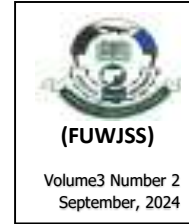


# SOCIALIZATION AND DRUG ABUSE AMONG YOUTHS IN NIGERIA

Terungwa Mpem<sup>1</sup>  
Stephen Terver ANYO<sup>2</sup>  
Evlyn Member Nyajoh<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1-3</sup>Department of Sociology,  
Benue State University, Makurdi  
Email: *termpemd@gmail.com*  
*Stevieanyo@gmail.com*  
*memberevlynb@gmail.com*



## Abstract

Drug abuse is a major challenge because of its negative consequences on the health of the individual, the family and the nation. The menace of drugs or substance abuse among youth in Nigeria is a social time bomb that will explode and affect the socio-economic and political foundation of the Nigeria state. Youth are the future of the Nigerian state, but most of them have destroyed themselves as a result of indulgence in drug abuse, thus becoming unproductive and a burden to the Nigerian state. This paper examines the influence of socialization on drug or substance abuse among Nigeria youths. The study used Edwin Sutherland theory of social learning to analyze why the youths engage in drug abuse. The study findings established that the youths are socialized into drug-substance abuse through copying from other family members, poor and inconsistent discipline from parents, peer influence and association with drug or substance addicts. The study concludes that drug or substance abuse has many negative consequences on the physiological, psychological and social behaviours of youth. It affects the family and the society at large. Thus, the study recommends that to fight the menace of drug-substance abuse in Nigeria, concerted efforts should be put in place through relevant agencies, like NAFDAC, NDLEA, Nigeria police and the federal and state ministries of health to control the abuse of drugs or substances among youth.

**Keywords:** NDLEA, drug abuse, crime, poverty, cannabis

## Introduction

Drug/ substance abuse is both a global health and social problem of alarming proportion. According to World Health Organization (2021), drug or substance is “the harmful use of psychoactive substances”. According WHO, this includes the illegal use of drugs, misuse of prescription and buying of drugs over the counter. The definition also highlighted that drug abuse has distinct conditions and problems that vary from one country to another. The West African epidemiological network on drug use (WENDU Report, 2014-2017), describe the problem of drug abuse as an issue of great public health concern as it affects governance, development, peace and security of nations. For the purpose of this paper, substance abuse, illicit drugs, drug abuse will be used simultaneously to mean the same thing. The term drug abuse is defined by this paper as the use of drugs for reasons rather than medical use, and using drugs or substance, despite clear evidence that there is health risks associated with these drugs.

It is estimated that worldwide, 275 million people are known to abuse drugs, while 36 million people suffer drug abuse disorders (World Drug Report, 2022). The WENDU report further stated that the number of people abusing drugs worldwide has gone up by 22%, from 2010-2019, with this gradual increase, the report project that by 2030, the people abusing drugs may go up by 11%. The UN (2019) estimates an exponential growth among drug users in Africa, 28 million people in Africa who abuse drugs. The figure could be higher considering the fact that there are no complete figures on drug abuse in Africa (UNODC, 2013).

In Nigeria about 15% adolescent populations, which is approximately 14.3 million populations are known to abuse drugs (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). This figure is more than the 2016 world average of 5.6% among adults. Youth are the group of people who are more susceptible to drug abuse (Luikinga, Kim & Perry. 2018). This no doubts constitute a great health and security concern to the Nigerian state. This concern is predicated on the fact that drug or substance abuse has short- and long-term effect on youth. Tshitangano and Oni (2016) stressed in their study that drug or substance abuse among the youth can result to poorer health outcomes like; depression, cancer, personality disorder, increased sexually transmitted infections like HIV/AIDS etc. Furthermore, drug/ substance abuse can contribute to negative social consequences like, school dropout, dependence, unemployment, crime as well as poverty

etc, which in turn can affect the economy of a country (Rezahosseini, Roohbakhsh, Tavakolian & Assar 2014). Failure to address this menace of drug/substance abuse will likely undermine the health, peace and law and order in Nigeria. In realization to this threat, various agencies of government like, national agency for food drug administration and control (NAFDAC) and national drug law enforcement agency (NDLEA), have been set up to address the problem of drug or substance abuse in Nigeria. Specifically, the national drug law enforcement agency (NDLEA) was established by Decree No. 48 of 1989 to address all issue that pertains to drug abuse and other psychotropic substances (NDLEA, 2012). Apart from creation of these agencies, various laws have been enacted by Nigerian government to control farming, sale and consumption of drugs/substance in Nigeria. Some of these laws were enacted by British Colonial administration. For example, Drugs Ordinance of 1935, and Indian Hemp Decree 19 of 1966, which was later on amended in 1979, as Decree No. 34. Others included the Indian hemp (Amendment) Decree. Furthermore, in 2004, these special laws to regulate the consumption of drug/substance abuse were later on codified into an Act of the Nigerian parliament, No 30. These agencies and laws have no doubt made significant in road to reduce problem of drug/substance abuse in Nigeria, unfortunately however, the menace has remained unabated (UNODC, 2020).

