Forms and Incidence of Drug Abuse among Nigerian Adolescents

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ABSTRACT
Drugs are commonly used by everybody whether young or old. Drugs are not only useful for human beings; they are also useful for animals for good health. Human beings give drugs to their animals when they discovered that they are not healthy. Drug is an effective substance in the life of any living thing to cure sickness and to make life healthy. It is true that drugs are used for beneficent therapeutic purposes, effective substance for good health, but they are being abused by people especially youths. They use it illegally and unlawfully, thus it becomes harmful to the body. The African Symposium (2010) viewed drug abuse as the improper use or application of drugs by a person without proper knowledge of the drugs and without due prescription from a qualified medical practitioner. This definition focuses on psychoactive drugs. All drugs can be abused to an extent that it turns into addiction when the drug user is unable to stop the use of the drugs despite the harmful effects on the user’s social, personal and economic lives. The problem of drug abuse is so grave that though it was originally conceived as the problem of a ‘select few’, it has extended beyond the usual characteristics of abusers being males, adults and urban based people, to now include females, youngsters and rural dwellers. The effects and counselling approaches we viewed.

Keywords: Forms, Incidence, Drug Abuse, Adolescents

INTRODUCTION
Since the early times, herbs, leaves and plants have been used to heal and control diseases. The use of drugs in itself does not constitute any danger, because drugs correctly administered have been a blessing. Sambo (2008) viewed that “chronic use of substances can cause serious, sometimes irreversible damage to adolescent’s physical and psychological development. The use of drugs could be beneficial or harmful depending on the mode of use. A drug refers to a substance that could bring about a change in the biological function through its chemical actions (Okoye, 2001). It is also considered as a substance that modifies perceptions, cognition, mood, behaviour and general body functions (Balogun, 2006). Drug abusers erroneously believe that drugs enhance their performance, put them in good mood etc. Drug abuse has been a scourge in our country Nigeria especially among the youths. As seen in the definition, it is the intentional misuse of a drug without a written prescription from a doctor. It is necessary to know those drugs that are being abused. Thus, in this paper, attempt will be made to write out with full explanation of forms of drug abuse, effects or consequences, causes of drug abuse etc as well the incidence of drug abuse and the strategies for counselling.

Concept of Drug Abuse
Drug abuse is a major public health problem all over the world (UNODC) (2005). The use and abuse of drugs by adolescents have become one of the most disturbing health related phenomena in Nigeria and
other parts of the world (NDLEA; 1997). Several school going adolescents experience mental health issues, either temporarily or for a long period of time. Some become insane, maladjusted to school situations and eventually drop out of school. According to Fawa (2003), “Drug is defined as any substance, which is used for treatment or prevention of a disease in man and animals. Drug alters the body functions either positively or otherwise depending on the body composition of the user, the type of drug used, the amount used and whether used singly or with other drugs at the same time”. NAFDAC (2000) as cited by Haladu(2003) explained the term drug abuse as excessive and persistent self-administration of a drug without regard to the medically or culturally accepted patterns.

World Book Encyclopedia (2004) defined drug abuse as the non-medical use of a drug that interferes with a healthy and productive life. Manbe (2008) defined drug abuse as the excessive, maladaptive or addictive use of drugs for non-medical purpose. Odejide (2000) warned that drug abusers who exhibit symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression, behaviour changes, fatigue and loss or increase in appetite should be treated by medical experts and counsellors to save them from deadly diseases.

Common Forms of Drugs that are abused

1. **Alcohol:** This is the commonly abuse substance. It is the drug of choice in our society and most people are taking it. People do not regard it as a dangerous drug because in Africa, especially in Nigeria, it is part of their daily life and they drink it often. According to Agha (2003:86); Most Africans believe that wines, “ogogoro” local gin and spirits are believed to be a necessary passport to social acceptance. Beer is advertised daily as drink which makes a man truly masculine, lagers and light also are said to promote the feminine touch. Alcohol is most often viewed as a depressant, although it can be a stimulant and for some it is a hallucinogen. Alcohol includes the following: ethyl, methyl, propyl, butyl and amyl. Each of them composed of one chemical and has its industry.

   **Effects or Consequences of Alcohol Abuse**

   Lateness to work, truancy, inconsistency keeping late nights, sleeping a lot, forgetting duties or responsibilities, family breakdown, accident, financial problem, break in relationships, academic problem like dropping grades, failure weakness of the body, craving, mental disability, unfruitfulness to spouse, dishonesty, unemployment, dismissal from job.

