

Drug Abuse amongst Tertiary Institution Students and Security Challenges in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract - Drug Abuse has become a topical issue in both National and International for as a result of the attendant cataclysmic consequences nations are facing due to the harmful usage by clandestine individuals and groups. This concern provoked the study as reported cases of drug abuse are on the increase in Nigeria, with the youth making the highest percentage of victims as seen among Tertiary Institution students in Cross River State. Thus, it was revealed that the high premium placed on some internationally known drugs like cocaine and heroin not manufactured nor produced in Nigeria, and their securitization, are the major reasons for the cultivation, production, trafficking, marketing and consumption of locally made illicit drugs by students as they are not easily detected by security agencies. Hence, the study was anchored on the premise that the emerging trends in narcotics with regard to the invention of locally made illicit drugs, aside conventional drugs like cocaine, heroin and cannabis (marijuana) is the main challenge of security agencies. Methodologically, the study covered Tertiary Institutions in Cross River State as the study area and the students' population thereon, hence relied on primary and secondary data sources to ascertain the magnitude at which the consumption of illicit drugs by Tertiary Institution students had contributed as a drawback to economic development and a catalyst to security challenges. Thus, this deviant behavior constitutes a social menace and a security threat to the Nigerian State. The study recommended amongst others for the establishment of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) post in Tertiary Institutions campuses or regular patrol of their personnel on campuses.

Keywords: Drug Abuse, Students, Consumption, Security challenges, Tertiary Institutions.

1. Introduction

In view of the fact that all over the world, Nigeria inclusive and particularly in this 21st century global system where education remains the only medium for the technological advancement of any human society. Thus, students of Tertiary Institutions who are supposedly trained

for middle, high and supper manpower needs of any economy should be sufficiently exposed to the harmful effect of drug abuse and narcotics of any kind as a drawback to both the individual and the wider society considering the accelerated rise in the intensity of drug abuse.

Drug abuse has become prevalent in recent times in the country amid daunting security challenges. The quantity of drugs available in the country following testimonies of arrest and convictions secured by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), is not unconnected with Drug trafficking among West African countries of Nigeria, the Gambia, Ghana, Niger and Burkina Faso. The United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC), alarmingly revealed that the quantity of cocaine crossing West African countries is estimated to be 50 tons annually [11].

More so, Drug abuse has become a chief security challenge as deviant behaviour with regard to Crime, violence, cult and confraternity fracas are not unconnected to drug usage. The most trafficked drugs at the international levels include heroin, cannabis, cocaine as well as synthetic drugs into the country. Security challenges traced to drug abuse such as kidnapping, armed robbery, banditry and other sundry challenges are the greatest challenges following the discovery of cannabis farms in the country, arrest of Nigerian cannabis traffickers abroad and reports of psychological disorders suspected to be associated with cannabis (marijuana), consumption. Conceptually as seen by [6], drug abuse is the arbitrary over dependence or misuse of one particular drug with or without a prior medical diagnosis from qualified health practitioners. While [4], argued that medically, drug abuse is the use of drug to an extent that it produce definite impairment. Also, it can be seen as the use of illegal drugs, or the misuse of prescription or over – the – counter drugs for purposes for which they are not intended or using a drug in excessive quantities.

However, in most countries of the world, like in the United Kingdom that is the largest producer of cannabis for medical and scientific uses, getting access to it is out of reach to those in need following a report from the United Nations International Narcotics Control Board. The United States also

produces cannabis in large quantity with Mexico coming closely in the second position. However, the United States is leading in the production and sale of marijuana following the legalization of its sale in most States in the country for the purpose of tax revenue generation. This note it is expected according to UNODC that legally, medical and recreational cannabis industry is expected to grow at an annual rate of about 33% between now and 2024. This expectation on the annual growth of cannabis industry in the US is couched as suggested by [5] on the sales performance or turnover of the largest and oldest lawn and garden supplies company in the world as of July, 2022, called Scotts Miracle – Gro Company, with Headquarters at Marysville, OH. This Company had a revenue base of \$4.93 billion as of 2021 and expecting to do better with the legalization of cannabis for medical and recreational purposes in more States of the United States of America.