### **The Menace of drug Abuse in Nigeria**

There is hardly any part of the town in Nigeria, where one would not see a hideout or joint where youths hide to indulge in illicit use of these drugs every day (NBS 2019). The situation is common among youth age between 25 to 39 years (NBS 2019). The situation has become so pervasive that it if not controlled, will constitute a menace to national development.

According to Bolajoko and Omojola (2014), the prevalence of drug abuse in Nigeria is high, with an estimated 14.4% of the population aged 15-64 years engaging in drug use. Cannabis is the most commonly abused drug, followed by opioids, cocaine, and amphetamines. The study also found that there is a lack of reliable data on the extent of drug abuse in Nigeria, due to the absence of a national surveillance system. The paper also identified several challenges to addressing the problem of drug abuse in Nigeria, including a lack of resources, poor coordination among government agencies, and a lack of political will.

Another paper by Abiodun Bolarinwa & Abdulfatah (2015), on "Pattern of Drug Abuse in Nigerian Universities: A case study of University of Ilorin, Nigeria", found that 16.8% of respondents reported ever using a psychoactive drug, with cannabis being the most commonly abused drug. The article discusses several factors that contribute to drug abuse among university students, including peer pressure, stress, and a lack of parental control.

Drug or substance Abuse is described by World Health Organization (2020) as consumption of drugs or substances not with medical advice from a competent medical professional or refusing to follow a medical advice on the use of a drug. The World Health Organization (2021) defined drug abuse as "persistence or sporadic excessive drug use inconsistent with or unrelated to acceptable medical use that alters the mood or behaviors of the user". There are different ways of consuming drugs/substance, such as sniffing, smoking, injecting, drinking, inhaling, or swallowing. For this paper, drug/substance abuse is referred to as patterned consumption of drugs/substance in amounts that are detrimental to health, and for reasons other than medical. When these drugs are illegally taken, they can produce a feeling of euphoria, and a distorted perception of reality.

The Nigerian national youth policy (2009) describes youth as a population age 18-35 years. On the other hand, the African Youth Charter recognizes youths as people between the age of 15 and 35. For the purpose of this study, youth are young people, male and female, who are resident in Nigeria and are aged between 15 -35 years and engaged in Drug abuse.

Almost every society of the world is affected by abuse of one or more drugs by its citizens. The Commonly Abused Drugs/substances among Youth in Nigeria are classified first according to their physiological effects and second, according to whether there are orthodox or traditional. It is also to be noted that, most of the drugs/substances abused by youth belong to these categories of; cannabis, depressants, stimulants, narcotics, analgesics, sedatives or performance enhancing drugs, hallucinogens and inhalants etc.

Cannabis is commonly referred to as *cannabis sativa*; it is a greenish weed that is grown in the tropics. This drug is made from the Indian hemp plant and is referred to as pot, marijuana, ganja, weed etc (Chivandire & January 2016). According to Odejide (2006), Cannabis was first brought to Nigeria by returnee soldiers who went for the Second World War. Cannabis has no medical value and it is not legalized by the Nigerian

Government. It is typically dried and smoked as cigarette or added to tea or food. When cannabis is taken like food, it dissolves quickly into the blood stream and is quickly absorbed into the blood stream. When smoked as cigarette, it enters the central nervous system. It deadens the brain and cause a phylogenic effect. It causes altered sense of sensation. Cannabis is cultivated and produced in Nigeria for both domestic consumption and sale, and is available in all parts of Nigeria and is the commonly abused drug/substance in Nigeria. According to Drug Use Survey (2018), more than 10 per cent or 10.6 million adults of the adult population reported use of cannabis in the year 2019; over half of those admitted for treatment for illegal drug use in 2018 were admitted for cannabis use.

