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FACTORS RESPONSIBLE AND IMPLICATIONS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG YOUTH IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Substance use and abuse is a growing problem in both developing and developed countries. The increase in psychoactive substances use and misuse is a global challenge and of grave public health concern. Nigeria is currently witnessing an alarming increase in the rate of substance use and abuse among the youths and emerging adults. The youth who are expected to constitute or dominate the Nigerian labour force are languishing in substance abuse and other social vices. The implications of the menace undoubtedly constitute great threat to the entire society. Part of the reasons youth engages in substance abuse in Nigeria includes issues such as curiosity, peer pressure, enhance performance, boost self-esteem, cope with unpleasant emotions, frustration, and get high syndrome. Youth are dying morally, socially, psychologically and physically. It has become worrisome that despite the known risks associated with the drugs, adolescents continue using these drugs. It is against this backdrop that this paper explores the factors influencing youth involvement in substance abuse in Southwest Nigeria. The study adopts Differential association theory and the paper revealed that peer influence, urbanization, unemployment and the media catalyzes the preponderance of substance abuse among Nigerian youth. The study recommends that government should sensitize the Nigerian populace particularly the youth on the danger inherent in substance abuse; relevant agencies must be empowered to control the menace and strict legislation should be made prohibiting psychoactive substance in Nigeria.

KEY WORDS:

*Substance, Abuse,
Youth, Peer
influence,
Social vices,
Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION

Psychoactive substance use has become a major social and public health concern in most parts of the world (Conway, P. K., Vullo, C. G., Nichter, B., Wang, J., Compton, W. M., Iannotti, R. J., & Simons-Morton, B. 2013). Substance use is also becoming increasingly widespread in many African

countries (UNODC 2013). Substance use disorder is more prevalent among young people than adults in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Nigeria with about half of her total population below 25 years (Liranso&Yosph, 2017). It has been reported that prevalence and availability of psychoactive substances catalyzes their use among youth (Warren, Smalley, & Barefoot, 2015). Research has shown that, issues such as industrialization, urbanization and increased exposure to Western life style have contributed to the spreading of substance use, with alcohol and tobacco acting as "gateway drugs" to the use of other substances like cocaine, heroin, amphetamine, inhalants and hallucinogens (Chukwujekwu, 2017). Factors like unhealthy family background, high social class, peer-group influence, and desire to remain awake at night, pressure to succeed in academic work, self-reported poor mental health, and easy accessibility of drugs have also been implicated (Keskis, 2015).

Psychoactive substances are both natural and manufactured substances, which when gulped, sniffed, smoked and infused into the body would adjust the manner in which the users feel, think or carry on (McLeod, 2016). WHO (2004) characterized psychoactive substances as compound substances that, when taken, can change a person's cognizance, mind-set or thinking forms. Adolescents and youths (between ages 15-30 years) constitute the high risk groups with females getting more involved than they used to, most especially among students of higher institutions (National Drug Law Enforcement Agency 2010). Among adolescents, boys are at higher risk for substance use than girls (Flisher, 2003)

Knots (2000) revealed that youth have adopted substances such as tobacco, liquor, cannabis, valium and inhalants, which they acquired from companions, patent drug stores, open markets and versatile medication merchants with practically no trouble. Drugs and other substances can be found at every nooks and crannies of Nigeria. They are mostly at motor parks, street corners, club house, joints on campuses, under flyovers. This is prevalence in places like Ring Road outlets in Benin City, Ajegule in Lagos, Mabushi in Abuja, under flyover in Onitsha and it will astonish you of the number of youths involved in the intake of cannabis and other drugs (Abudu 2008; Oshodi, Aina&Onajole, 2010).

UNODC (2013) cited in (Samson and Agberotimi, 2018) opined that African youths often engage in adopting varieties of psychoactive substances. The varieties, running from liquor, cigarettes, marijuana, cocaine, heroin, and most recently codeine, tramadol and numerous others are promptly accessible to the young people in Nigeria and this has made them to be perpetrators of social vices (Yusuf, 2010). The substance abusers are in large numbers in marijuana (4.2 million), pain relievers (1.9 million), and cocaine (855,000), (National Survey on Drug Use and Health NSDUH, 2013). Peer influence is one of the major factors of substance abuse among youths (Winters, 2009). In addition, advertisements, film, TV stars, pop stars and fashion models make drug seem attractive and the adolescents imitate them for their style (Jiloha, 2011). The

socio-economic and cultural transitions of most countries in sub-Saharan Africa have provided a favourable climate for increased maladaptive use of psychoactive substances (Tsefaye, Drese and Hambia, 2014).