Meanwhile, as suggested by [1], it is widely known that the illicit and internationally traded drugs of cocaine and heroin are not cultivated in Africa.” Aside cannabis that is cultivated in Africa, cocaine and heroin became attractive to drug traffickers in Africa in the early 1980s as a result of their high international market [13]. This, in the words of [1].

Cocaine is largely in Latin America countries called the Columbia groups; namely Bolivia with 10 percent of total production, Columbia with 61 percent and Peru with about 29 percent. Heroin, which is the second most trafficked drug in Africa is cultivated and produced by Afghanistan and Myanmar, which produce 92 percent and 8 percent of total production respectively.

In view of the above, even though these drugs (Cocaine and Heroin) are not produced in Africa, Africa is their main rout with West Africa in particular for the shipment of the illicit drugs. As observed by [4]. The main routes of Nigerian traffickers heading to Europe and the United States are Ghana, Senegal and South Africa for heroin and cocaine. With the emergence of a syndicate traffickers known as the Nigerian group which is an upshot of Africa network of Nigerian traffickers engaged in the transit of narcotics especially cocaine from Latin America to Europe. Considering that their network is beyond the shores of West Africa sub region and indeed other sub regions in Africa, its level of economic, political and technological sophistication to undermine and obliterate security of States is not to be under estimated.

The concern on the incremental increase in the consumption of narcotic substances particularly cannabis and other locally invented hard drugs with sometimes coded nomenclature that are cheap and easily reached or affordable, hence abused by consuming beyond clinical recommendation

by a critical population of the youths considered to be the political leaders and drivers of Nigeria’s economy tomorrow has provoked the study to investigate the rationale behind the consumption of the illicit drugs amongst students of tertiary institutions in Cross River State following the lethal consequences of their actions.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Abuse of substances particularly amongst the youthful population is a menace of a national proportion that have necessitated the enactment of several drug laws and policies to curb the challenges therein. The security challenges posed from the cultivation, production, trafficking, marketing and consumption of illicit drugs have caused the introduction of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency Act of 1989 empowering the NDLEA to do battle and criminalize illicit drug traffickers and forfeit proceed from such persons found guilty and convicted of drug offences.

Despite the effort of government through the NDLEA as the lead agency creating awareness on the harmful effect of illicit drug consumption, the youthful populations in the higher institution who have refused to make good use of such advice are on the increase. Deviant behavior in campuses amongst students, from speech mannerism to dressing, hair style, just to mention but a few, leaves much to be desired of a student in the higher institution of learning. Most students who sleep in the class while a lecture is ongoing are to a very extent victims of substance abuse which eventually lead to such a student dropping out of school due to diversion of interest, mental incapacitation and the student becoming a psychiatric patient and a social miscreant, hence a security threat to the entire society.

More so, inspite of the effort shown by the present leadership of the NDLEA led by Gen. Buba Marwa (Rtd), the youths are on the voyage of discovery with regards to illicit substances that cannot be easily uncovered or traced by the law enforcement agencies like it is in the case of cannabis which is common and less expensive and well known to almost every adult person. For instance, on the 4th of October, 2022 as reported on national television, the NDLEA uncovered a methamphetamine clandestine laboratory in a high brow residential estate at Victoria Garden City, Lekki area of Lagos. The agency further uncovered no fewer than 13,451,466 pills of tramadol, 225mh worth ₦8.9 billion in street value from the same Estate. Hence, the cultivation, production, trafficking, marketing and consumption of nocturnally and clandestinely newly invented psychotropic substances is the new order in the business of narcotics in the contemporary Nigerian state, and as such, the centre –piece of the study. Thus, the study seeks to examine the challenges

arising from new trends in the cultivation, production, trafficking, marketing and consumption of illicit drugs within the praxis of the following thematic areas;

- 1) What could constitute emerging trends in drug abuse amongst students?
- 2) Whether peer influence could be responsible for the increase in drug abuse?
- 3) Whether drug abuse promotes security challenges within and outside school campuses?