Heroin is an illegal, highly depressant drug, processed from morphine. It belongs to the seeds of an opium poppy class. Heroin is usually taken through the veins when smoke or inhaled. Its effect is felt on the brain five minutes after it is taken (Gate Way Foundation, 2013). It can make the person drowsy and weak. Heroin has several names like 'smack' 'H', 'ska', 'junk'. When inhaled, heroin can produce effect like euphoric feeling, clouded thinking and drowsy state. This is a condition of feeling abnormally sleepy and tired during the day time. It may also lead to other symptoms such as forgetfulness, high levels of stress or anxiety and fatigue. But the substance can have tremendous consequences on a person's health, example heart problems, miscarriages, dependence and death.

Cocaine is a powerful substance, which is inhaled or infected into the veins or smoked. It referred to as 'coke', 'crack' and 'snow', 'flake', 'blow'. When taken it can quickly change the body metabolism like body temperature, blood pressure and heart rate. When taken for a long time, it can cause severe harm to the body like heart attack, respiratory failure, stroke, seizures and ultimately death.

Methamphetamines are snorted, heated smoked or injected into the veins. There are known with different names, like, 'chalk', 'meth', 'Ice', 'crystal', 'speed' 'crank'etc. When methamphetamines are used for long time, it can lead to drug dependence. It can increase body activity; leading to increased heart rate, body temperature, blood pressure etc. people who take methamphetamine are likely to exhibit violent behavior, develop elevated anxiety, mood swing, insomnia and severe dental problems.

There are other compounds of commonly abused traditional drugs/illicit substances like smoking of grey hair of old men, excreta

from agama lizard and frog, inhaling ammonia tiff from septic tank and soak away pit, inhaling gasses from used sanitary pads, zakami etc.

Anabolic steroids are lab made substances that are orally taken. They include jaize, gym candy, pumpers, and stockers. They are hazardous to health when taken, and it can lead to aggressive behavior, cause liver damage, high blood pressure, infertility etc. It can cause menstrual circle changes, depended voice in women.

Inhalers are also abused by members of the public. These breathable include chemical vapors or gasses that produce psychotic effect when taken and they include organic solvents like, rubber solution, gasses, glue, kerosene, typewriter correction fluid etc. they are known as whip-its'. 'Poppers' etc. They produce an effect just like alcohol, like less of concentration, dizziness, low blood pressure, brain damage, damage of lung and heart failure etc (National Inhalant Prevention Coalition 2012).

Prescription or recommended drugs are drugs that are recommended to manage certain medical conditions like pain, but these drugs are abused for reasons other than doctor's prescriptions. These are opioid like, tramadol, codeine and non codeine syrups, oxycoclone, acetaminophen/hydrocodone, Alprazolam, diazepam etc.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Differential association theory by Edwin Sutherland is used as a theoretical framework to analyze the problem of drug/substance abuse among youth in Nigeria. Differential association theory is a theory by Sutherland (1947) to analyze how people indulge in criminal activities in the society. According to Sutherland, two types of groups of people operate in a community. The one is group for criminal purposes, and the other groups against crime. The two groups differ in terms of the respect they have for the law. An individual will be drawn to commit or not to commit crime depending on the closeness to of his associate. The propositions of the theory are that: Criminal behavior is learned. Criminal behavior is learned in association with other persons in criminal behavior. The main part of the learning process of the criminal behavior occurs within intimate personal groups. The learning process are; (a) first, techniques of committing the crime, which are complex, or simple, (b) the specific direction of motives, propelling factors, rationalizations, and attitudes. The specific course of motives and drives to commit crime is learned from definitions of the legal codes as favorable or unfavorable.

Based on the propositions of the theory, individuals learn two types of definitions before indulging in criminal behavior. These are favorable and unfavorable definitions. The favorable definitions will likely increase the chances that the individual will commit the behavior, the unfavorable definitions will however decrease the chances that he will engage in a particular anti criminal behavior. Based on the assumptions of the Sutherland differential association theory, we can argue that Youth learn and indulge in drug abuse in Nigeria because of association with peers, members of the family and influence of social media.

### **Research Methodology**

This paper is theoretical, it primarily used secondary data sources such as; journal articles, books, personal sources, websites, reports by NGOs and government records. Content analysis was used for the secondary data. The words and phrases in those documents were coded and analyzed to bring out the themes patterns relating to the study drug. These sources were thoroughly and systematically searched for information relating to socialization and drug abuse in Nigeria. Anecdotal evidence by the researcher on the topic was also included.

