



## ASSOCIATED CRIMES AND ILLICIT DRUGS AMONG WOMEN IN KANO METROPOLIS: DILEMMA AND SALIENT ISSUES

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper examines illicit drugs and operating patterns of crime among women in Kano metropolis of Nigeria. Illicit drug use is, by definition, a crime. That simple observation thrusts illicit drug use into the realm of law-breaking behaviours long dominated by men. Thus, the question of women's patterns of illicit drug use and their relation to criminal activities must be addressed within the broader context of gender differences in criminal and delinquent behaviour. Male and female patterns of both crime and substance use are very different, as the majority of the crimes being committed today are directly or indirectly connected to substance abuse. Thus, the persistence of drug abuse behaviour amongst women and the teeming youth in urban Kano has become a major source of concern. Preliminary investigation revealed that peer group influence, parenting style, broken homes and law enforcement corruption are some of the factors responsible for drug abuse menace. Therefore, the paper examines the dilemma and salient issues of illicit drugs among women in Kano metropolis area of Nigeria as well as many of the abusers engage in the act out of frustration, poverty, lack of parental supervision, peer influence and pleasure among others. The methodology used in the study was a desk-based library method where the knowledge gained from various literatures as well as conceptual, theoretical, and empirical studies reviewed form the basis for conclusion and recommendations.*

**Keywords: Illicit Drugs, Substance Abuse, Criminal Behaviour, and Female Offender**

### INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse is common in criminal justice populations. An important task of the criminal justice system is to prevent criminal recidivism, which is Substance abuse is a strong risk factor for committing new offenses and therefore presents a difficult challenge for correctional institutions (Walter, Wiesbeck, Dittmann, and Graf, 2011). Apart from contributing to criminal relapse, the high prevalence of substance abuse has been shown to be associated with elevated mortality and psychiatric symptoms in the criminal population, compared to the population in general (Bonta, Law and Hanson, 1998). The youths in Nigeria like many countries of the world are increasingly developing addiction to psychoactive substances or engage in drug abuse (NDLEA, 2011).

Female illicit drug users are doubly deviant. Not only do they break the law, they also participate in a predominantly male activity (Ferrencia and Whitehead, 1980). It is instructive to examine the parallel course in the explanation of female deviance in the criminology literature. Female criminals have been variously described over the past 80 years as "devious, deceitful

and emotional ... intellectually dull and passive ... closer to animals in evolution ... immoral ... lonely and dependent ... [and] a pathetic lot" (Klein and Kress, 1976, p. 35). The deviant behaviour of males and females was assumed to reflect different underlying processes and motivations (Smith and Paternoster, 1987). While men have been viewed as seeking monetary success, status, or peer acceptance through criminal pursuits, their female counterparts have been portrayed as personally or socially maladjusted or as the victims of biological imbalance (Smith and Paternoster, 1987). The current trend is away from gender-specific theories of deviance, toward more comprehensive explanations of deviant behaviour in both males and females (Hagan et al., 1985).

Crimes and deviant behaviour bring about insecurity in any society and remain part of the major impediments to development in any nation. A society thrives when criminalities and social menace that could threaten its security are controlled. Nwanegbo et al., (2013) stressed that security is evidently the pillar upon which every meaningful development could be achieved and sustained. Iwerimie Jaja et al., (2013) posits further that without law and order, there would be no stability and sustainable development in any society

In contemporary Nigeria society, if we look around in our immediate environment there seems to be high spread of drug use and abuse among many, mostly the young ones (Mahmoud & Dabit, 2020). Some of these substances may come in form of tablets, capsules, syrups or soluble, examples of such are codeine, tramadol, frenor, Alabuku. Some people sniff, swallow, inject or ingest them to get euphoria. In addition, substances such as wee wee, ganja, marijuana and many others mostly initiate in the users the ability to commit crimes. In support of this, Adegboro (2014) asserts that use of illicit drugs has been linked with anti-social behaviours and criminality for many decades. Alcohol and marijuana were the top two on the list of substances abused. Adegboro (2014) further reported that violent behaviour like sexual assault and violent crimes were common among substance abusers.

Also, it has been noted that the society contributes vastly to the rate of substance abuse among this set of groups in the society. The level of poverty and high rate of unemployment in the country made several people to engage in unregulated business to make ends meet. This is why the sales of Central Nervous System (CNS) active agents like alcohol herbal mixture also known as "paraga", Indian hemp and the rest are commonly found in all the motor parks in the state. This go in line with Balarabe (2006) asserts that 61% of those who consume *gadagi* are commercial motorcyclists who want to push ahead of time. Oluwadiya et al., (2012) assert that "paraga", an alcoholic herbal preparation that comes in different varieties had been shown to be commonly available to commercial vehicle drivers in southern Nigeria.

