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The Role of Guidance Counsellors in Curbing the Menace of Drug Abuse among Secondary School Students in Nigeria

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Abstract

Drug Abuse is a global problem deviling many countries in the world and the rate at which this problem is spreading calls for urgent attention to prevent the situation from getting out of control, particularly among secondary school students in Nigeria. Many of these students engaged in drug abuse out of frustration, poverty, curiosity, lack of parental supervision, lack of guidance and counselling, negative peer influence, and social media influence. The use of marijuana, tramadol, alcohol, tobacco, cocaine, cough syrup and other drugs have become a common practice among students. The paper therefore focuses on the role of guidance counsellors in curbing the menace of drug abuse among secondary school students. It also covers a review of relevant literature on warning signs of drug abuse, drugs commonly abused in schools, counselling theories on drug abuse, causes of drug abuse and its effects among secondary school students. The paper suggested that drug abuse counselling should be an integral part of school curriculum; a method of management which focuses on specific problems arising from the abuse of drug. Counsellors should be equipped with adequate skills and strategies to handle students with behavioural problems in school; and they should always organise lectures, rallies, seminars and film shows for students on the adverse effects and preventive measures on drug abuse.

Keywords: *Counselling, Drug abuse, Nigeria, Secondary schools, Students*

Introduction

Secondary school students are typically adolescents between the ages of 10 and 16 who attend school after completing primary education. A drug is defined as any natural or manufactured substance, other than food, that modifies the chemical or physical structure or function of a living organism. Medicines are intended to build rather than destroy, to heal rather than kill, and to replenish rather than deplete; they are used in the treatment, cure, prevention, or diagnosis of disease, or to improve physical and mental well-being.

Drugs can be grouped into legal drugs (legal drugs are substances that are permitted by law for sale, possession, and use under specific circumstances); socially acceptable drugs (socially acceptable drugs are substances that are widely tolerated and culturally sanctioned for recreational or ritualistic use within certain social contexts); and illegal drugs (illegal drugs are

substances that are prohibited by law for sale, possession, and use due to their potential for abuse, addiction, and harmful effects on individuals and society).

Drug abuse among secondary school students is becoming one of the most worrying health-related problems, with negative consequences that cross regional, national, religious, cultural, gender, ethnic, class, and age lines in Nigeria and throughout the world. Drug abuse refers to the misuse or excessive use of drugs, whether they are legal or illegal, for non-medical purposes. It occurred when a substance was intentionally used to create physiological or psychological effects for a purpose other than therapeutic purposes, or when the intake of medications was taken contrary to the prescriptions of medical professionals. It involves the consumption of drugs in a way that is harmful to the individual's health, well-being, and social functioning. It is the misuse or excessive use of substances such as alcohol, tobacco, prescription medications, or illegal drugs.

Drugs can be found in schools, motor parks, and street corners, under flyover bridges, joints, unfinished buildings, and even homes in Nigeria. There are approximately 7 million drug users between the ages of 9 and 20 in Nigeria, and the problem is growing at an alarming rate, particularly among students in schools (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2023). Marijuana, alcohol, tobacco, cough syrup, tobacco, alcohol, stimulants such as caffeine, nicotine, cannabis, tramadol, codeine, volatile solvents such as glue, chloroform, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), mescaline, vasodilator, anesthetic, and other drugs are now commonly used by secondary school students in Nigeria.

According to Fisher and Harrison (2023), the number of drug users among students between 8 and 17 years has steadily increased from 20 million in 2012 to 66 million in 2022 across the world. Drug abuse causes exhaustion, rape, sexual harassment, school violence, tension, emotional abuse, anxiety, hostility, bullying, and murder. According to Garikai (2023), an estimated four hundred and sixty thousand secondary school students abuse alcohol each year, two hundred and twenty thousand smoke cigarettes, and marijuana silently kills approximately seventy thousand students in Nigeria. Several abused medications have the potential to affect a person's thinking and judgement, posing health hazards such as drugged driving and communicable infections. This could be injurious to the health of the concerned persons and entire society (Inemesit, Chukwuemeka & Okafor, 2020). The magnitude at which this problem is growing like wildfire necessitates immediate scholarly and policy-oriented attention in order to prevent the situation from spiralling out of control.