This paper is divided into 5 sections. The first is the introduction which lays a foundation of problem of socialization and drug or substance abuse among youth in Nigeria. The second section examines the kind of drugs or substances commonly abused by youth in Nigeria. The third section analyses the impact of drug abuse and its implication on youth, in the Nigerian society, while the fifth section deals with the conclusion and recommendations.

### **Socialization and Drug Abuse among Youths**

This section examines the propelling reasons of drug/substance abuse among youth in Nigeria. It is important to determine the predisposing factors that propel youth to indulged in drug/substance abuse, this will enable government, policy makers NGO's etc develop and implement targeted interventions aimed at reducing problem of drug/substance abuse in Nigeria. These reasons could be categorized into, social, economic and political.

A study by Oyewo (2013), identified many social factors responsible for drug/substance abuse in Nigeria The social factors include; decline in family value systems, peer association, influence of social media, poverty and unemployment etc (Mosijiola, 2018). The decline in the family value system is a fundamental reason for the rise in drug/substance

abuse among youth in Nigeria. The family value system has greatly reduced due to modernization. Strict discipline, which was the order of the day, has been eroded, because of this, parents no longer take full responsibility for discipline and providing proper guidance to their children. Because of the desire to earn a decent living, many parents are engaged in work, that take them out of the house for a greater no of hours in a day time, thus exposing children to social vices like cultism, drug abuse and other anti-social behavior. Another fundamental factor is the problem of peer pressure. A study by D'Amico, Jackson, Witkiewitz, & Villarroel, (2016), identified the influence of peer pressure on youth indulgence in drug abuse. As encapsulated in Sunderland differential association theory, most youth learn anti-social behavior from their peers. Drug abuse too is learned in company of peers. As youths go out with their peers, they try to learn and copy from their peers. It is therefore the responsibly of the parents to be vigilant and provide guidance to their children on the type of friends their children keep. Social media influence is also a reason youths engage in drug abuse. The youths watch and copy lifestyles from artists, celebrities, adverts and film actors. These personnel create ecstatic scenes on social medial, radio and televisions, these have tremendous influence on the youth who try to copy and reenact them. Poverty and unemployment is another reason for youth indulging in drug abuse. The youth in Nigeria are exposed to socio-economic uncertainty, thereby becoming the most vulnerable segment of the Nigerian population. Nigeria is facing problem of youth unemployment of 53%, which is second highest after South Africa (NBS, 2022). The economic situation in Nigeria is harsh, and this has created a situation of hopelessness among the youth, because of this, many of them indulge in drugs/substance abuse, to wear away the frustrations of life.

Another commonly reported reason for indulging in drug or substance abuse is desire by youth to relax or sleep after a hard day's job. This is particularly evident among youth who are engaged in hard day labor. A study by Yunusa, Bello, Idris, Haddad, Adamu (2017), on the determinants of drug/substance abuse among commercial bus drivers in Kano Metropolis, Nigeria, shows (80%) respondents agreed that they take drugs to relax their body after a hectic day driving.

Another probable reason for the abuse of drugs/substance by youths in Nigeria is the desire to experiment/curiosity to do what others are doing. Adolescent stage is normally period of "storm and stress"; it is time for search for independence. At this stage in their life, the youth seek close friendships with peers and experiment with a wide range of ideas,



products and lifestyles. This experimentation involves taking great risks and making choices that may lead to uncertain outcomes. Indulging in drugs or substances may become a means of exploring, experimenting new things and a desire to experience what is not known about drugs/substance. The first experience in consuming drug/substance can produce arousal in form of extreme happiness, which motivates users to continue with the habit.

Abuse of drugs or substance is also caused by economic reasons. The desire to make money fast makes peddlers to engage in the sale of drugs/substances that are detrimental to health, because of this, there is proliferation of drug market in Nigeria. It is common to see joints, shops, brothels and black places where these drugs are sold, bought and consumed by youth.

Another reason for drug/substance abuse is deliberate disobedience to the laws of the country. The laws regulating use of drugs in Nigeria are weak, the sanctions for the sellers and traffickers of drugs/substance are non-functional; this is coupled with the problem of corrupt officials who look the other way as people violate these laws. There is also the problem of lack of control over dispensing of drugs prescription in pharmaceutical shops where drugs are sold. Even drugs that are prohibited like codeine are hidden from the canter and sold to buyers. Because of this, the youth find it very easy to purchase drugs/substance, over the canter, which are proscribed by relevant agencies of government.

This section examines effect of drug/substance abuse consumption on youth and Nigerian society at large.

