



Issue Brief

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Rising Drug Use and Youths in Nigeria: A Need for an Urgent Legislative Action

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Summary

- The objective of the brief is to identify the causes of rising drug intake among youths in Nigeria.
- Rising cases of drug intake in Nigeria is alarming which has caused huge and unquantified damage to the society
- There should be a total overhaul of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency to reduce the rate of drug abuse in Nigeria. This can be done through the development of a central data capturing to identify the progress of such actions and the means to be adopted to curtail such intake by the youths.

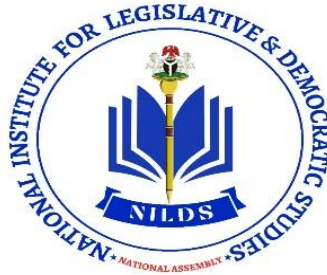
Introduction

Rising drug abuse has been a worrisome situation in the world and Nigeria in particular. This situation has continued despite the earnest search by drug law enforcement agencies in Nigeria to curtail the rising intake of unprescribed drugs. This intake has caused the fall of many youths in the country; with some being dropouts from schools, psychologically derailed, disabled, various degrees of emotional and physical accidents as well as dead. With this epidemic rise in these cases, the consequences to the Nigerian society could be devastating as this has caused varying degrees of damage to the immediate community and the country at large. Especially, this intake has served as stimulants to the youths to carry out various nefarious acts that affect the economy

negatively. As such one could begin to question the growth and development of the Nigerian youths and the future which the country holds. Based on the aforementioned, this brief seeks to identify the factors responsible for the rising cases of drug use by the youths in Nigeria.

1. *Stylized Facts on Rising Cases of Drug use in Nigeria*

There has been an increase in the intake of drugs by Nigerian youth over the years. This number has continued to rise unabated due largely to the inefficiency and effectiveness in the control of such drugs in the country. Affirming to this, National Bureau of Statistics posited that over the past year alone, nearly 15% of the adult population in Nigeria (around 14.3 million people) reported a “considerable level” of use of psychoactive drug substances—it’s a



rate much higher than the 2016 global average of 5.6% among adults.¹ Furthermore, “Thisday” asserted that every day, over 500,000 bottles of codeine are consumed by young Nigerians across the country, same with the intake of tramadol, rohypnol, marijuana, and other opioids, an alarming trend that has subtly eaten deeply into the Nigerian fabric with children of all classes having a field day abusing these drugs.² This distribution of such drugs cut intake in Nigeria is presented in figure 1.

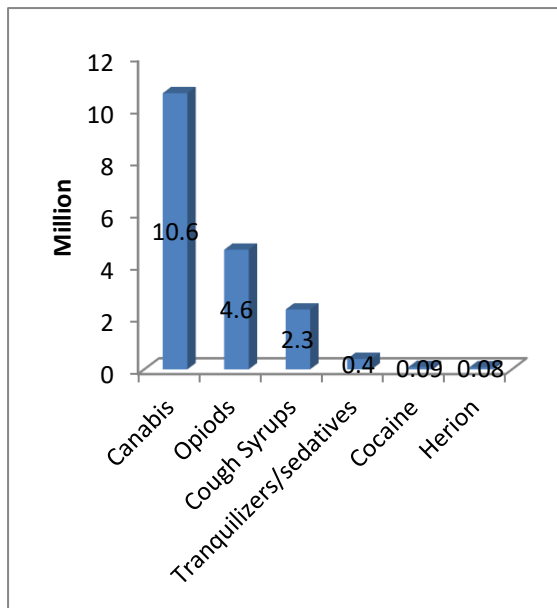


Figure 1: Hard Drug Consumption by Youths in Nigeria.