Nigeria has recently been ranked among the developing countries, the largest consumers of substances such as tobacco, alcohol cannabis, benzodiazepines; cocaine amongst others (Kessler, 2008). According to a report by NDLEA, substance abuse is a major problem among youth in Nigeria (NDLEA, 1997; 2000 and 2005). Substance abuse often results in negative effects, contrary to adolescents' portraits of positive images of substance use (Agius, Taft, Hemphill, Toubourou, &McMorris, 2013). This abuse has become a worrisome phenomenon, because youth are dying morally, socially, psychologically and physically. Apart from the substance use problem, youth also have specific health and developmental needs and may face challenges that hinder their wellbeing including poverty, a lack of access to health information and unsafe environment (WHO, 2008). The Nigerian government has put in some effort to stop or minimize psychoactive substance use among the Nigerian youth. For example, last year, codeine, which is one of the most commonly abused drugs among the youth, was banned in Nigeria. Substances such as marijuana popularly known as "weed" have been prohibited and the police have even gone to the extent of arresting youths found in possession of such substances. To this end and judging from the problems outlined, this study aims at examining the factors influencing youth involvement in substance use and abuse in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Psychoactive substance abuse in Nigeria in the contemporary time has become one issue that casts a gloomy shadow to the entire Nigerian society. The problem and negative impact of substance abuse affects almost every country of the world only in different dimensions and degrees (UNODC, 2017). Furthermore, drug abuse constitutes a great threat to families, society and the entire nation, causing unimaginable damage in all spheres of human endeavours such as health, occupation, interpersonal and social and economic spheres (Massah, 2015). Fayombo and Aremu (2000), in their research on the effect of substance abuse on educational performance of some adolescent substance abusers in Ibadan found that the misuse of substances such as marijuana had reached an epidemic level in the present Nigerian society. Research findings also indicated that these substances negatively affect the health and behaviours of the users.

Study has also shown that under the influence of substance abuse, many youths particularly in southwest embark on criminal behaviours and bad activities. The abusers are more likely to be involved in one or more act of indiscipline like forgery, truancy and stealing. This could go beyond the human destruction caused by substance dependence down to the damage of traditional values and

lifestyles. Studies have also shown that substance abuse wrecks individual, shatter families and weakens entire society with its burden of economic losses, health cost and increased lawlessness and crime (Hoffman, 1990). In addition, it seems to undermine learning, assimilation and contradict the values of physical wellbeing and abuser suffers both physical and psychological deterioration. To add to this, substance abuse entails many social problems particularly for the youth and this ranging from family neglect, deviant behaviours, involvement in crimes and so on. In terms of economic cost, it includes the more money required to deal with undesirable effects of the drug abuse, the less money for services and programmes that enhances the quality of life (Harwood, 1998).

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the factors influencing youth involvement in substance abuse in Southwest Nigeria. However, in attempt to achieve this, the research specific objectives are:

1. To examine the factors influencing substance use and abuse among youth in Southwest Nigeria.
2. To determine the implications of substance use to Nigeria society.

Theoretical Framework

Differential Association Theory

Differential association is a theory developed by Edwin Sutherland in 1949, proposing that through interaction with others; individuals learn the values, attitudes, techniques, and motives for criminal behaviour. This theory is a prominent criminological theory rooted in Sociology (Sutherland, Williams & McShane, 2015). The theory holds that criminal behaviour is learned through interactions with others in a process of communication (Steffensmeier & Ulmer, 2017). The differential association theory is the most talked about of the learning theories of deviance. This theory focuses on how individuals learn to become criminals, but does not concern itself with why they become criminals. They learn how to commit criminal acts; they learn motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes. Criminal behaviour is learned from observations of definitions favourable to law violation (Okpan & Anigbogu, 2016). These will determine whether a person will violate the laws or becomes a criminal (Alabi & Durowaiye, 2018). Also, Akers and Sellers (2004) argued that a direct association and interaction with others who engaged in certain kinds of behaviour as well as indirect association and identification with more distant reference groups is a significant factor in the occurrence or non-occurrence of deviant acts. The timing, length, frequency and nature of the contact are also important determinants of criminal behaviour (Ibrahim & Mukhtar, 2016).