1.2 Emerging trends in drug abuse

The alarming rate at which drug abuse appears to have damaged the future of young Nigerians, calls for a state of emergency to be declared in this regard. In response to this, and to nip in the bud, the awaiting national disaster arising from substance abuse,[10], brought out a master plan on drug control to deepen awareness on drug issues in order to contribute to the improvement in health, security and well-being of the Nigerian citizens. Giving credence to this dangerous trend, the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) in a world drug report in 2018 stated that drug use in Nigeria is most common among those who are between the ages of 25 and 39 years. The report further stated that cannabis is the most commonly used drug followed by Opioids and cough syrup and one out of four drug users is a woman.

Considering that consumption of drug and alcohol among the youths or young adults is most times a social behaviour that is learned through experimentation that turns out to be harmful to the individual himself, causing such individual to be anti-social, anti-peace and anti-development as available evidence had shown that intake of drugs beyond clinical boundaries is always met with dire consequences by the individual and by extension the society at large. Aligning with this position, [8], in his studies on drug abuse amongst Nigerian undergraduate, considered dependence and addiction as one of the major consequences of drug abuse characterized by compulsive drug craving seeking behaviours are use even in the face of negative consequences.

More so, as suggested by [8], majority of the Nigerian adolescents ignorantly depend on one form of drug or the other for their various daily activities which cut across social, educational, political, moral etc. such drugs include: Tobacco, Indian hemp, cocaine, morphine, heroin, alcohol, ephedrine, madras, caffeine, coleus, barbiturate and amphetamines. The war on drug abuse today is beyond conventional known hard drugs as well as those that could be seen on the shelf of medicine stores or pharmacies. Hence, most of the mental challenges faced by adolescent and young adults as a result of drug abuse are largely not caused by drugs like cocaine, heroin

or any other conventionally known hard drug to the knowledge of security agencies but from locally produced drug concocted from a combination of unimaginable substances. A study on the name and mode of consumption of some of the locally made hard drugs in Nigeria is tabulated below:

Table 1: Name and mode of consumption of some of the locally made hard drugs in Nigeria

S/N	Name of drug	Mode of consumption
1.	Blue boy	Licking
2.	Shisha	Smoking
3.	Tramadol	Swallow the pills
4.	Crystal	Sniff
5.	Loud	Smoking
6.	Arizona	Smoking
7.	Ice	Smoking
8.	Crack	Inhale
9.	Sk	Smoking
10.	Vanilla	They come in form of crystalline powder that users swallow, inhale or injects.
11.	Flakka	It is a plateaued crystal that users eat or inject. It can also be vaporize using a c-cigarette device.
12.	Krokodil	It is injected, to the blood stream
13.	Doses	It is lick with the mouth like sweet
14.	Salvia	It is chewed or smoked. It is a leaf
15.	Crank	It is injected or swallow. It comes in tablet and injection
16.	Snuff	It is inhale through the nose
17.	Aspirin	It is a tablet, it is swallowed
18.	Colorado or Colos	It is a drug weed consumed through smoking
19.	Skunchies or king of highness	By drinking. It is made by soaking marijuana in water for a day or two, then extract the water and add mkpulumili, ethanol and zobo odor. It is the worse form of drug addiction among the youths.
20.	Soak away pit	The user direct his / her nose to the manhole of the soak away pit and put a pile and sniff to get high

Source: Survey Report

Given that Tertiary Institutions houses the most critical number of the population of young adults whose development if not well managed, though affect that particular institution of learning at that time, but with severe consequences to the larger society. The study on this emerging trends on hard drugs cultivation, production, trafficking, marketing and consumption is relevant to the extent that it will enable both students, parents, security agencies and policy makers to have a better insight of this conundrum as a subterfuge that promotes security challenges in Nigeria. The acknowledgement and recognition of this trend, gives an automatic change in paradigm on the war against illicit consumption of drugs.