Oyeniyi (2015) argues that "there have been numerous anecdotes (stories) and newspapers reports that paraga makers sometimes include psychoactive herbs such as cannabis and cocaine as well as alcohol in paraga to add some 'kick' to their product. Going by the argument of Oyeniyi (2015), it is clear that several criminal/deviant behaviours such as, rape, street fight, dispossession of commuters' valuables items, bullying, serious abuse and beating of commuters at slightest disagreements which are commonly found among the commercial vehicle drivers may directly or indirectly link to their use of psychoactive substance, notably their intake of 'solution' Tramol, among others.

In view of the above, the paper examines the dilemma and salient issues of illicit drugs among women in Kano metropolis area of Nigeria on the bad nature of increase enrolments of womenfolk in the deal of drug abuse thus; some of these women are students and married women while in the 1990s women are not real participant in this bad attitude.

## CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

**Criminal behaviour:** It can be defined from both legal and social perspectives. From legal perspective criminal act is said to be acts or omissions forbidden by law that can be punished by imprisonment and/or fine. Murder, robbery, burglary, rape, drunken driving, domestic violence and many others are common examples of criminalities.

**Substance abuse:** connotes excessive and persistent self-administration of a drug without regard to the medically or culturally accepted patterns. It could also be viewed as the use of a drug to the extent that it interferes with the health and social function of an individual.

## REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Women are generally more biologically susceptible than men to blood-borne infections, as the issue of drug abuse is a common global phenomenon in the contemporary times. For example, various features of the female genital tract enhance susceptibility to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection (Reis Machado et al., 2014). Women who use drugs also have gender-specific vulnerabilities to blood-borne infections (Pinkham et al., 2012). HIV prevalence rates are higher among women who inject drugs than among their male counterparts (EMCDDA, 2006; Des Jarlais et al., 2012). In comparison with men, women who use drugs are more likely to share injecting paraphernalia and to share it with more people (Sherman et al., 2001), trade sex for drugs or money and have difficulties in negotiating condom use with sexual partners (Tuchman, 2010). Interventions to reduce the risk of blood-borne viruses should address issues such as relationship dynamics, housing and employment (to reduce reliance on partners and the need to trade sex), in addition to condom use and injecting practices (Pinkham et al., 2012), and should target individuals, couples and social networks (El-Bassel et al., 2010).

Thus; Women who use substances are more likely than men to have experienced traumatic events, such as sexual and physical assault and abuse as children and/or adults (UNODC, 2016) and to be currently exposed to intimate partner violence (Downs and Miller, 2002). The experience of trauma can lead to the development of post-traumatic stress disorder or other mental health problems and can also increase the risk of substance use (Najavits, 2009; Jonas et al., 2011).

According to Yunusa (2016), in his study of substance abused by delinquents (male and female) in Zaria metropolis, found that inhalants or industrial solvents such as glue, /gum solution, gasoline/petrol, nitrous oxide and laughing gas were abused to intoxicate their minds. Also, commonly abused substance in the study area include codeine, cannabis, cough syrups, rafenol, tramadol, heroin, steroids, mandrax and cocaine, alcohol, designer/ club drugs. However, types of locally made organic abused substances were sniffing or smoking dry lizard faeces, dry human faeces and dry faeces from other animals to intoxicate themselves. The study was able to establish that some delinquents inhaled the odour of contaminated water from the gutter or drainage, inhaling the odour from pit toilets and sand from gutter to make them high or intoxicated. Zakami (Daturametel) was the most abused concoction in Zaria metropolis, as many women in prison use drugs.

