



Psychosocial Correlates of Cannabis Use among a Sample of Nigerian University Students

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ABSTRACT

Cannabis use among undergraduates is increasingly becoming a serious problem in Nigerian universities, with empirical reports showing its potential effects on academic performance and psychosocial health. There are however, paucity of research on possible psychosocial factors influencing cannabis consumption among Nigerian university students. This research examined parenting styles, self-esteem and peer pressure as correlates of cannabis use among undergraduates of Nigerian Army University, Bui. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design, using snowballing technique to recruit 106 students across all the Departments of the university. Standardised instruments were utilised to assess demographic information, parenting styles, self-esteem, peer pressure and cannabis use behaviour of the participants. Multiple regression was used to analyse the data, in line with research objective. Result indicated that authoritarian parenting and peer pressure are significant correlates of students' cannabis use, while authoritative, permissive and self-esteem were not significantly related with students' cannabis use. However, results further showed a significant joint influence of parenting styles, self-esteem and peer pressure on cannabis use, accounting for 13% of its variance. These results indicate that parenting, particularly strict and over controlling parenting and peer influences are the major reasons why university students indulge in cannabis use. It is recommended that university authority and parents should take cognizance of these factors to reduce the menace of cannabis use among undergraduates in Nigerian universities.

Introduction

Cannabis use among undergraduates has assumed a worrisome dimension and thus attracted the attention of researchers, policy makers and other relevant stakeholders. Globally, cannabis is one of the second most used illicit substance (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNODC, 2022), typically occurring between late adolescent and early adulthood (Degenhardt & Hall, 2012), which coincidentally corresponds with university age. Previous statistics have indicated that, after alcohol and tobacco, cannabis is one of the most commonly used substance by university students (Arbour-Nicitopoulos, 2010). A recent World Drug Report (2020) indicated that more than 35.6 million people suffer from substance use related disorders, which corresponds approximately to 5.2% of the total prevalence in Africa alone.

In Nigerian, rates of cannabis consumption among university students has been consistently high. Literature on the lifetime prevalence of cannabis use among university students in Nigeria ranged 1.4% in 1992, 20% in 2010 and 39.8% in 2017 (Ekwueme, & Chukwuneke, 2010; Akindutire & Adegboyega, 2012; Obi, Adayonfo, Iwueze & Ekwe, 2017), cutting across the three geo-political zones in the south (i.e. south-east, south-west and south-south) respectively. Same trend is reported in the northern Nigeria where rates of cannabis consumption is relatively higher. Report by Ahmed (2012) have shown that apart from cigarette and tramadol, cannabis is the most commonly abused drug in northern Nigeria. Accordingly, existing findings have reported steady progression in use of cannabis among northern Nigerian youths, ranging from 7.3%, 19.7% and 43.6% respectively (Idris & Sambo, 2009; Mohammed, 2014; Yunusa, Bello, Idris, Haddad, & Adamu, 2017).

At the Nigerian Army University Biu, there are many indicators and anecdotal evidences suggesting high cannabis use and dependence among university students. This has become more precarious with the co-existence of civilian and military population which previous research in Nigeria have associated with high cannabis use (Kazeem & Abdulkarim, 2014). Such co-existence of military and civilian students could increase vulnerability due to imitative and social learning possibilities that are imminent. This portends a danger and thus requires urgent research attention considering that increased cannabis use could affect students' cognitive abilities, leading to poor memory, concentration, attention, induce mental

laziness, which will ultimately affect academic performance and progress. Cannabis use among university students can also promote social vices, including but not limited to cultism, examination misconduct and malpractice, risky sexual behavior and gangsterism. Clearly, this indicates that cannabis consumption is a problem and justifies continuous research to unravel risk factors and new patterns, especially in high prevalent environments.

Suffice to say that there are existing research on correlates of cannabis use. In this regard, many factors such as sexual enhancement, conformity and coping (Renata, Ignes & Ivan, 2013), family background, attendance of social events, peer pressure (Shehu & Idris, 2008), reading at night and attempt to relieve stress (Oshodi, Aina, Onajole, 2010) have been implicated. It is worthy to note that, aside these factors, there are other salient variables that can make university students to indulge in cannabis use. Prior parental influences, students' evaluation of self-worth and peer influences are other germane factors that can influence cannabis use particularly among university students.