2. **Cannabis (Marijuana):** Aka and Akunyili (2003), says that “marijuana is the common name for the plant cannabis sativa. The plant has been used for centuries, primarily for its euphoric (mood altering) effects and is one of the leading drugs of abuse particularly among the youths”. This drug first emerged in the United States of America (USA) in the 1920’s. It is dangerous and addictive, by 1960’s and 1970’s it became popularly known by the youths till today day. It is an indigenous product, cheapest among drugs and most widely abused by the youths. (Abel, 1980). Cannabis was brought into Nigeria by slave traders and soldiers who returned from the world wars. This drug is widely used by millions of people because of its effectiveness in mood alteration.

   **Effects or Consequences of Cannabis or Marijuana Abuse**

   Mental disorder, crime laryngitis, pharyngitis, cough, hoarseness, bronchitis, and asthma increases and reduces sexual urge Abel, (1980). over speeding in driving which can lead to road accident. The use of marijuana causes armed robbery and killing, misunderstanding, fight, family breakdown, abortion, kidnapping etc. Marijuana causes health problems like heart, kidney, liver problems, glaucoma, vomiting. It also causes mouth odour on the addict over the years.

3. **Cocaine:** This is a stimulant. It is a white powder that is typically sniffed. In its original form, it is chewed as a leaf from the cocoa plant. Cocaine is a byproduct of the resin of cocoa plant. It was used initially to enhance physical endurance or by doctors as a local anesthetic before it’s abuse by addicts (Barber, 1967). Cocaine is abused when used in a wrong way. It is done by mixing the raw cocaine powder with sodium bicarbonate (Na₂CO₃) in a particular proportion. The mixture is poured into a conical flask with distilled water and heated over an unseen burner and the rock it will form is what the addicts use. They take it by combining it with other drugs, it can be snorted, smoked or inhaled. These three methods of cocaine usage can lead to addiction and other severe health problems.
Effects or Consequences of Cocaine Abuse
Regular snorting of cocaine leads to loss of the sense of smell, nosebleeds and chronic running nose, injecting cocaine can cause severe bowel gangrene as a result of reduced blood flow and it can bring about severe allergic reactions and increased risk for contracting HIV and other blood born diseases, irritability, restlessness and anxiety.

4. Heroin: This is a powerful illegal drug and it is made from morphine. There is a brown heroin that is obtained through the purification of opium and that brown substance is due to the dirt contained in the substance. At the end of the purification, the white heroin is gotten. The opium can be swallowed raw with water or sucked. The brown powder can be mixed with cigarette. Heroin is one of the worst drug as it damages severely more than other drugs both physically and mentally. Heroin gives an addict pleasure when abused and he develops tolerance to the heroin and endangers the life of the addict.

Effects or Consequences of Heroin Abuse
Mental disorder, brain damage, liver cirrhosis, kidney problem, Heart problem, restlessness, mode swing, bad breath.

5. Opium: This is derived from juices of the opium poppy. It produces physical and psychological dependence. It is used in relieving pains and inducing sleep. It is sucked, swallowed or put in a hot tea after cutting off the semi-molten opium resin into small bits. Opium abuse begins when the patient starts taking medication on their own term, more frequently than what their doctor has recommended. It is not only used by the patients for their relief, opium abuse is even more prevalent in those who use it as a recreational drug.

Effects or Consequences of Opium Abuse
Muscle and bone pain, vomiting, restlessness, diarrhea.

6. Valium: This is a drug that is used to reduce anxiety. It is commonly recommended CNS (Central Nervous System) depressant used to produce beneficial drowsy or calming effect in individuals suffering from sleep disorders or anxiety. If valium is used as prescribed by a doctor it is not addictive but when used as not prescribed by the doctor, it becomes addictive and an abuse.

Effects or Consequences of Valium Abuse
Headache, confusion, rashes, nervousness bladder weakness painful urination, muscle cramps, vomiting, urinary retention, tremor, dizziness (Hollister, 1995).

7. Methadone: It is a drug that is used to treat people that are trying to stop taking the illegal drug. Since its legalization in 1947, it has become a highly abused drug. It is used to break one’s addiction to another substance. It is effective in withdrawal symptoms that are causing pains in the patient. When it is taken incorrectly or against the prescribed direction, it can easily move from an abuse situation into a full edged addiction. It is available in tablets, liquid and injection forms. It is safely and carefully given/administered by a highly trained staff but the drug is rampant everywhere and it makes it one of the fastest addictive substance available.

Effects or Consequences of Methadone Abuse
Drowsiness, euphoria, weakness, dehydration, difficult breathing, constipation, muscle spasms, hypotension, tremor, stomach spasms, coma, death (Barber, 1967).

