

**Pattern of Substance Use and Psychiatric Co Morbidity among Substance Users Attending a Mental Health Facility in Damaturu, North East Nigeria: Outcome of a Two Year Retrospective Review**

Oderinde KO, Kundi BM, Ahmed HK, Akhigbe KO, Aina IO, Adayonfo EO, Obadeji A, Dada MU, Ezra-Oderinde WE

Department of Mental Health, University of Benin Teaching Hospital, Benin City, Nigeria

Department of Psychiatry, Yobe State Specialist Hospital, Damaturu, Nigeria.

Federal Neuro Psychiatric Hospital, Maiduguri, Nigeria.

Department of Mental Health, University of Benin/University of Benin Teaching Hospital, Benin City, Nigeria

Department of Psychiatry, Ekiti State University/ Ekiti State University Teaching Hospital, Ado Ekiti, Nigeria 6 Federal Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital, Benin City, Nigeria

E-mail: [psymedrecoverycentre@gmail.com](mailto:psymedrecoverycentre@gmail.com).

**Abstract**

The use of psychoactive substances is a major global public health problem and is associated with psychosocial, economic and mental health consequences. The occurrence of co-morbidity with substance use disorders has been shown to make diagnosis of either condition problematic, worsen prognosis, linked with poorer compliance to treatment and associated with an overall increase in morbidity and mortality. Not much is known about the pattern of substance use and accompanying co morbidity in this geopolitical zone of the country, hence this study. The study aimed to evaluate the co morbidity and associated clinico-demographic characteristics of patients diagnosed with substance use disorder (dependence syndrome) in a tertiary health institution in Damaturu, North East Nigeria.

We conducted a retrospective review between May 2017 and

April 2019 of case notes of patients and extracted socio demographic, clinical and drug related data from their clinical records. The study participants consisted of eighty eight (88) patients and the participants included in the study met ICD-10 diagnostic criteria of dependence syndrome. Data analyses were done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 21. Majority of the respondents were male 85/88 (96.6%), adolescents and young adults 65/88 (73.9%), had friends using substances 82/88 (93.2%), were daily multiple times user 61/88 (69.3%) and had previous history of substance use 74/88 (84.1). Indian hemp is the most widely used substance among the participants and almost half of the participants 36/88 (40.9%) reported “feeling high” as the reason for substance use. Depression was the commonest psychiatric co morbidity among the substance users 43/88 (48.9%), followed by bipolar disorders 14/88 (15.9%) and schizophrenia 11/88 (12.5%). Peer pressure influence, co morbidity and reason for substance use were significantly associated with substance use. The findings in this study suggest the need for psycho educational programmes that will target young adults and adolescents who have increased propensity to use substances. Continuous research in substance use disorders will also help in monitoring trends and formulating adequate strategies for control of substance use.

**Keywords**

Substance use; Psychiatric co morbidity; Substance users; Mental health facility; Damaturu; Nigeria

**Introduction**

The use and abuse of psychoactive substances is a complex behavior seen among young people all over the world and has become a problem of national public health significance. Among youths and young adults, substance use is a worldwide epidemic that can impact negatively on health, family, educational life and society. The recent nationwide survey on psychoactive drug use patterns in Nigeria

indicated an overall rate in the country (14.4%) that exceeds the global average at 2016 of 5.6% . While opiates were commonly abused in the northern part of the country, cannabis was more commonly abused in the southern region.

Global surveys indicate considerable co morbidity of substance use disorders with other mental illness exacting significant toll on human lives and productivity. According to a US survey, 4% of its adult population met the criteria for both a mental illness and substance use disorder, this has been associated with psychosocial, economic and medical complications. A global mental health facility survey also found varied patterns of somatic co morbidities based on types of psychoactive substances abused. People with substance use disorders are more likely to die younger and are more likely to have a psychiatric disorder than people without substance use disorder.

## Methods

This was a two year retrospective case note review of patients diagnosed with mental and behavioral disorders due to psychoactive substance use (dependence syndrome) between May, 2017 and April, 2019 in Yobe State Specialist Hospital, Damaturu, Nigeria. Each case was critically evaluated and reviewed by a consultant psychiatrist and the diagnosis of mental and behavioral disorders due to psychoactive substance use (dependence syndrome) was made using the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 10th edition (ICD-10). Case notes were retrieved manually from the health record department of the hospital.

## Conclusion

The study offered some insight into the potential relevance of the socio demographic characteristics to the development of substance use in North East Nigeria. This information will be useful for intervention measures aimed at stemming the tide of drug abuse in this region of the country.

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