Muhammad (2022) has identified some various factors that contribute to drug abuse nowadays. This problem impacts not only the individual, but also families and society as a

whole. Students may abuse drugs for a variety of reasons, including a lack of adequate knowledge about the harmful effects of the drugs, demonstrating personal independence, peer pressure, satisfying curiosity, low levels of self-confidence, inability to maintain inter-personal communications, and stress reduction. Students from broken households, abusive homes, and whose parents drink and smoke are especially vulnerable to drug abuse. Some children witness their parents using drugs or administering medications to them without a doctor's prescription, and drugs can have a reinforcing impact. The use of drugs among students may grow due to easy access to drugs and other dangerous substances.

Nearly every student is vulnerable to alcohol and other drug problems at some point in their lives. Therefore, drug abuse among secondary school students requires adequate provision for guidance and counselling. Counselling serves as a cornerstone of drug abuse prevention efforts in schools by providing early intervention, assessment, support, and education. Counselling provides education and awareness about the risks associated with drug abuse, including the physical, psychological, and social consequences. Counsellors use evidence-based information to debunk myths and misconceptions about drugs, increase knowledge about substance use disorders, and promote informed decision-making. By raising awareness, counselling empowers students to make healthier choices and resist peer pressure to engage in drug abuse.

The consequences of drug abuse frequently extend beyond the abuser to family members, acquaintances, and society at large. Counselling helps to provide students with a confidential and supportive environment to explore their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours related to drug abuse. Students are taught to resist drugs through the development of personal and social skills like decision making, stress management, communication, social interaction, dispute resolution, and assertiveness. Counsellors help students identify underlying issues contributing to their drug use, develop coping strategies, and set achievable goals for recovery. Through counselling interactions, students can gain insight into their drug use patterns, learn healthy coping mechanisms, and develop skills to resist peer pressure and triggers.

Counsellors need to provide counselling to students struggling with drug abuse or related issues in school. They provide a safe and non-judgmental space for students to explore underlying factors contributing to their substance use, develop coping strategies, set goals for recovery, and address co-occurring mental health concerns. There is need for guidance counsellors to also collaborate with other school personnel, parents, healthcare professionals, and community organizations to address drug abuse comprehensively. They coordinate referrals to external resources such as drug abuse treatment centers, mental health clinics, and

community support services, ensuring students receive the holistic support they need for recovery and long-term success.

Drugs Commonly Abused by Secondary School Students

The most common types of abused drugs among secondary school students are categorised as follows:-

1. **Stimulants:** Stimulants are primarily used to increase the activities of the central nervous system (CNS) through increased heart rate, blood pressure, and brain function rate. Users report feeling elevated and less fatigued. Caffeine, cocaine, nicotine, and amphetamine are examples of stimulants.
2. **Hallucinogens’:** These are known as psychedelics, dissociative drugs, or deliriant (mind) visions (Adaobiagu & Afamuefuna, 2024). The effects of psychedelics are visible in the form of illusion, hallucination, and vision. At anesthetic levels, dissociative induces analgesia, forgetfulness, and catalepsy, resulting in disassociation from his environment. Deliriant, as the name suggests, produce delirium in the user, which is characterised by acute disorientation and inability to control one's actions (Owoh & Onuchukwu, 2024). These medicines may cause visual hallucination, altered depth and time perception, distorted sense of object size and shape, motions, colour, sound, touch, and body image. These medicines are typically derived from marijuana and LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide).
3. **Narcotics:** These are highly addictive medicines that are used therapeutically to ease pain and induce sleep. Opium, morphine, codeine, and heroin are all produced from plants. They are highly addictive and can be smoked, injected, or breathed (snorted).
4. **Sedatives:** These are some of the most often used and misused pharmaceuticals. This is partly owing to the assumption that they relieve stress and anxiety, and that some of them induce sleep, relieve tension, cause relaxation, or assist users in forgetting their troubles. They come from valium, alcohol, promethazine, and chloroform.
5. **Miscellaneous:** This is a class of volatile solvents or inhalants that provide the user euphoria, emotional disinhibition, and constant mental distortion. The most common sources include glues, spot removers, tube repair, perfumes, chemicals, and so forth.
6. **Tranquilizers:** These are mild depressants used to decrease anxiety, tension, and relax persons who have difficulty controlling stress. They include diazepam (valium) and chlodiazepoxide (Librium). Individuals can rapidly become hooked to it and suffer from severe withdrawal symptoms, which can be fatal (Ajibola & Tihamiyu, 2022).
- (7) **Cannabis:** This is a medicine made from the Indian hemp plant (*cannabis sativa*), popularly known as marijuana or pot. It has limited therapeutic value and is unlawful to use for non-