Figure 1 showed that most of the youths involved in drug intake consumed more of cannabis with the NBS report affirming that the highest levels of drug use was recorded among people aged between 25 to 39, with cannabis being the most widely used drug, followed by opioids, cough syrups, tranquilizers/sedatives, cocaine and heroin. However, the reported ignore tobacco and alcohol which is another rising intake of drugs aspect in Nigeria. This means that the intake of these drugs could affect the future plans of parents toward their wards. With a country naturally endowed with abundant human and natural resources, about 45% of its youths are indulged in drug abuse.³ with a record of 3,683 kg of suspected hard drugs including 804.22 kg of cannabis, 2,873.8 kg of tramadol (225 mg), 5.3 g of cocaine and 57.2 L of codeine syrup in Lafia alone.⁴ NBS survey report stated that about 14

¹ NBS (2019). A national survey has confirmed the massive scale of Nigeria’s drug problem. <https://qz.com/africa/1538843/nigeria-drug-abuse-14-million-adults-use-drugs/>

² Thisday (2020). Rising Drug Abuse. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/11/01/rising-drug-abuse/>

³ Jatau, A. I., Sha’aban, A., Gulma, K. A., Shitu, Z., Khalid, G. M., Isa, A., Abubakar, S. W. & Mustapha, M. (2019). The Burden of Drug Abuse in Nigeria: A Scoping Review of Epidemiological Studies and Drug Laws. *Public Health Reviews*, 42, 1-11.

⁴ National Institute of Drug Abuse. (2019). Drug addicts: An assessment. Available from <https://ng.linkedin.com/company/the->



million youths in Nigeria are involved in drug abuse.⁵

2. Causes of Rising Drug Use among Youths in Nigeria

Ajibade summarized the factors responsible for rising cases of drugs among youths in Nigeria to include:

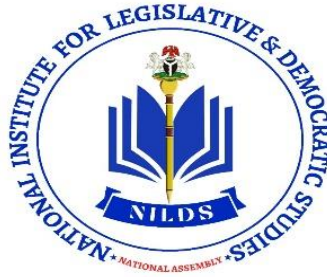
- a. **Demographic factors:** In Nigeria, demographic factors have been associated with substance abuse and the rising cases of drug use in the country. Factors such as age and gender can predict the course of substance abuse. It is also suggested that, there are “ages of susceptibility” to substance abuse. The period of major risk for initiation to cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana peaks between ages 16 and 18 and is completed for the most part by age 20 with the male most likely to be the ones indulged the most in the abuse of such substances. This is evident in the number of male youths involved in social vices as a result of drug intake. Such vices include, banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery and so on.
- b. **Socio-economic Factors:** This involves the influence of family, peers, and the environment. Most youths who are exposed to drug intake begins or mimic their parents especially when they are involved in substance intake. Youths who live with such parents are most like to

get involved in such act. Dysfunctional or disturbed families are more likely to influence the youths into substance intake and abuse. Youths who hang around peers involved in substance abuse have higher chances of drug abuse involvement. Environment factors also have been implicated as one of the occurring factors in youth substance abuse. This is attributed to lack of appropriate law enforcement.

- c. **Behavioural Factors:** The use of certain substance, such as alcohol and marijuana, can lead to increased use, as well as the use of harder drugs. Substance and drug use has also been found to be associated with a tendency to engage in other antisocial behaviors, such as rebelliousness and precocious sexual and delinquent activities. Individuals who are engaged in substance intake have high tendency of entering into other substances intake. Certain substances have been shown to predict entry into other drug use. Youths tend to begin with certain entry such as cigarettes and liquor, then sequentially progress to marijuana and finally to harder drugs.
- d. **Individual Characteristics:** Rising cases of drug abuse have also been linked to poor academic performance of youths. Most youths

nationalinstitute-on-drug-abuse-nida;
<https://www.drugabuse.gov/>

⁵ Ibid



in Nigeria who perform poorly in school consider themselves as failure and hence consider the intake of hard drugs as an alternative to stigmatization in the society. Poor academic achievement has been found to influence alcohol and/or other drugs use. Psychological variable such as self-esteem, motivation, developmental factors, and depression can also contribute to drug use. Adolescents may subsequently turn to drug and substance use to alleviate the distress this causes. Conversely, adolescents who are heavily involved in alcohol and other drugs, place little value on academic performance, as the urge to drink and use drugs take on the primary importance.

