GENDER DIFFERENCE IN SUBSTANCE USE AMONG STUDENT ATHLETES IN A TERTIARY INSTITUTION IN EKITI STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study examined gender difference in substance use among student athletes in a tertiary institution in Ekiti State Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. One hundred tertiary institution student athletes, randomly selected from Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, constituted the respondents for this study. Self-developed questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, mean, chi-square, and student's t-test. All inferences were made at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of this study revealed that irrespective of gender, majority of the students athletes do not engage in substance use. The most commonly used substance among the few students who indicated are Schnapps (Mean=1.60), Sepe (Mean=1.59), Opa eyin (Mean=1.55), cigarette (Mean=1.49), and Nicotine (Mean=1.47). Marijuana (Mean=1.26) was the least commonly reported substance used among the students. The findings of this study further revealed that there is no significant gender difference in the use of most of the substances among the students. It is therefore recommended that student athletes, irrespective of gender, should be enlightened on their need to desist from substance use so as to avoid its detrimental effect.

Keywords: Gender difference, Substance use, Tertiary institution, Ekiti State

Introduction

Substance use among student athletes is increasingly becoming alarming. Athletes, at almost all levels of competition, of all ages and in almost all types of sports, engage in substance use (Rehardon & Creado, 2014, Mcduff & Baron, 2015), and this has been reported to have serious detrimental effect on both the physical and psychological health of these athletes. Adegboyega (2012) citing WADA code (2005), noted that the use of illicit substances in sports is becoming alarming and it is becoming an issue which is threatening the existence of sport.

Many athletes use substances due to their craving for enhanced performance, pain relief, increased lean muscle mass, increased oxygen depth and capacity, and reduced recovery time after exertion (Adegboyega, 2014; Mcduff & Baron, 2015; Guarnotta, 2022). Other athletes also use substances to treat mental illness and to deal with stressors such as pressure to perform, injuries, physical pain, and retirement from sport (Rehardon & Creado, 2014).

Substances that are often used by athletes are mostly performance enhancing substances. Performance enhancing substances, according to Pier (2022), are substances that have the potential to change the human body and its functions in such a way to improve athletic performance. USADA (2022) posited that although performance enhancing drugs have the potential to improve athletic performance, the drugs can be very dangerous and deadly. Hence no athlete should consider the use of performance enhancing drugs to achieve success in sports.

Substances commonly used by athletes include alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, opiates, such as heroine, sedatives, hallucinogens, and inhalants (Kids Help Phone, 2022). All these substances have been reported to have one adverse effect or the other on athletes (Volpe, 2010).

Findings from previous research seems to suggest that gender differences exist in substance use among athletes. Adegboyega (2012) and Mazzeo, Santamaria and Montesano (2019) reported that male athletes engage in substance use than the female athletes and that the male athletes take more of cannabinoids,

stimulants, diuretics and other masking agents than their female counterparts. National Institute of Health (2020) also declared that men are more likely than women to use all kinds of illicit drugs. Evidence abound in the literature that the use and abuse of substances have adverse effects on the physical and psychological health as well as the sport performance of both male and female athletes. It is therefore important to embark on frequent enlightenment of the athletes so as to create awareness in the athletes, of the side effects of substance use. However, in order to be able to plan an effective enlightenment programme, it is important to first assess the commonly used substances and the extent of use among athletes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was therefore was to assess substance use and gender difference in substance use among student athletes in a tertiary institution in South-West Nigeria. Specifically, this study was carried out to:

1. determine commonly used substances among student athletes
2. determine reasons for substance use among student athletes
3. assess the level of substance use among student athletes
4. examine gender differences in substance use among student athletes

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study:

1. What are the commonly used substances among tertiary institution students?
2. What are the reasons for substance use among students?
3. What is the level of substance use among students?

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant gender difference in substance use among tertiary institution students

Methodology

The descriptive research design was adopted in this study. The study consisted of 100 student athletes randomly selected from Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. The instrument for data collection was a validated questionnaire consisting of three sections. The first section of the questionnaire contains items to assess the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Section B consists of 9 items having a "Yes or No" response format to assess reasons for substance use. The third section was used to assess the pattern of substance use among student athletes. This section consists of 17 substances commonly used by student athletes. The instrument was administered by two research assistants and copies of the questionnaire were retrieved on the spot. Data analysis was done using descriptive (frequency counts, percentages and mean). Student's t-test was used to determine gender difference in substance use among the respondents. Statistical significance was set at $P < 0.05$.