medical purposes. Cannabis, sometimes known as marijuana, is one of the most commonly abused substances in Nigeria, particularly among students. Soldiers returning from World War II brought marijuana to Nigeria (Muhammad, 2022).

8. **Aphrodisiacs:** These are drugs that trigger sexual desire or boost a person's sexual capacity. It is also known as libido boosters and is commonly referred to as "manpower" in the streets, "qurantaashi" in the north, and "aleko" in the southwest. The agents improve sexual drive performance and increase sexual satisfaction.

Signs and Symptoms of Drug Abuse

Identifying signs and symptoms of drug abuse in schools is crucial for early intervention and support. Here are some common indicators that may suggest a student is struggling with drug abuse:

1. **Physical Symptoms:** This may include bloodshot eyes, dilated or constricted pupils, sudden weight loss or gain, changes in appetite, slurred speech, tremors, or unusual body odors.
2. **Behavioural Changes:** Look for sudden changes in behavior such as mood swings, agitation, irritability, lethargy, hyperactivity, paranoia, secretive behavior, or unexplained financial problems.
3. **Social Withdrawal:** Individuals may withdraw from friends, family, and social activities they used to enjoy, preferring to spend time alone or with a new social circle associated with drug use.
4. **Neglect of Responsibilities:** Neglect of school, work, or family responsibilities, frequent absences, declining performance, or a lack of interest in previously enjoyed activities.
5. **Changes in Sleep Patterns:** Insomnia, oversleeping, or erratic sleep patterns that are not typical for the person's normal behavior.
6. **Legal Issues:** Involvement in legal problems such as arrests, DUIs, or theft, which may be related to obtaining drugs or engaging in illegal activities while under the influence.
7. **Physical Health Problems:** Increased susceptibility to illness, frequent headaches, nausea, vomiting, seizures, unexplained injuries, or worsening of pre-existing health conditions.
8. **Psychological Symptoms:** These may include anxiety, depression, paranoia, hallucinations, delusions, mood swings, or suicidal thoughts.

9. **Changes in Appearance:** Look for changes in personal grooming habits, neglect of hygiene, unexplained bruises or marks on the skin, or the presence of drug paraphernalia.
10. **Drug Paraphernalia:** The discovery of items such as syringes, pipes, rolling papers, lighters, burnt spoons, small plastic bags, or residue on clothing or personal belongings.

Stages of Drug Abuse

Drug abuse typically progresses through several stages, each characterised by specific behaviours, attitudes, and consequences. The following stages are commonly observed:

1. Experimentation:

- In this initial stage, students may try drugs out of curiosity, peer pressure, or to explore altered states of consciousness.
- Experimentation may involve occasional use of drugs in social settings or recreational settings without experiencing significant negative consequences.
- Students may rationalise their drug use as harmless or temporary, believing they can control their consumption.