Parenting styles are various techniques that parents employ in bringing up their children. According to Baumrind (1997) three basic parenting styles exist, namely authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting style. Authoritative parenting which is the best style of parenting because it involves punishing the child when needed and pampering the child when needed; the child knows the consequences of his actions described and knows why rules are set. The authoritarian parenting on the other hand is also known as strict parenting because the child has no decision of his or her own and he or she is constantly under the shadow of his parents. In this kind of parenting, parents are usually over strict and never allow their children to express themselves. Permissive parenting is a parenting style in which parents provide excessive freedom, love and care to their children. Documented research has shown that exposure to different parenting styles leads to different psychosocial and physical outcomes in both adolescents and youths (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Arria, Kuhn, Caldeira, Grady, Vincent & Wish, 2018). Therefore, early parental experiences may influence current cannabis use in Nigerian university students, but this has not been well understood.

Self-esteem is another factor that may influence cannabis use in university students. This is defined as the evaluation of self-worth, in terms of ability or

value that people place on themselves, in which low evaluation may positively influence thoughts and behaviours concerning cannabis use. According to Adewumi (2017), adolescents' substance abuse starts when they begin to grow-up and are confronted with low self-esteem that hinders social adjustment and promote worry about being loved in a positive way. In a university environment where opportunities for social interaction are imminent, social comparison is likely to occur amongst students. In such comparison and evaluation, students who show feelings of low self-worth may become more disposed to cannabis use.

Another crucial factor that could influence cannabis use among university students is peer influence. Peer pressure or influence is formulated as a subjective experience of feeling pressured, urged or dared by others to do certain things (Santor, Messervey, & Kusumaker, 2000; Westling et al., 2008). It is a pressure, planned or unplanned, exerted by peers to influence others behaviour. The freedom associated with university environment makes peer influence a potential risk factor for cannabis use. Peer influence may become even more potent in an environment co-habiting two highly prevalent groups, as it provides increased opportunity for social learning. Although, previous research among Nigerian university students have associated peer influence to substance use (Abikoye, et al., 2015), the role that this crucial variable play in cannabis among university students remains seriously understudied.

Therefore, given that current rates of cannabis use among university students are high, and with lack of domestic research to identity risks, this research was designed to examine the influence of early parenting styles, self-esteem and peer influence on cannabis use among undergraduates of Nigerian Army University, Bui.

Method

Design and Setting

The design for this research is a cross-sectional survey that examines psychosocial correlates of cannabis use among undergraduates of Nigerian university Bui. The Nigerian Army University Bui is a conventional military-owned institution established in 2018 with the mandate to provide excellent intellectual and moral training to civilian and military students. The choice of the setting was informed by the researchers' observations and anecdotal evidences showing astronomical rise in cannabis consumption among the students of the university.

Participants and procedure

Participants comprised 106 eligible and well-consented students who met research criteria. Eligibility criteria required students to be cannabis users who were willing to participate in the research. The research adhered strictly with the ethical declaration of Helsinki. Informed consent was sought and obtained from all participants before administering the questionnaire. We also ensured voluntary and anonymous participation and treated information provided to us with utmost confidentiality. Participants were aged 18 to 50. A total of 69.2% profess Islam, while 30.2% are Christians. Most of the participants representing 88.6% are male, while 9.34% are female students. Concerning students' ethnic affiliation, 43% are Hausas, 30.8% are Yoruba, 9.3% are Ibos, while 16.8% are students from other ethnic groups. Majority of the cannabis users are students in 200L, with the total percentage of 33.6%.

We also obtained approval from the school authority and consent from each participant before embarking on the data collection. Due to the sensitivity of study, we utilised snowball sampling technique, which provided much security and comfort to the study participants and also ensured valid data gathering. Participants responded to a 72-item questionnaire, comprising measures of demographics, parenting styles, self-esteem, peer influence and cannabis use. Each questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes of the respondent's time. In all, data collection lasted for approximately two weeks, beginning from 15th to 31st December, 2022. At the end of approximately two-week data collection period, (106) fully filled questionnaires (out of the 140 administered) were returned, representing 75.7% return rate.