Results

Table: 1 Demographic Attributes of Respondents (n=100)

S/N	Characteristics		Freq	%
1	Age group	-19 years	16	15
	>20 years		84	84
2	Sex	Male	49	49
		Female	51	51
3	Level	100 level	23	23
		200 level	49	49
		300 level	21	21
		400 level	7	7
4	Years of experience as a student athlete	<1 year	69	69
		1-3 years	24	24
		>3 years	7	7

Table 1 shows that majority of the student athletes (84%) are above 20 years old, 51% are female, many of the students are in their second year of study, and majority of the student athletes have less than one year of experience as student athletes.

Research Question 1: What are the commonly used substances among tertiary institution students?

Table 2: Commonly used Substances among Student Athletes

S/N	Item		Mean	SD
1	Alcohol	Sepe	1.59	1.11
		Opa eyin	1.55	1.03
		Schnapps	1.66	1.10
		Grand mean	1.60	1.08
2	Pain relieving drug	Tramadol	1.49	1.68
3	Stimulants	Nicotine	1.47	1.07
		Caffeine	1.48	1.03
		Grand mean	1.48	1.05
4	Cannabis	Marijuana	1.26	0.89
5	Tobacco	Cigarette	1.49	0.97

Table 2 shows the commonly used substances among student athletes. Schnapps (Mean=1.66) is the common type of alcohol used, and caffeine (Mean=1.48) is the most commonly used Stimulant. Other substances used are: tramadol (Mean=1.49), and cigarette (Mean=1.49). Marijuana is the least commonly used substance among student athletes. Table 2 further shows that on the average, student athletes take more of alcohol than any other type of substance.

Research Question 2: What are the reasons for substance use among students?

Table 3: Reasons for Substance Use

S/N	Item	Mean	SD
1	To acquire strength to perform well on the field	1.76	.43
2	To restore lost energy after athletic activity	1.72	.45
3	To associate with fellow athletes	1.30	.46
4	To increase chance of winning in a competition	1.41	.49
5	To reduce the rate at which I get tired (fatigue) on the field	1.62	.49
6	I use performance enhancers for relaxation	1.50	.51
7	To boost mental alertness on the field	1.62	.49
8	To improve motivation on the field	1.78	.42

Table 3 shows that the most common reason for substance use among student athletes is to improve their motivation on the field (Mean=1.78). The next commonly reported reason for substance use was to acquire strength to perform on the field (Mean=1.76), and to restore lost energy after athletic activities (Mean=1.72). The least common reason for substance use among athletes is to associate with fellow athletes (Mean=1.30).

Research Question 3: What is the level of substance use among student athletes?

Table 4: Level of Substance use among Student Athletes

Level	Frequency	Percent
Low	-	-
Moderate	70	70.0
High	30	30.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 4 shows that 70% of the student athletes are moderate users of substances.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant gender difference in the level of substance use among student athletes

Table 5: Gender Difference in the level of Substance Use among Student Athletes

Level	Male	Female	X^2	P-Value
Low	0	0		
Moderate	32	38	1.008	.385
High	17	13		

Table 5 shows that the P value .385 for the difference in the level of substance use among male and female athletes is greater than 0.05 (X^2 = 1.008; P>0.005). This implies that there is no significant gender difference in the level of substance use among student athletes hence hypothesis 1 is not rejected

Discussion

This study determined gender difference in substance use among student athletes in Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. The findings of this study showed that majority of the student athletes are moderate users of substances and this corroborates the findings of Adegboyega (2012) that majority of the athletes assessed in their study, were occasional users. The findings of the study also show that the most common reasons given by student athletes for substance use, was to improve their motivation on the field and to improve their performance. This is in line with the submission of Adegboyega (2014) and Mcduff & Baron (2015), that athletes use substances for the purpose of enhancing performance. The reason for use of substances commonly reported by these student athletes may be as a result of their false perception of the performance enhancing functions of these drugs. The finding of this study is contrary to that of White (2020) which showed that male student athletes had a high level of substance use compared to their female counterparts. This may

likely be for relaxation or social interactions. It should however be noted that the detrimental effect of substances are more than their beneficial effects hence its use should be discouraged among student athletes.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that only few student athletes use substances and there is no significant gender difference in substance used among them.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that both male and female athletes should be given:

1. Substance use education so as to enlighten them on the adverse effects of substances on health and performance.
2. Health education to intimate them with sport specific diet and strategies that support health and sport performance

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