2. Regular Use:

- As experimentation progresses, some students may transition to regular or intermittent use of drugs. They may begin to seek out opportunities to use drugs more frequently.
- Regular use may be driven by factors such as stress relief, socialising, coping with emotional difficulties, or enhancing mood or performance.
- Despite increasing drug use, individuals in this stage may still maintain some level of functionality in their daily lives, although their drug use may begin to affect relationships, work, or school performance.

3. Risky Use:

- In this stage, students start to engage in risky or dangerous behaviours associated with drug use. They may use drugs in higher quantities, mix substances, or use them in hazardous situations (e.g., while driving).
- Risky use may lead to negative consequences such as accidents, injuries, legal problems, or conflicts with family, friends, or authorities.
- Students may start to experience physical and psychological effects of drug dependence, including tolerance (requiring higher doses for the same effect) and withdrawal symptoms when not using drugs.

4. Dependence:

- Dependence occurs when students develop a psychological or physical reliance on drugs to function normally. They may experience cravings, compulsive drug-seeking behaviour, and an inability to control their drug use despite negative consequences.
- Physical dependence involves the development of tolerance and withdrawal symptoms when drug use is reduced or discontinued.
- Psychological dependence refers to the emotional or psychological need for drugs to cope with stress, negative emotions, or everyday life challenges.

5. **Addiction:**

- Addiction, also known as substance use disorder, is a chronic, relapsing condition characterised by compulsive drug-seeking and use despite harmful consequences.
- Students with addiction prioritise obtaining and using drugs over other aspects of their lives, including relationships, work, health, and personal responsibilities.
- Addiction is associated with changes in brain function, including alterations in reward pathways, motivation, and decision-making processes.
- Overcoming addiction often requires comprehensive treatment approaches, including counselling, behavioral therapy, medication-assisted treatment, and support from peers and professionals.

Causes of Drug Abuse among Secondary School Students

There are lots of factors that cause drug abuse among secondary school students, these include:

1. **Environmental influence:** The environment in which a child is raised might have an impact on his or her behaviour. When a child lives in an area where drug abuse is prevalent, that student may be drawn to similar behaviour. Living in a drug-infested neighbourhood puts the youngster at a significant risk of trying with drugs at a young age.

2. **Genetic background:** Drug abuse has been proven to run in some families. When a parent abuse drugs, the child is more likely to do so as well. According to Njoku, Ajaraogu, Obasi, Eke, and Erondu (2022), the majority of drug or alcohol addicts have one or two children in the same condition. Furthermore, Bolu-steve and Adeboye (2020) acknowledged that there is a genetic predisposition to drug consumption, but they have yet to identify the precise genes implicated. They believe it has something to do with dopamine, a feel-good hormone. A person who is genetically predisposed to drug abuse develops an addiction problem and may use substances on a regular basis since dopamine provides natural pleasure.

3. **Influence of peer pressure:** Peer pressure is a crucial factor in motivating many students to use drugs. This is due to the fact that peer pressure is an unavoidable part of adolescent and adolescent life. As they try to rely less on their parents, they become increasingly reliant on their friends. One may not enjoy the company of others in Nigeria, as in other areas of the world, unless he complies with their rules.

4. **Mass media:** The media frequently portrays drugs and alcohol in a positive light, which encourages students to use them. Drug advertising on television, magazines, home videos, films, and newspapers is powerful enough to entice students to experiment with drugs.

5. **Lack of parental supervision:** Many parents lack the time necessary to oversee and censor their children. Parental neglect is frequently one of the reasons why students engage in drug abuse. When parents fail to pay attention to their children, the children feel abandoned and seek alternatives. This causes psychological issues among students (Anyama, 2022).

6. **Curiosity:** Students, particularly adolescents, experiment with drugs because they are unaware of the consequences and have a great desire to learn more about substances. The first taste and its effects determine whether or not the user continues. As a result of their intrinsic curiosity and desire for new experiences, adolescents frequently experiment with drugs.