8. Morphine: Morphine is a powerful drug made from opium that is used to reduce pain. It is being prescribed by doctors for its effectiveness in reducing pains in patients who are suffering from chronic illness like cancer. It can be used easily, even though it is used for health treatment. It is abused when it is being used habitually and recreationally without the prescription of the doctor. It can be administered in tablet form and through injection. The longer one takes morphine, the more he needs to experience the same level of effect.

Effects or Consequences of Morphine Abuse
Headache, anxiety, high or low blood pressure, rashes and itching, loss of memory, tremor, constipation, diarrhea, depression, insomnia, abdominal pain, fluid in the lungs, cold, slow breathing, slow heart rate, it can cause coma, it can lead to death (Walter, 1974).
9. Percocet: This is a narcotic drug prescribed to patients by doctors for the management of mild to moderate post-operative pain. The medication which is a mixture of oxycodone and acetaminophen is part of the opioid family of drugs and as such it is highly addictive. Percocet is abused when the patients do not follow the prescription as directed by the physician. The patient may take more than the prescribed number of pills at a given time or take the medication more often than what is recommended. The drug can be chewed or crushed and the powder sniffed.

**Effects or Consequences of Percocet Abuse**
Dizziness, constipation, depression, rashes, itching, slow breathing, Nausea and vomiting, drowsiness, euphoria, hypotension, heart attack, coma, then eventual death. (Laver, 1978).

10. Amphetamines: These are Central Nervous System (CNS) stimulants. They are used to counteract narcolepsy, sometimes to overcome drowsiness. It increases energy, dissipation of fatigue and loss of appetite. They can be taken orally, and intravenously.

**Effects or Consequences of Amphetamines**
Cancer of the heart, slow breathing, cough, and death.

Other drugs that are abused include;
Crystal Methamphetamine, Hallucinogen, Sedatives, Pemolin, Vicodin, Xanax, Oxycotin, Inhalants etc.

**Theories of Drug Abuse**
Theories of drug abuse indicate that some people truly depend on certain drugs for their survival due to a number of factors. The major emphasis of the theories is that people have their individual reasons for depending on one type of the drug or the other. Such reasons, according to Eze and Omeje (1999) are explained by the following theories.

(a) Personality Theories of Drug Abuse: The main emphasis of the theories is that there are certain traits or characteristics in the individuals that abuse drugs. Such personality characteristics, according to Eze and Omeje (1999) are inability to delay gratification, low tolerance for frustration, poor impulse control, high emotional dependence on other people, poor coping ability and low self esteem. Individuals with these personality characteristics find it difficult to abstain from drug abuse.

(b) Socio-cultural Theories of Drug Dependence/Abuse: The theories maintain that abuse is determined by socio-cultural values of the people. For instance, while certain cultures permit the consumption of alcohol and marijuana, other cultures do not.

**Causes of Drug Abuse**
Haladu (2003) gave the following as the main causes’

i. Experimental Curiosity: Curiosity to experiment the unknown facts about drugs thus motivates adolescents into drug use. The first experience in drug abuse produces a state of arousal such as happiness and pleasure which in turn motivate them to continue.

ii. Peer Group Influence: Peer pressure plays a major role in influencing many adolescents into drug abuse. This is because peer pressure is a fact of teenage and youth life. As they try to depend less on parents, they show more dependency on their friends. In Nigeria, as other parts of the world, one may not enjoy the company of others unless he conforms to their norms.

iii. Lack of parental supervision: Many parents have no time to supervise their sons and daughters. Some parents have little or no interaction with family members, while others put pressure on their children to pass exams or perform better in their studies. These phenomena initialize and increases drug abuse.

iv. Personality Problems due to socio-Economic Conditions: Adolescents with personality problems arising from social conditions have been found to abuse drugs. The social and economic status of most Nigerians is below average. Poverty is widespread, broken homes and unemployment is on the increase, therefore our youths roam the streets looking for employment or resort to begging. These situations have been aggravated by lack of skills, opportunities for training and re-training and lack of committed action to promote job
creation by private and community entrepreneurs. Frustration arising from these problems lead to recourse in drug abuse for temporarily removing the tension and problems arising from it.

v. The Need for Energy to Work for Long Hours: The increasing economic deterioration that leads to poverty and disempowerment of the people has driven lots of parents to send their children out in search of a means of earning something for contribution to family income. These children engage in hawking, bus conducting, head loading, scavenging, serving in food canteens etc and are prone to drug taking so as to gain more energy to work for long hours.

vi. Availability of the Drugs: In many countries, drugs have dropped in prices as supplies have increased.

vii. The Need to prevent the Occurrence of Withdrawal symptoms: If a drug is stopped, the user experiences what is termed “withdrawal symptoms”. Pain, anxiety, excessive sweating and shaking characterize such symptoms. The inability of the drug user to tolerate the symptoms motivates him to continue (Ige, 2000).