- e. **Insecurity Factor:** The rise of insecurity in Nigeria has led to loss of so many lives in the country which has motivated the youths whose relations are killed into high substance intake. These youths prefer to have revenge than forgive thereby motivating them into substance intake to have confidence of attack on the perpetrators of such act. This factor happens to be the chief engineer of social vices in Nigeria today among the youths.⁶

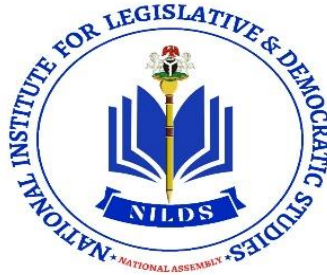
3. Consequences of Rising Drug abuse in Nigeria

Youths in Nigeria who persistently abuse substances often experience an array of problems, including academic difficulties, health-related problems (including mental health), poor peer relationships, and involvement with the juvenile justice system. Additionally, there are consequences for family members, the community, and the entire society.

- i. **Academics:** In Nigeria, rising cases of drug abuse has resulted into declining grades, absenteeism from school and increased potential of dropping out of school. The intake of such drugs has created among youths', low level of educational commitment and higher rate of truancy. With respect to this, vulnerability to secret cults' initiation is prone due to demoralization and loss of interest.
- ii. **Physical health:** High intake of substances among youths in Nigeria has caused injuries due to accidents (such as car accidents), physical disabilities and diseases, and the effects of possible overdoses are among the health-related consequences of teenage substance abuse. Disproportionate numbers of youth involved with alcohol and other drugs face an increased risk of

⁶ Ajibade, B.L., Uvomata, M., E., Akinpelu, A.O., Adeleke, M.A., Fabiyi B.O., Akinlabi, T. (2016). Factors influencing substance abuse amongst selected commercial motorcyclists in

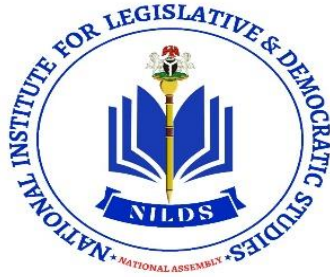
Ogbomoso metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria. International Journal of Health and Psychology Research, 4(3), 1-27.



- death through suicide, homicide, accident, and illness. These illustrate the catastrophic health-related consequences of substance abuse among youths in Nigeria. Besides personal and family distress, additional healthcare costs and loss of future productivity place burdens on the community.
- iii. **Mental health:** Mental health problems such as depression, developmental lags, apathy, withdrawal, and other psychosocial dysfunctions frequently are linked to substance abuse among youths in Nigeria. Substance-abusing youth are at higher risk than nonusers for mental health problems, including depression, conduct problems, personality disorders, suicidal thoughts, attempted suicide, and suicide. Marijuana use, which is prevalent among youth, has been shown to interfere with short-term memory, learning, and psychomotor skills.
- iv. **Peers:** Substance-abusing youth often are alienated from and stigmatized by their peers. Adolescents using alcohol and other drugs also often disengage from school and community activities, depriving their peers and communities of the positive contributions they might otherwise have made.
- v. **Social and economic consequences:** The social and economic costs related to youth substance abuse are high. They result from the financial losses and distress suffered by alcohol- and drug-related crime victims, increased burdens for the support of adolescents and young adults who are not able to become self-supporting, and greater demands for medical and other treatment services for these youth.
- vi. **Insecurity:** Rising cases of drug abuse has caused Nigeria millions of resources in rebuilding destroyed facilities by drug-influenced youths. Most of the dastardly acts performed in Nigeria are as a result of high intake of drug substances. In the event of such acts, many lives are lost and properties destroyed in the process.

Areas for Legislative Consideration

- i. There should be a total overhaul of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency to reduce the rate of drug abuse in Nigeria. This can be done through the development of a central data capturing to identify the progress of such actions and the means to be adopted to curtail such intake by the youths.
- ii. A guidance and counselling unit should be established as a matter of urgency in all primary and secondary schools to educate the young ones about the negative effects of drug abuse on themselves, family and the society at large.
- iii. A strong legislative backing should be provided to traditional



rulers to punish those involved in the trafficking of drugs in the society where these government agencies are not found or cannot reach.

- iv. A strong review of the security architecture should be considered in Nigeria to prevent the wide spread of angered youths from relations loss. This will help curtail the rate of avenging the deaths of relations by other groups in the society.

the society in curtailing the excesses that may arise from this problem.

Conclusion

Rising cases of drug intake in Nigeria is alarming which has caused huge and unquantified damage to the society. Therefore, there is an urgent need to for families, schools, and orientation agencies to develop suitable measures that will assist

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