7. **Emotional imbalance:** Individuals' personal or environmental problems, as well as their negative self-concept, can lead to emotional imbalance. Students frequently use drugs to cope with the anxiety and frustration caused by emotional disturbances. When children do not perform well in school, they are typically frustrated, and they seek to alleviate their unhappiness by using drugs.

Effects of Drug Abuse among Secondary School Students

Drug abuse among students in schools can have serious effects that impact their academic performance, physical and mental health, social relationships, and overall well-being. Some of the effects of drug abuse among students include:

1. **Academic Decline:** Drug abuse can impair cognitive function, memory, and concentration, leading to academic underachievement and a decline in school performance. Students may experience difficulties in completing assignments, attending classes regularly, and maintaining focus on their studies.
2. **Behavioural Problems:** Drug abuse can lead to behavioural problems such as aggression, impulsivity, and defiance of authority. Students may engage in disruptive behaviours, exhibit mood swings, or demonstrate a lack of motivation or interest in school-related activities.

3. **Health Issues:** Drug abuse can have detrimental effects on physical health, including damage to vital organs such as the brain, heart, liver, and lungs. Students may experience a range of health problems, including respiratory issues, cardiovascular complications, liver damage, and neurological impairments.
4. **Mental Health Disorders:** Drug abuse is associated with an increased risk of developing mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, psychosis, and substance use disorders. Students may experience mood disturbances, paranoia, hallucinations, or other psychological symptoms as a result of drug abuse.
5. **Risk of Addiction:** Continued drug abuse among students can lead to the development of addiction or substance dependence. Addiction is characterised by compulsive drug-seeking behaviour, loss of control over drug use, and withdrawal symptoms when drug use is discontinued.
6. **Social Isolation:** Drug abuse can lead to social withdrawal, alienation from peers, and strained relationships with family and friends. Students may experience social isolation, stigma, and rejection due to their drug abuse, leading to feelings of loneliness and despair.
7. **Legal Problems:** Involvement in drug-related activities can result in legal consequences such as arrest, juvenile detention, or criminal charges. Students may face legal sanctions, fines, or probationary measures as a result of drug-related offenses, which can have long-term consequences for their future.
8. **Financial Strain:** Maintaining a drug habit can be expensive, leading students to engage in risky behaviours or criminal activities to fund their drug use. Students may experience financial difficulties, indebtedness, or reliance on illegal means of obtaining money to support their addiction.
9. **Impact on Family Dynamics:** Drug abuse can strain family relationships and disrupt household dynamics. Parents may experience feelings of guilt, anger, or helplessness in response to their child's drug abuse, leading to conflict, tension, and breakdowns in communication within the family.
10. **Increased Risk of Accidents and Injuries:** Drug abuse impairs judgment, coordination, and reaction times, increasing the risk of accidents, injuries, and fatalities among students. Drug-impaired driving, accidental overdoses, and other drug-related incidents pose significant threats to students' safety and well-being.

Counselling Theories on Drug Abuse

These counselling theories offer valuable frameworks and techniques for addressing drug abuse among students in schools, emphasising empowerment, self-awareness, and practical skill development. By incorporating these approaches into counselling interventions and prevention programmes, counsellors can effectively support students in making healthy choices and reducing their risk of drug abuse. Certainly! Here are three counselling theories used in curbing drug abuse in schools:

1. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT):

- **Overview:** Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) was pioneered by Aaron T. Beck in the 1960s. CBT is a widely used therapeutic approach that focuses on identifying and changing negative thought patterns and behaviours. It is based on the premise that human thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are interconnected, and by altering one's thoughts and behaviors, this can positively influence one's emotions and overall well-being.
- **Application in Drug Abuse Prevention:** In the context of drug abuse prevention, CBT helps students develop coping strategies, enhance problem-solving skills, and build resistance to peer pressure. It addresses underlying issues such as low self-esteem, stress, and maladaptive coping mechanisms that may contribute to drug abuse. CBT also emphasises relapse prevention techniques, teaching students how to recognise triggers and develop healthier ways of responding to them.