Measures

Parenting Styles: Parenting style were assessed using Baumrind parenting style scale (Baumrind, 1991). This is a 32-item, self-report questionnaire based on Baumrind's conceptualization of Authoritative, Authoritarian, and Permissive parenting styles. Participants retrospectively responded to the instrument about the various ways in which they were raised by their parents. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scoring format: 1 = Never to 5 = Always, with higher scores indicating more frequent use of the described behavior. In a review of the psychometric properties of the scale, Robinson, Mandlco, Olsen, (2001) reports the reliabilities as follows:

authoritative ($\alpha = .86$), authoritarian ($\alpha = .82$), and permissive ($\alpha = .64$). The scale has been widely used among youths and found to be an excellent measure of parenting style (Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, & Hart, 2013).

Self-esteem: Self-esteem was measured using the 10-item Rosenberg Self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965). This is a widely used and standardized instrument that assesses the level of self-esteem in diverse populations. Participants responded to the scale on a 4-point Likert format: 1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree. Previous studies have reported good psychometric properties (high reliability and validity with Guttman scale coefficient of reproducibility of 0.92 (Hatcher, Jennifer; Lynne & Hall, 2009).

Peer influence: We assessed peer influence using Armsden and Greenberg's peer influence scale (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) which is a 24-item standardised measure of peer influence among adolescents and youths. Peer influence scale (PIS) was developed mainly for the reason that youth problems are increasing day by day and peer pressure is one of the major factors influencing such problems among them. The response categories ranged from (1) Almost never or never true (2) Not very true (3) Sometimes true (4) Often true (5) Almost always or always true. High scores indicate higher level of peer pressure and low scores indicate lower level of peer pressure. On psychometric properties, the internal consistency of the Armsden and Greenberg 24-item scale was established by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and a reliability of 0.92 was obtained for the final 24 items. Also, high test-retest reliability ($r=0.33^{**}$,

$p<.01$) and internal consistency ($=0.77^{**}$) was reported for the scale (Armsden & Greenberg (1987).

Cannabis Use: Students' cannabis use was assessed using Cannabis Use Identification Test-Revised (CUDIT-R), which is a brief cannabis misuse-screening tool that has widely been used to identify cannabis problems among adolescents and young people (Adamson et al., 2010). The scale is generally accepted as a psychometrically reliable measure and has been extensively been utilised in students research. Sample questions include; How often do you use cannabis? 2) How many hours were you "stoned" on a typical day when you were using cannabis?. Response options vary from question to question. Most questions use the following: Never (0), less than monthly (1), monthly (2), weekly (3), daily or almost daily (4). A cut-off of 8 or above is considered positive for hazardous use, while 12 or above is considered positive for possible cannabis use disorder (Adamson et al., 2010). CUDIT-R has been used extensively among students and found to have good psychometric properties, with Cronbach alpha of 0.78 (Adamson et al., 2010; Gyepesi, et al., 2012). In our study, we found Cronbach's alpha of 0.92, which is considered acceptable.

Data Analysis

We used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version-23) to analyse research data. Demographic data were analysed with the use of simple percentages, frequencies, mean and standard deviation. Multiple linear regression was utilised to analyse the result of the main variables, which aimed at examining the independent and joint influence of parenting styles, self-esteem and peer influence on cannabis use among the participants.

Results

Table 1: Multiple linear regression showing independent and joint influence of parenting styles, self-esteem and peer influence on cannabis use among undergraduates.

Variable	R	R ²	df	F	β	t	P
Constant					.26	4.6	
Authoritative parenting					.02	.21	>.05
Authoritarian parenting	.35	.13*	5,100	2.893	.17	1.82	<.05
Permissive parenting					-.06	-.63	>.05
Self-esteem					-.14	-1.4	>.05
Peer influence					.26	2.63	<.05

As presented in table 1, authoritarian parenting emerged as a significant factor influencing cannabis use among students of Nigerian Army University, Biu ($\beta = .17$, $t = 1.82$, $p<.05$). However, authoritative ($\beta = .02$, $t = .21$; $P>.05$) and permissive parenting ($\beta = -.06$, $t = -.63$, $P>.05$) do not have significant influence on students'

cannabis use. This result means that students who are received authoritarian parental practices during early years are more vulnerable to cannabis use. This implies also that when parents are very strict, uncompromising, highly disciplined and show excessive control over their children, such harsh practices could temporarily suppress negative emotions and desires. However, coming to the university environment which offers much freedom, these suppressed impulses and desires may begin to manifest through substance use.