A systematic review, which included mainly US-based studies, reported that, in the month before prison entry, 30-60 % of women were dependent on or used illicit drugs (Fazel et al., 2006). Compared with women in community-based substance abuse treatment, women offenders with substance use problems experience similar issues, although the severity of the problems tends to be greater (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2009; Grella, 2015). The complexity of their problems is typically coupled with a lack of appropriate services to meet their

psychological, social and healthcare needs (EMCDDA, 2012b; Kolind and Duke, 2016). Although prisons are high-risk environments for unsafe drug using behaviour and for the transmission of blood-borne infections, harm reduction activities, especially access to clean syringes, remain controversial (Stover and Hariga, 2016) and are often opposed on the grounds that they are perceived to contradict the goal of a drug-free prison (EMCDDA, 2012b). The absence of these activities may have a greater impact on women than men, as it has been found that, in the European Union, a higher proportion of women prisoners than of male prisoners inject drugs (EMCDDA, 2004). As a result of their complex needs, these women require diverse interventions while in prison and following release (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2009; Mir et al., 2015). They can benefit from gender-responsive, trauma-informed, integrated interventions that address multiple issues in addition to substance use, such as trauma, mental health, physical and reproductive health, and infectious disease risk behaviours (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2009; Messina et al., 2010). Needle and syringe programmes in prisons are also recommended (UNODC, 2012). At Hindelbank women's prison in Switzerland and Vechta women's prison in Germany, syringes can be exchanged via slot machines (WHO Regional Office for Europe and the Pompidou Group, 2002). Other recommendations include drug substitution treatment for women with opioid addiction problems (UNODC, 2008) and psychosocial interventions (Covington, 1998). Preparing women for release includes supporting them to enhance their housing and financial situations, develop vocational and life skills, and rebuild social support networks and family relationships. Through care to drug treatment in the community is also required (UNODC, 2008).

In a study conducted by Hali (2017), on the predisposing factors of substance abuse among women in Kano Metropolis, found that factors that predispose women to substance abuse are parental negligence, over protection by parents, having parents/guardians who are substance abusers, substance availability, to reduce tension, peer group pressure, early marriage, due to the negative influence of western media, frustration, depression and co-wives rivalry. Furthermore, women abuse substances to either increase or decrease their performance. It was found that some of the women abused substances to control their emotions, especially their sexual urge when their husbands are away. It induces sleep and also keeps them calm. The study established that substance mainly abused by women in Kano metropolis were cough syrup/Roche. Others include cannabis, rafenol, tramadol, alcohol prescriptive drug etc. Also, cocaine and steroid are least abused by women in Kano metropolis (Hali, 2017).

There is the need for studies to explore, assess, and monitor the urban drug use in Nigeria, because the solutions to the problem lie in the community itself.

## **DILEMMA AND SALIENT ISSUES OF ILLICIT DRUGS AMONG WOMEN**

Drug and alcohol problems in Nigeria have assumed epidemiological dimensions. Scholars began to evaluate and re-examine the trends and impacts of drug and alcohol use in the 1990s. These scholars examine how drug and alcohol use reflects gender, regional, demographic and occupational categories, and in some cases, the impact of these drugs. Obot (2011) notes that while alcohol consumption is not age-, gender- or class-specific, it is consumed for recreational and instrumental purposes. In rural-urban contexts, he observes that most rural communities engage in agriculture, producing grains, root crops and fruits, which form local in-puts in both local and industrial breweries (O'Malley and Mugford, 2017). This makes it easier for a burgeoning production of, and accessibility to, alcohol. As a result, *Burukutu and Pito* are locally produced and consumed in the middle belt/northern part of the country, while *palm wine and ogogoro (gin/whiskey)* are produced in the south (Obot, 2015). Other studies such as Ikwuagwu et al. (2012) observe the worrisome preponderance of young persons in hospitals for alcohol and drug problems. The fact that most of them come from rural communities is very disturbing.

Burt, et al., (1979) also examined available data from large national data systems as well as small scale local data sets which provided a good picture of the different demographic and other characteristics between female addicts and male addicts. These data showed:

Almost without exception, most female addicts fall within the 21-30age group;

That whites constitute over 50 percent of the clients in the national data sets, while local data sets tend to show a higher or equal percent of blacks;

On the average most of these women are single;

Close to 50 percent of addicted females fail to complete high school;

The vast majority of these women are not employed with most reporting that they were unemployed or housewives;

For over two-thirds of these women the primary source of income was either welfare or they were dependent on others;

Heroin represented the primary drug of abuse for 50 percent or more of these women. When comparing females to males it was found that: (1) Females involved in traditional treatment programs were slightly more likely than males to be under 21 and slightly less likely to be 21 and over. However, female clients of crisis centres were more likely than males to be over 30 years of age and those dying of drug overdoses were considerably more likely to be over 36. These latter differences are attributed to the higher use of psychotherapeutic drugs by females than males in those age groups. (2) Females are less likely to be black and considerably less likely to be Mexican-American or Puerto Rican. (3) As a group, while there were no educational differences between males and females, women were considerably less likely to be employed than males. (4) While women were more likely to be dependent on others or welfare for their support than males, they were less likely to be dependent on illegal activities as their major source of support. (5) Females begin the use of heroin at a slightly older age than males (Burt et al, 1979). The point at which most females begin using opiates appears to be between ages 16 and 20 with a tendency for first use to occur at the upper limits of this range. Certainly, by age 20 over 50 percent of addicted women have begun heroin use (Chambers, 1974a; Binion, 1979).