Drug abuse is a risky venture with devastating consequences on the youth, his family members and the Nigeria society at large. Fox, Oliver & Ellis (2013) identified three issues that combine to determine the overall consequence caused by unregulated drug/substance consumption. The first problem identified is harm of the drug/substance to person that consumes drug/substance. The second issue is possibility of drug/substance to induce dependence on the person that consumes drug/substance; the third issue is effect of the drug/substance consumption on family and society at large. Fox, Oliver & Ellis further stressed that drug abuse can produce psychological and physiological complications, like insomnia, declining focus, depression and anxiety, poor academic performance, inability to perform task responsibly, loss of job and social status. Drug abuse can also cause very serious illnesses to its victims, for like cancer, liver problem and kidney problem and many other health implications.

Drug or substance abuses can also cause physical harm to the individual. Most people who abuse drugs normally destroy their physical outlook by looking dirty and irresponsible. They are normally stigmatized by members of the society. People look at them as mad people who should be avoided. Due to drug dependence, victims are often unable to perform certain duties and responsibilities; consequently, it destroys their lives and makes it impossible for them to realize their life potentials. Violent crimes, especially, street violence is very often caused by drug abuse. Drug/substance abuse can cause physical and psychological damage and premature death. Drug abuse in Nigeria is also associated with other social vices like cultism, armed robbery, fighting, kidnapping, rape, assault, burglary, auto theft, arson etc (Hussein, Mukhtar & Umar 2017). Many youth in Nigeria develop depression as a result of drug abuse; many have become mad as a result of abuse of drugs and the consequences of this are death. Drug abuse can lead to both physical and mental impairment; it is associated with physical ailments, such as liver and cardiovascular disease, breakdown of nervous system, memory loss and many other problems. People who abuse drug usually engage in risky behavior that exposes them to health conditions like HIV/AIDS, STD'S. People, who consume drugs/substances, may even die suddenly from complications from overdose when consumed too much for the body to contain (Ibrahim, 2021) It affect their performance in school due to personality disorder and impaired cognitive functioning as a result of regular fatigue.

Drug abuse is not only harmful to the victim, but it is also harmful to the victim's family, through association or courtesy. When a member of a family is a drug/substance addict, the family is often is stigmatized. The family is looked upon as not been able to properly bring up a child. Other members of the society may therefore not wish to associate with such a family. A victim of drug/substance abuse often loses interest in performing duties and responsibilities, because of consequently, they become a liability for their families (NCERT, 2017)

A country with significant percentage of youth who abuse drugs will not achieving its highest potential in national development. Drug or substance abuse therefore poses a tremendous challenge to the overall sustainable development of Nigeria. About 70% of the Nigerian populations are youth, under 30; this means that 151 million Nigerians are youth. This means the future of the Nigerian state is under threat, if youth who are major change agents for development are engaged in drug/substance consumption. Consumption of drug or substance has

created social problem such as unemployment, loss of man-hour and productivity which usually increases with the frequency and duration of drug abuse.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Drug abuse among the youth is detrimental to the health of the Nigerian state; it is a social time bomb that will destroy the social political development of the Nigeria. To address this public health and social concern, there is need for concerted efforts by NGO'S, the three arms of government, ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), religious, education institutions and parents to address this cankerworm with serious concern through the following recommendations: there is need for greater involvement by non-governmental agencies in advocacy, on dangers of drug/substance consumption among youth in Nigeria. This awareness should be done through public rallies and shows, on electronic and print media. The aim of this will be to educate the youth against indulging in drug abuse. Parents should provide proper discipline and guidance of their children by inculcating good values and educating them against drug abuse and keeping bad Marriage institutions should be strengthened to provide discipline and ensure effective upbringing of children. Regulatory agencies like NAFDAC, NDLEA, etc, should be properly organized and funded by the government for effective performance. There should be improved regulatory alertness, diligence and control of importation, circulation and consumption of illicit drugs or substances. The curriculum of educational institutions in the country should emphasize educating the children on dangers of drug abuse. Religious institutions in Nigeria should include in their sermons, the danger of youth involvement in social vices, especially drug abuse. There should be thorough enforcement by regulatory agencies like State and Federal Ministries of Health, of the prescription policy by patent medicine shops in Nigeria. This will guide against selling of illicit drugs to unauthorized persons. Government should create employment opportunities and skill acquisition programs for youth to properly engage them and prevent them from been idle. There should be strict penalties by government for people who indulge in drug abuse, these penalties will help deter youth from indulging in drugs. Drug laws should be amended to enable judiciary apply penalties that are commensurate to the offences of sale and consumption of drugs/substance.

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