SUMMARY

Brain Fag Syndrome (BFS) is a psychiatric disorder associated with study among African students. Among secondary school students, it affects two to four out of every ten students. One of the consequences of this illness is early foreclosure of education in affected students. Aetiological factors such as nervous predisposition, motivation for achievement and psycho-stimulant use have been found associated with it. However, the contributions of study habits as well as sleep patterns to the pathogenesis of BFS deserve more attention than has been given.

The objectives of this study is to ascertain the types of study habits and sleep patterns associated with the BFS and possible correlations between identified study habits, and sleep patterns of BFS among a sample of secondary school students in Ile-Ife.

A total of 500 senior secondary school students from six schools in Ile-Ife, selected using a stratified random sampling technique, completed the Socio-demographic Data Schedule, the Brain Fag Syndrome Scale, Bakare’s Study Habit Inventory, and selected items from Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index, and Beliefs and Attitudes about Sleep Questionnaire.

Respondents aged 14 to 16 years accounted for over 75% of the cohort with a mean age of 15.5 years (S.D ± 1.5). The male to female ratio was 1: 1.1. Majority were Christians (n = 408; 81.6%); offered science course (n = 309; 61.8%); from monogamous setting (n = 375; 75%); lived with parents (n = 465; 93%). High proportions of parents of respondents had secondary school education and were into buying and selling.

Majority (n = 332; 66.4%) of respondents had good study habits. Majority (n = 449; 90.2%) were sleep self-deprived. A significant proportion of the subjects (n = 275; 55%) were late to bed early to rise and within this group 54.6% used stimulants to stay awake significantly.
The prevalence of BFS was 40.2% (201). There were no significant socio-demographic variables identifying BFS students differently from those without BFS. Students without BFS had 1.2 odds of having good study habits than BFS students. High proportion of BFS students (45.5%) used stimulants to keep awake and majority of them were late to bed early to rise. Sleep quality and written work were the significant predictors of BFS.

The prevalence of BFS among secondary school students was relatively high; and BFS students deprived themselves of sleep, engaged in the use of stimulants, and had poor study habits.