Therefore, looking at the areas in which most female addicts live we find, like males, they typically come from urban areas rather than small towns. Over the last 20 years it is reported that just over 80 percent of female addicts come from metropolitan or urban areas (Gandossy, Williams, Cohn, and Harwood, 1980). This represents a major change over the pre-World War II pattern where most female addicts came from non-urban southern areas. It is also important to note that there are marked contrasts between addicts coming from the South and Southwest when compared with stereotypical "street heroin addict" living in the large metropolitan areas in other parts of our country. Typically, the former group of women are white, begin using drugs at a later age, and generally limit their drug use to prescription narcotics acquired illegally or semi-legally. This group also is likely to depend on legal means of support with many obtaining their money by regular employment.

### **Philosophical Framework**

Differential Association Theory of Sutherland and Cressey (1960) could be used to explain associated crimes and illicit drugs among women in Kano Metropolis of Nigeria. This theory is of the view that conformists through stages of successive events begins to engage in abnormal or anti-social behaviours including illicit drugs as a result of their association with drug peddlers. Thus; it shows how deviant behaviour is learned in the same way normal behaviour is learnt but not necessarily biological or psychological defects in him as a social being. In recent times many females (women) are drifting into illicit drug taking as a result of association with bad peers they come in contact with. Equally, it is learned in both males and/or females) who are already involved in this practice of illegal drugs acts. Also, media, such as movies, television, and internet network could influence women to engaging in substance abuse. However, this



study ascertained the extent to which a person's behavioural intentions are affected by what he or she expects to experience and how much these expectations stand to cover the person's ability to see its damaging effects. What this means in line with this study is that individuals are more likely to engage in drug use depending on what they perceive to be the outcome. Although, there is a dearth of scientific fact to prove the extent to which these media have facilitated the genesis of women of Kano Metropolis in engaging on illicit drugs. Some women, who may not have access to the media could engage in illicit drugs through the habits of copying the act from their friends and associates. Also, defect in socialization process, as a result of broken home significantly increases the prevalence of women in the act of illicit drugs, as a result of growing poor parenting attitude in the contemporary society.

## **Conclusion**

By and large, women who use drugs face a number of issues that vary in extent and nature compared with those experienced by their male counterparts. The paper is of the view that women have greater experiences of stigma, shame and discriminatory responses; have less social support; are more influenced in issues relating to drug use and recovery by their parental role and through their partners; and are at a greater risk of exposure to violence and blood-borne infections, as the issue of drug abuse has become a serious social problem affecting both social lives of many people's living within the metropolitan area of the state because of the higher number of women engagement in this bad attitude of drugs abuse. As such the call for responsive regulation progresses, such global and urban processes as well as influences requires effective monitoring and regulatory programming to reconcile their implications with community context and effects. As evident in this paper, global, market and urban influences render the rural communities vulnerable to the activities of entrepreneurs (hawkers, patent medicine dealers, professionals and quacks) of various drugs, ranging from illegal to the fake drugs, where they have found market niches. Therefore, the need to focus on substance use in such marginal populations beyond occasional descriptive glimpses is important.

## **Recommendations**

1. The State and Local governments should ban joints and recreational centres known to be selling points for illicit substances and ensure that uncompleted buildings that are hide-out for the consumption and sale of illicit substances are completed by the owners or risk demolition.
2. Parents and the larger society should take extra measures to keep monitoring of their children's and wards.
3. National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and National Drug Law Enforcement Agency should embark on grassroots awareness creation and sensitization campaign to warn the public of the risks of abuse/misuse of codeine containing medicinal products.
4. Government must interfere fast in educating the Nigerian public using mass media about the spreading scourge of drug abuse among our adolescents.
5. All the three tiers of Government in Nigeria, the NGOS and concerned individuals must made concerted effort in curbing the spread of the scourge of drug abuse among our youth's and adolescents through awareness campaign programs.
6. Government should establish laws that will entails serious fine and grievous punishments for those found guilty such would address the wider availability of drugs in the society.

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