. The use of drugs during preps is however very low. Furthermore, the study shows that alcohol is the leading type of drug student often abuse followed by marijuana and tramadol respectively. From the study, students are affected either directly or indirectly by drug abusers and drug abusers are usually involve in unacceptable behaviors on their campuses.

One of the factor that catalyzed the uses of drugs among students is due to the fact that sources of drugs are very common and close to them. A shocking revelation is that about 82.4% of the responders indicated most of them learn how to use drugs on campus and peer pressure, social problems, fun/enjoyment and seniors pressure are the main cause of drug abuse on their campuses. The worrying thing is that, about 34 % of youth do not know the harmful effects of drug abuse and hence their involvement in the social canker. From the study, there is an increasing trend in drug abuse among SHS students and SHS graduates 54.0% of the responders indicated that, it is as a result of relaxation of discipline in the education sector. Additionally, the data shows that students use at least more than one drug, and according to (Poznyak, 2019) (Schindler, 2019) (Mignon, 2014)and (Bardo, 2004) the abuse of different types and forms of substances may generate different levels of addiction and harm which in turn may trigger distinct social

maladjustment and craving behaviors. Since SHS students are still growing, the effects of harm may be dangerous not only for the drug users but the society in which they stay.

Society is aware that substance abuse especially alcohol, marijuana and tramadol is a disease for young population today and SHS students are the most exposed. Students in KNMA make up a substantial proportion of our youth population that use drugs.

Conclusion

From the results, we concluded that abuse of drug was more common among SHS students of KNMA due to abandoned opportunities like easy access to drugs and relaxation of discipline in second cycle. The data gathered shows that, Students often abuse drugs but they abuse more during entertainment. The basic reason of the drug abuse that we have seen from the data is the easy access and availability of drug among students in their schools community.

Substance abuse greatly affects their thinking and studies as well as other students around them.

Our study considered 450 responders, even though we had good response rate, but still various restrictions need to be conceived. The study was done during the holidays and students were feeling free to answer without fear because their identity and school was not required. The disadvantage of this is that the responders may not be evenly distributed among the schools. So there is need in the future to research more and data collected at the various schools to find more elaborated results of this highly considerable issue which is spreading like a wild fire.

Policy makers should put in place measures that will reduce if not control drug abuse disease. One of such measures should be introduction of punitive punishment for students who abuse drugs on campus. This is because from this research, about 50% of the responders agreed that drug abusers should be punished. They should also make sure that permits are not granted to people who want to establish drinking spots near schools. This is because it has been revealed that drugs are common and close to students.

Educators should not only teach but should also counsel students very often with videos if possible for students to appreciate the effects and dangers of drug abuse. This is necessary since about 34% of youth do not know the harmful effects of drug abuse and hence their involvement in the social canker. They should also enforce all anti-drug abuse policies effectively from policy makers.

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