1.3 Security challenges and drug abuse

Drug abuse amongst students in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria and in Cross River State in this instance is having a cataclysmic effect on the student's members of the academic community and the society at large. Hence a concern among members of the academic community, and the civil society in general that if not checked and controlled is capable of exacerbating the already emasculated security architecture of the country. Strife amongst students and cult activities have a nexus with the consumption of psychotropic substances when considering deviant activities on campus by students such as

fighting with dangerous weapons, indecent dressing, aggressive behaviour, unkempt appearance amongst many others.

Increasingly too, loss of memory, loss of interest, brain damage, sleeping in the class while lecture is ongoing, are all challenges arising from drug abuse which would eventually lead to such a supposed future leader dropping out of school. Cult activities as seen in the tertiary institutions are gradually taking over local communities with a supersonic speed following the incremental increase in school dropouts who later return to the communities and living among innocent young adult who see them as “civilize” having return from the universities.

Aside major security challenges as seen in kidnapping, banditry, armed robbery, herder’s farmers’ conflict, ritual killings and militancy, Nigeria suffers from moral decadence with the increase in social vices such as raping of young girls, financial corruption and the blatant abuse of the rule of law. The geometric decline in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is traced to the decline in the Per Capita Income from the supposedly most viable and productive group of the population due to substance abuse. The damage done to the economy can hardly be estimated as young adults of working ages with the required mental and physical capacities are the major culprits in the fight against this menace. For this challenge to be abated in the words of Bassey (2019: xviii)“What is required is a comprehensive restructuring or transformation of the Nigeria Police Force that heightens its professionalism and operational efficiency to contain the accelerating internal security crisis in the country”. Thus, the future of the country becomes precarious as its most dependable population is largely overrun by drug abuse, hence a security threat to the local communities and the Nigerian state in general.

1.4 Promoters of drug abuse

i. **Peer group:** as a social aggregate in the psychological fulfillment of a young adult is considered a strong promoter of drug abuse. This is so because the belongings’ of any young adult to a peer group gives such a person the spirits of acceptability, identity, honour and pride to be found among a group, hence indulge in the group’s activity wrongly or rightly. Peer group as a means of identity defines to a very large extent the character and the opinion most young adults hold about life as the indulgence in the activities of such a group in the formative stage of an individual could be dangerous in the life of such a person as seen in the case of drug abuse. As observed by [7] the cause of substance over use among peers is that everyone else is using it and there is no problem doing so.

ii. **Lack of proper parenting:** children that grow without proper parenting are to a very large extent at the risk of being misguided. For instance a walk around major streets in Calabar, the capital city of Cross River State, Nigeria, leaves one with no doubt as teenagers different ages are seen in groups smoking marijuana and other harmful substances in open spaces and sometime in uncompleted buildings that have become their permanent abode.

However, some schools of thoughts are of the opinion that family relationships can result in a person becoming an alcoholic. For instance having a close relative who has a problem with drugs or alcohol can increase ones risk as well as being closely involve with a person who display alcoholic behaviours can also lead to the indulgence of a young adult towards substance abuse as children most times see their parent and close relatives as role models whether wrongly or rightly. Thus, lack of proper parenting becomes obvious as the father who is the final arbiter following the African Standard of parenting is absent causing a gab in supervision resulting in drug abuse and abysmal achievement of students in their choosing career.

2. Methodology

The study employed the survey research design. Data was gathered from 200 respondents comprising students of Cross River State College of Education, Akamkpa, University of Calabar, University of Cross River State and College of Education, Obudu. The instrument used was a self designed twelve items questionnaire to elicit information from the respondents by filling the answers in the space provided for the purpose. Section A has to do with information of the respondents while section B is a twelve item questionnaire. The questionnaire required the respondents to indicate Strongly Agreed (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D), and Strongly Disagreed (SD).

Research Question 1

How does locally manufactured drug promote drug abuse than Cocaine and Heroin?

Table 2: Mean score of respondents on emerging trends in drug abuse among students N=200

S/N	Items	Agree	Disagree
1	Colorado or Colos is a locally made hard drug	185	15
2	Cocaine and Heroin are more expensive than Colorado	190	10
3	Student get drugs from illegal sources	169	31
4	Students manufacture drugs by themselves	150	50
Total mean		174(87%)	27(13.5%)

Source: Survey report

Research question 2

Does the consumption of psychotropic substances promote security challenges than weak security architecture of the state?