In other words, the greatest effect on a person's behaviour occurs the earlier the association is made. The longer the duration of the association, the more frequently the association and the closer the association is

(Okoye&Uniamikogbo, 2017).Hence, from the perspective of Sutherland's differential association theory, it can be assumed that many youth learn psychoactive substance use from their peers. An individual who moves with those who engage in psychoactive substance use will also be influenced to practice this vice. This initiation process will also include the methods of intake such as: inhaling, swallowing, through injections and so on. It can therefore be said that psychoactive substance use is learned. Sociologists and behaviorally oriented psychologists have built upon the differential association theory to assert that adolescents possibly acquire substance abuse behaviors from role models, especially peers and parents. For instance, it is widely documented that peer influence is a central factor in shaping adolescents' substance use and other interpersonal experiences (Rukundo, 2012; Walsh & Tzelepis, 2007).

Methodology

In the conduct of this research work, the researcher employed basically the relevant materials which were sourced from articles, journals, newspaper, and magazine, textbook as well as materials from the internet among others.

Factors responsible for substance abuse among youth in Nigeria

Many have continued to ask why people use drugs or abuse substances which are simply agents of death. The choice to abuse substance and progress in the act is the result of many interrelated factors. The knowledge of these factors will assist educational institutions and human resource managers in particular in protecting youth against factors that are within their control. More so, it is important to have in-depth knowledge of the genesis of substance abuse so as to be more prepared to manage them and carry out referral services. The following are factors that cause psychoactive substance abuse in Southwest Nigeria.

Negative Role Models/Peer Influence

Most people who abuse drugs always attribute the cause to the influence of their friends (peers). Peer pressure has been shown to be one of the most important determinants of substance abuse, and other forms of problem behaviours. Peer pressure or influence normally starts at schools and parties. Association with friends who are substance abuser is one of the entries for exposing the youth into delinquency (Dishion, Kavanagh, Welton & Kaufman, 2002). Members of the peer group are deceived into believing that drugs are used to solve emotional problems hence they take it initially, to enjoy, to relax, and to be more sociable until they become substance oriented (Abudu, 2008). Closely related to peer pressure, as a predisposing and perpetuating factors to substance abuse is adolescence. Substance abuse maybe initiated at any age but mostly initiated at adolescent age (11- 15 years). Adolescent age therefore becomes a predisposing factor to substance abuse (Mayberry, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009). Parents in particular must therefore, be sensitive to the activities of their children at this stage of their development. Adolescents tend to seek adventure,

excitement, and a new thrill and do not always realize the dangers inherent in trying out drug. Most often, the attraction is the need to be accepted by members of their chosen group as identified under peer group. The risk factor for adolescent substance abuse is similar to the behavioural effects of learning disabilities, reduced self-esteem, academic difficulty, loneliness, depression and the desire for social acceptance (Kiiru, 2004). One such period, comprises the storm and stress of adolescence. This timing is probably not by accident, for this is the period when the struggle for personal identity is at its height.

Urbanization

The Nigerian society has undergone tremendous transformation in the past five decades. There has been relatively rapid industrialization and urbanization, increased culture-contact with the Western World; this has resulted in acculturation and rural urban migration (Wirth, 1938; Clinard, 1942; Johnson, 1992; Oumarou, 2007; Meke, 2012). All these have led the weakening of traditional control system where neighbours are no longer surrogate parents, and children return from school only to meet empty homes because parents have gone for work. Such kids find and join other children to perpetrate crime-oriented activities including substance abuse. Studies have shown that illicit drug use is less common in the rural areas than urban areas. This is not to say that drug abuse is limited to urban areas. This simply means that urbanization; increases the chances of substance within the urban areas compared to rural areas (Meke 2012). The reasons are not farfetched. In the village, there is communal living pattern and the elders and the neighborhood carry out the control of the behaviours of both adults and children.