Self-esteem has no significant influence on undergraduates' cannabis use ($\beta = -.14$, $t = -1.4$; $p > .05$). This result means that the way NAUB students evaluate themselves in terms of personal or academic worthiness does not significantly influence their indulgence in cannabis use. However, peer influence has significant influence on cannabis use among the participants ($\beta = .26$, $t = 2.63$; $p < .05$).

The results as presented in table 1 also revealed a significant joint influence of parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive), self-esteem and peer influence on cannabis use among students of Nigerian Army University, Biu [$R = .35$, $R^2 = .13$, $F(5,100) = 2.893$, $P < .05$]. The three independent variables jointly accounted for 13% in the variance of students' cannabis use. This result implies that different styles in which students are nurtured, their perception and evaluation about self and pressure they get from peers contributed at least 13% in explaining why NAUB students take cannabis. This finding strongly supported our objective that parenting styles, self-esteem and peer influence would influence cannabis use among university students in Nigeria.

Discussion

This research examined parenting styles, self-esteem and peer pressure as influencing factors to cannabis use among undergraduates of Nigerian Army University Biu. Analysis of students' scores on CUDIT-R indicated that, out of the total population of 106, 34.9% scored positive for hazardous cannabis use, while 19.8% had scores considered as possible cannabis use disorder. This means that, more than 50% of these students currently indulge in problematic cannabis use, to which a significant number are in need of intervention. Indeed, this portends a serious problem that needs urgent attention from parents, school management, government and other concerned individuals and groups. The high prevalence found in this research is not surprising as previous research have already established that more than 30% of Nigerian university students indulge in substance use (Ekwueme et al. 2010; Akindutire et al., 2017). Therefore, with the coexistence of the two highly indulgent groups, hazardous cannabis use is expected.

Our research findings on the study main objectives indicated that only authoritarian parenting is significantly an influential factor in students' cannabis use behaviour. This finding is consistent with the findings of Schucksmith and Garcia (2009) whose research have associated authoritarian parenting with alcohol and other substance use among adolescents. The result implies that, when students encounter harsh and domineering parenting during childhood, they may repress their pleasure impulses and desires, apparently for fear of punishment. However, the express freedom

common in the university environment makes it easy for repressed desires, impulses and feelings to manifest through cannabis use.

Our results have implication for parenting; it can guide parents to adopt flexible parenting that prevent repression of desires, which have negative effects on future behaviour. The findings on self-esteem and cannabis use is insignificant and therefore implies that students' feeling of self-worth has no independent role in cannabis use, thus contradicting previous studies (e.g. Barone, 2019; Bolakale, & Boman, 2015). We however, found significant influence of peer influence on cannabis use. This result corroborates previous findings (e.g. Lai et al. 2013; Jenkins, 2021) associating peer influence with substance use in University students.

This implies that having a cluster of social networks, especially substance abusing friends can encourage students to indulge in cannabis use. The university environment provides more opportunity for social relationship which makes students to learn through social interaction. Finally, this research found significant joint influence of parenting styles, self-esteem and peer influence on cannabis, implying that a combination of these factors could significantly influence students' cannabis use.

This study has found a very high and disturbing prevalence of cannabis use among university students in Nigeria. This prevalence is linked to problematic parenting and social influences that are related to peer influence on campus. Consequently, our study recommends very strongly that, the university through the counselling unit, should

thoroughly initiate and implement drug counselling for youths, making them to understand the risks and consequences associated with continuous usage. The study also recommend for best parental practices that as a way of reducing problematic parenting that propels cannabis use. A little way from our findings, we also recommend for the university management to adopt punitive measures against negative peer influences and students who indulge in this undesirable behaviour, to serve as deterrent. . Given the dearth of empirical work on this very important issue, it is also recommended that more research be carried out to fully explore the problem of cannabis use among university students, especially in this location.

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