Incidence of Drug Abuse among Nigerian Adolescents

Students, especially those in secondary school tend to see the drug user as one who is tough, bold and strong. Many youngsters have been known to use drugs at the instance of peers, elders or siblings. Students who usually feel inadequate have been known to use drugs to achieve social acceptance. Esen (1979) stated that Nigerian secondary school adolescents under the influence of Indian hemp shed all inhibitions and produce behaviour that is inconsistent with school discipline. He went further to observe that the increasing incidence of drug abuse among secondary school students is a contributory factor in the ugly confrontation between school administration and students. Odejide, (1979); Ogunremi and Rotimi, (1979); Agunlana, (1999); Ubom, (2004); Obiamaka, (2004); Okorodudu and Okorodudu, (2004); Olatunde (1979) in their research work indicated that the problem of drug abuse know no boundaries or social class. It impedes the development of any society as it is a threat to life, health, dignity and prosperity of all individuals.

Fayombo and Aremu (2000) in their research on the effect of drug abuse on educational performance of some adolescent drug abusers in Ibadan found that the misuse of marijuana had reached an epidemic level in the present Nigeria society, and that drug abuse could lead to reduce academic achievement or even halt one’s entire academic process. Adesina, (1975); Ekpo, (1981); and Orubu, (1983) in their studies dwelled extensively on reasons students use drugs include success in examination, social acceptance and initiation of peers. Idowu (1987) found that students smoke and use drugs at the instance of friends/peers, parents and television/radio advertisements. Oladele, (1989); Okorodudu and Okorodudu (2004); and Enakpoya (2009) in their studies showed that adolescents were very susceptible to the influence of their peers. Osikoya and Ali (2006) asserted that socially, a drug abuser is always pre-occupied with how to obtain drug of choice and crave for the substance. Kobiowu (2006) study revealed that the academic pursuit of those undergraduates who engages in drug misuse is not unduly jeopardized, and that the abusers do not socialize extraordinarily, contrary to seemingly popular expectation. Studies by Okoh (1978), Oduaran (1979) and Johnson (1979) exhibit a plethora of purposes for which students use drug. The list includes curiosity, boldness, friends-do-it, enjoyment of social gathering, academic pressure, sound-sleep, sexual-prowess, and performance in sports. Drug abuse is a very serious problem among school adolescents and which has slowly made the average Nigerian student to be maimed, sentenced to a life of delinquency, insanity, street walking and premature death.

Strategies for Counselling

The following counselling strategies are suggested to help reduce drug abuse among adolescents.

1. Establishment of Family Education on Drugs: The family is the nucleus of the social organization. Parents should give their children appropriate education on drug use, they should inform them of the dangers of drug abuse and dependence on their health, society and the nation.
2. Establishment of Counselling Centers for Drug Control and rehabilitation: Counselling centers should be established in every community by the government or private individuals. Qualified counsellors should be employed in helping drug addicts or those dependent on drugs by using appropriate therapy and rehabilitative measures on them.

3. Designing Curricula on Drug Education: Ministry of education (State and Federal) should as matters of urgency add to the curricula- drug education at all levels of education.

4. Campaign on Drug use: National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) should intensify their campaigns on antidrug in order to have a drug free society. The campaign against use of certain drugs and misuse of drugs should be more intensified at the secondary school level. Also, government and other relevant authorities should lunch out campaigns against drug abuse as well as dependence.

5. Establishment of Drug Awareness Units: Drug awareness units to be set up in all states and moderated by the federal state and local governments. It should not be a panel established to try people who use drugs as criminals, but to help solve their socio-psychological problem.

6. Parents and adults should refrain from using drugs in indiscriminately and keep same from youngsters and they should discourage their wards/children from associating with “unknown” gangs or suspicious neighbourhood peer groups.

CONCLUSION
Drug abuse is a problem that is causing serious concern to both individuals and government all over the world. The problem is prevalent among adolescents who in most cases are ignorant about the dangers inherent in drug abuse. Many of them engaged in drug abuse out of frustration, mere curiosity, poverty, lack of parental supervision, peer influence and pleasure. However, with effective counselling programme, the problems can be tackled.

REFERENCES