Parenting Style

The parent-child relationship can be examined with regard to a variety of characteristics. For example, parental attitudes toward the child can be described as neglectful, overprotective, possessive, arbitrary, democratic, accepting, warm, hostile, rejecting, and so on. Possessiveness, detachment, concerned with the extent to which the parent is protective of the youngster; this can range from extreme over protectiveness to neglect and disregard for dangers and traumatic experiences. Dominating parents impose excessive control on the child; indulgent parents pamper the child every time and make little attempt to control him or her. The overprotected and indulged children show behaviour characterized by disobedience, temper tantrums, and excessive demands on others. They try to dominate and tyrannize other children of their own age (a step in the direction of drug abuse). Parenting styles help the child to build either positive or negative identity (Brook, Pahl, Morojele, & Brook, 2006).

Other family conditions that predispose drug abuse by children are lack of love in the home, parental negligence of responsibilities in the home due to materialistic pursuits, broken home, polygamous home, single parenthood, marital conflict, and large family size (Wood, 2009). Failure to experience love

and affection from parents and siblings is one of the major causes of antisocial behaviours, rebelliousness, disobedience, and discipline problems of all kinds. Most polygamous homes and large families are characterized by incohesion and lack compatibility between members of the family because of frequent disagreements, quarrels, fighting nagging which predispose the child to poor sense of security and identity. In deteriorating situations, the home break-up and the children are subjected to inadequate parental care and supervision. This influences his social and emotional adjustment - a path to substance abuse.

Media

Media is also one of the factors responsible for substance abuse among youths in Nigeria. Some drugs and substances such as alcohol and cigarette are not only available but also advertised. The media project these drugs and substances in such a way that makes them attractive to the audience particularly the youth which makes them vulnerable to the abuse of the drugs (Kalichman, Simbayi, Kaufman, Cain, & Jooste, 2007; Sznitman & Romer, 2014). Social Drugs usually referred to as gate way drugs. They are natural or synthetic substances, which by law are acceptable for consumption. Examples of social drugs within the Nigeria context are alcohol, cigarette, and kola nut. The selling and consumption of these drugs are not illegal in Nigeria. The basis for not classifying them as illegal drugs has, though, been criticized considering their health implications, predisposing nature and social hazards. Until these consequences are realized and the substances placed in the right perspective, they remain drugs of discretion with no legal prohibition of possession and use.

Unemployment

According to United Nations Organisation (UN) cited in Borode (2011, P. 149), over one billion people live in a situation of unemployment in the world, mostly in Africa. Ajaegbu (2012) noted that between 14 and 50 age grade is worst hit by unemployment situation and its consequences. Authors (Okeshola & Adeta, 2013; Sodipo, 2014; Chukumezie & Osakpa, 2015; and Shuaibu, Jogana & Mukhtar, 2018) have posited that the main driver of crime such as substance abuse and other forms is unemployment. It is widely known that if people had decent employment they would be less likely to use drugs. Many drug dependent persons themselves believe this sincerely. They know that drugs are often used to fill up the emptiness of unemployment. They also see that people with good jobs get less involved with drugs. The frustration associated with joblessness, idleness is not only a predisposing factor to drug abuse but also an obstacle to cessation. A Yoruba adage says that "Owo to dilelesuyalo" meaning ("an idle mind is the devil's workshop"), as such most of our youth will use their time and knowledge as a platform for their criminal activity, in order to improve their livelihood and to make ends meet. The relative deprivation theory may be adapted to explain the phenomenon of substance abuse in Nigeria. Gurr (1970) developed this

theory. According to this theory, individuals are more likely to commit crimes when the situations in the society are unfair to them.

Implications of substance abuse among youth in Nigerian

Health Complications

Drug and alcohol use affects nearly every part of the body from the heart to the bowels. Substance abuse can lead to abnormal heart rates and heart attacks, and injecting drugs can result in collapsed veins and infections in the heart valves. **Substance abuse can also leads to depression, anxiety disorder, oppositional defiant disorder and increased suicide risk** (Zinn, Stein and Swartzwelder, 2004). Some drugs can also stop the bones from growing properly, while others result in severe muscle cramping and general weakness. Using drugs over a long period will also eventually damage the kidneys and liver. The effect of substance abuse is not only acting on the central brain but also spread to the other parts of the body. This influences blood pressure, intestinal activity or other functions (Ksir, Hart and Ray, 2008). The effects of a drug do not depend solely on chemical interactions with the body only, the influences of expectancy; experience and mood constitute strong determinants of drug's effects too.