2. Motivational Interviewing (MI):

- **Overview:** Motivational interviewing was developed by William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick in 1983. MI is a client-centered counselling approach designed to explore and resolve ambivalence about change. It involves collaborative conversations that help individuals identify their motivations for change and develop a plan of action to achieve their goals. MI is characterised by its empathetic and non-judgmental stance, focusing on enhancing intrinsic motivation rather than imposing external pressure.
- **Application in Drug Abuse Prevention:** MI is particularly effective in engaging students in discussions about their drug use behaviour and exploring their readiness for change. By fostering a supportive and empathetic environment, counsellors can help students clarify their values, goals, and aspirations, highlighting discrepancies between their current behaviour and their desired outcomes. MI techniques encourage students to explore the pros and cons of drug use, weigh the costs and benefits, and ultimately commit to making positive changes.

3. Reality Therapy:

- **Overview:** Reality Therapy is a counselling approach developed by William Glasser in 1965, emphasising personal responsibility, choice, and the need for fulfilling relationships. It focuses on helping individuals identify their current behaviors and evaluate whether these behaviours are effective in meeting their needs and goals. Reality Therapy emphasises the importance of realistic goal setting and taking practical steps to achieve desired outcomes.
- **Application in Drug Abuse Prevention:** In the context of drug abuse prevention, Reality Therapy helps students take ownership of their behaviour and recognise the consequences of their actions. Counsellors work with students to identify their underlying needs and desires, exploring alternative ways of meeting these needs without resorting to drug abuse. Reality Therapy encourages students to set realistic goals for themselves, develop action plans, and take responsibility for their choices. By empowering students to make positive changes in their lives, Reality Therapy promotes long-term behaviour change and resilience against drug abuse.

The Role of Guidance Counsellors in Curbing the Menace of Drug Abuse in Schools

Drug abuse is prevalent across Nigeria, with various substances being abused, including alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, prescription medications, and illicit drugs such as cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine. This behaviour can have detrimental effects on their physical health, mental well-being, academic performance, and overall development. There is need for guidance counsellors to play a critical role in curbing drug abuse among secondary school students in Nigeria. Here are several ways in which guidance counsellors can contribute to this effort:

1. **Enlightenment Programme:** Guidance counsellors can organise enlightenment programmes to educate students about the dangers of drug abuse, its consequences on health, academics, and relationships. These programmes can include presentations, workshops, and guest speakers who share their experiences. Counsellors can also distribute informative materials and resources to raise awareness among students about the risks associated with drug abuse.
2. **Assertiveness Training:** Counsellors can conduct assertiveness training sessions to empower students to resist peer pressure and make informed decisions about drug use. Through role-playing exercises and discussions, students learn how to assert their boundaries, express their opinions, and say no to substances in assertive yet respectful ways. This training enhances

students' confidence and self-esteem, equipping them with the skills to navigate social situations without succumbing to peer influence.

3. Relapse Prevention Programme: Guidance counsellors can develop relapse prevention programs tailored to students who have previously struggled with drug abuse or are at risk of relapse. These programmes typically involve identifying triggers, developing coping strategies, and creating personalised relapse prevention plans. Counsellors provide ongoing support and guidance to help students implement these strategies effectively and maintain their sobriety.

4. Constructive Confrontation: When counsellors suspect or become aware of a student's involvement in drug abuse, they may need to engage in constructive confrontation. This involves addressing the issue directly with the student in a supportive and nonjudgmental manner. Counsellors express concern for the student's well-being, provide factual information about the observed behaviour, and offer assistance in accessing appropriate resources and support services. Constructive confrontation aims to motivate the student to acknowledge the problem and seek help for overcoming it.

5. Counselling: Individual and group counselling sessions are fundamental components of drug abuse prevention efforts in schools. Guidance counsellors offer confidential counselling services to students struggling with drug abuse issues or facing challenges related to peer pressure, stress, or emotional distress. Through counselling, students explore the underlying factors contributing to their drug use, develop coping skills, and work towards achieving healthier behaviours and goals. Counsellors also collaborate with students' families and other stakeholders to provide comprehensive support and intervention.