Table 3: Mean score of respondents on drug abuse and security challenges N=200

S/N	Items	Agree	Disagree
1	Drug abuse promotes cultism in tertiary institutions	180	20
2	Drug abuse causes students to behave rebelliously to the school authority	181	19
3	Drug abuse contributes to indecent dressing	186	14
4	Drug abuse has contributed to the increase in social miscreants	192	8
Total mean		185(93%)	15(7.0%)

Source: Survey report

Research question 3

How does peer group contribute to drug abuse than poor parental supervision?

Table 4: Mean score of respondents on peer group influence and drug abuse N=200

S/N	ITEMS	AGREE	DISAGREE
1	Students take drugs because their peers are doing so	159	11
2	Students take drugs to have a sense of belongings' to the group	125	75
3	Students take drugs to be socially high	172	28
4	Students take drugs because they are reachable and affordable	178	22
Total mean		159(80%)	42(20%)

Source: Survey report

3. Result and Findings

From the analysis of the table 2 above, an average 174 which is 87% of the respondents agreed that students manufacture hard drugs locally, while 27 students which is 13.5% disagreed to this opinion. Considering that a greater number of respondents gave positive response to the opinion that said students manufacture drugs locally, it therefore holds that psychotropic substances are locally made and consumed by students as they are easily reach and less expensive than Cocaine and Heroin.

Table 3 from the analysis have a very high mean score of 185 which is 93% of the respondents agreed that drug abuse promotes security challenges, while 15 of the respondents representing 7.5% disagreed to this opinion, hence a greater number of the respondents holds that drug abuse promote cultism, causes rebellions behaviour, indecent dressing resulting in security challenges.

Meanwhile, from the analysis of table 4 above, an average of 159 which represent 80% of the respondents agreed that students take drugs because their peers are doing so, while 42 which represent 21% of the respondents disagreed. It therefore holds that peer group influence amongst others is responsible for drug abuse amongst tertiary institution students.

4. Summary and Conclusion

Considering the alarming rate at which drug abuse had damage the future of young Nigerians, the National Drug Control Strategy in 2015 brought out a master plan on drug control from 2015 – 2019 to deepen awareness on drug issues in order to contribute to the improvement in health security and well-being of the Nigerian citizens. The youths, particularly in the Tertiary Institution being a critical factor in the development trajectory of any country the world over, it became imperative that the issues of drug abuse must be addressed following security challenges emanating from its cultivation, production, trafficking, marketing and consumption by the students in Tertiary Institutions.

However, the study maintained that drug abuse in Nigeria today is caused by locally made drugs as revealed in table 1 in the study which are not easily noticed or dictated by security agencies are now the major challenge in the fight against illicit trafficking by the NDLEA. Thus, the central thesis of the study holds that drugs are linked to crime, violence and corruption that its potential impact on peace and security, if not checked, could be more catastrophic than the variant of unrest. Nigeria is facing presently across the regions of the country. Hence, to unrivaled this menace, the study focused on the emerging trends in drug abuse, security challenges and what the study considers as promoters of drug abuse.

5. Recommendations

- Inter-agency collaboration amongst security agencies should be strengthen at the National and State level.
- Enhance operational capability of the NDLEA as the lead agency for the control of drug abuse.
- Sensitization and advocacy should done in Tertiary Institutions through the formation of clubs on drug abuse.
- Posting of NDLEA personnel to campuses as well as regular patrol by the agency.
- Decentralization of the Nigeria Police Force from the central command structure to community policing.
- Surprise checks should be conducted in our hostels by trained narcotic personnel'.
- Vehicles coming in and out of the campuses should be thoroughly scrutinized as drivers collude with drug barons as distribution channels of these drugs.
- Eateries and other vendor stands should be checked also at irregular and unannounced periods.
- Offices of academic and non-academic staff should be periodically checked as no one should be trusted considering the state of the economy today were everyone explores other channels to make ends meet hence the cheapest way is to go into drugs business.

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