Legal Consequences

Drug and alcohol abuse not only has negative effects on the health but can also have legal consequences that a person may have to deal with for the rest of his/her life. Many employers require that a drug test is taken before offering any job; many of them even conduct random drug tests even after employment. Refusing to give up psychoactive substance use could end up making a person unemployed, which comes with even more issues. Driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol can lead to a suspended driver's license, usually for 6 months to 2 years. A great numbers of substance abusers that have been incarcerated have increased over the last few decades (National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, NDLEA, 2014). Substance abuser may sometimes ask to pay heavy fines and may even spend the rest of their lives in jail. The use and abuse of substances among youth undermine economic and social development and contribute to crime, instability and insecurity (NDLEA, 2014).

Economic Implication

Drugs and alcohol are expensive, especially when a person is using a lot and constantly. Substance abuse also affects productivity and success at work and in school. The time spent searching for, using and recuperating from drugs can be better spent learning new skills to advance one's career. The legal issues tied to drug use will increase expenses as well. Government also spent huge budgetary allocation to rehabilitating substance abusers in Nigeria. According to Giade, (2011), any nation being used by drug barons as a transit route has the potentials of becoming a drugs abuse consumer's country, drugs abuse threaten the security of every nation, tearing apart our societies, spawning crime,

spreading diseases such as aids, and killing our youths and our future”.

Injuries and Death

If a person uses drugs and alcohol, he/she is more likely to experience physical injury or be involved in car accidents. Even worse, psychoactive substance users also have an increased risk of death through both suicide and homicide. Drug-related deaths are on the rise, doubling since the early 1980s. Alcohol specifically results in 5.2 million accidental injuries and 1.8 million deaths each year. It is estimated that 1 out of every 4 deaths is caused by drugs and alcohol, according to the World Health Organization. Drug abuse affects the mental state of drivers leading to altered perceptions and delayed reactions, increasing the risk for having Road Traffic Accident (Drummer, 2005). Substance abuse can also lead to mental health problems such as depression, developmental lags, apathy, withdrawal and other psychosocial dysfunctions (Skogen, Sivertsen, Lundervold, Stormark, Jakobsen, Hysing, 2014).

Conclusion and Suggestion for policy road map

From the findings, it can be deduced that psychoactive substance use is prevalent among youth in the Southwest Nigeria. Youths (between ages 15-30 years) constitute the high risk groups. They use drugs for many reasons, including curiosity and desire to find out the effectiveness of a particular drug, to feel good, to reduce stress, or to feel grown up. Furthermore, urbanisation, parenting style, unemployment, media and environment were factors predisposing youth to substance abuse in Southwest Nigeria. The consequences of substance use disorder includes, loss of productivity, eroded self-control, injuries and deaths from automobile and other accidents, overdose and death, violence, suicides

The following suggestions are raised towards the mitigation of psychoactive substance use among youth in Southwest Nigeria:

1. Government and other relevant bodies such as NDLEA, NAFDAC, SON and the law enforcement agencies should create awareness on the dangers and consequences of psychoactive substance abuse and should be made available in courses, in guidance and counseling centres and bill boards as majority of the youth do not have knowledge of the dangers of psychoactive substance use to mental and physical health.
2. Early health education on the effect of psychoactive substance should commence at an early age before the age of puberty.
3. Steps should be taken to prohibit the new substances which are now being used by the Nigerian youth.
4. Drug law enforcement agencies in Nigeria such as the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), should be adequately empowered to enable them combat the menace of psychoactive substance use in full force.

5. Strict and direct legislation should be made prohibiting psychoactive substance abuse and strict punishment (such as imprisonment for a period not less than 5 years) should be stipulated. If strict punishment is given to every person involved in psychoactive substance abuse, this will serve as a form of deterrence.
6. Families should socialize their children positively before they reach adulthood to abstain from psychoactive substance use and abuse.
7. Lastly, youths should be made aware that psychoactive substance will eventually have long term negative effects on their health and social relationships. It may also bring about psychological imbalance and stigmatization in future.

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