6. Organising Recreational Activities: Guidance counsellors can collaborate with school administrators, teachers, and community organisations to organise recreational activities that provide students with alternative outlets for socialising and self-expression. These activities may include sports teams, art clubs, music programmes, drama productions, outdoor excursions, and other extracurricular events. By engaging students in constructive and enjoyable pursuits, counsellors create opportunities for them to develop friendships, build confidence, and experience a sense of belonging within the school community.

7. Promoting Healthy Lifestyle Choices: Counsellors can incorporate education about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle into their counselling sessions and classroom presentations. This includes discussing the importance of regular exercise, balanced nutrition, adequate sleep, and stress management techniques. By emphasising the positive effects of these behaviours on physical and mental well-being, counsellors encourage students to adopt healthy habits that reduce the likelihood of turning to drugs as a coping mechanism.

8. Providing Peer Support Programmes: Guidance counsellors can establish peer support programmes that pair students with mentors or peer counsellors who have undergone training in drug abuse prevention and intervention. These programmes create a supportive network within the school where students can seek guidance, encouragement, and practical advice from their peers. Peer mentors can serve as positive role models, offering empathy, understanding, and accountability to fellow students who may be struggling with drug abuse issues.

9. Implementing Prevention Curriculum: Counsellors can collaborate with teachers to integrate drug abuse prevention curriculum into existing health education classes or wellness programmes. These curricula typically cover topics such as the effects of drugs on the body and brain, refusal skills, decision-making strategies, stress management techniques, and healthy coping mechanisms. By providing students with accurate information and practical skills, counsellors empower them to make informed choices and resist peer pressure to experiment with drugs.

10. Fostering Positive School Climate: Counsellors play a key role in creating a positive and inclusive school climate where students feel valued, respected, and supported. By promoting a culture of empathy, tolerance, and acceptance, counsellors help reduce the stigma associated with seeking help for drug abuse issues. They work to cultivate strong relationships among students, teachers, and staff based on trust, communication, and mutual respect. A supportive school environment encourages students to seek assistance when they need it and promotes early intervention for at-risk students.

Conclusion

Abuse of drugs by secondary school students is currently one of the most alarming health-related issues in Nigeria and other parts of the world. Guidance counsellors are concerned that many students in schools are quickly joining the drug train, drinking and smoking their futures away for the pleasure of getting high, posing a threat to the students' health and safety. Avoiding these unhealthy situations can be accomplished through counselling (individual and group), enlightenment programmes, assertiveness training, promoting healthy lifestyle choices, providing peer support programme, relapse prevention programmes, and raising awareness about the negative effects of drug.

Suggestions

Sequel to the earlier discussions, the following suggestions are provided in this paper:

- A functional guidance and counselling center should be established in every school, and qualified counsellors should be employed to perform their roles in curbing the menace of drug abuse and other social vices.
- Guidance counsellors should be equipped with adequate skills and strategies to handle students with behavioural problems; and they should always organise lectures, rallies, seminars and film shows for students on the adverse effects and preventive measures on drug abuse.
- Guidance counsellors in collaboration with The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency should step up and intensify their anti-drug campaign by creating more awareness on the dangers of drug abuse among students in secondary schools.
- The Ministry of Education (Federal and State) should include drug abuse prevention as part of the curriculum to be taught in secondary schools.
- There should be a concerted effort among guidance counsellors, school authorities, and the government to curb the spread of the deadly misery of drug and sensitise on drug abuse prevention in order to save secondary school students from the menace.
- Parents should also completely stay away from the use of drugs arbitrarily in the presence of their children. This is very important because most children are ignorant of the harmful effect of drug abuse and dependence on their health, education, family, community and society at large.
- There is need for rehabilitation centre for students who have addicted to drug and regular counselling should be provided for them at the Centre. This will assist them in sanitising the society from crimes that could results through these categories of students.

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