



## DRUG ABUSE AND HEALTH IMPLICATION FOR THE NIGERIAN REDERATIN OF CATHOLIC STUDENTS (SECONDARY SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY) IN MAIDUGURI DIOCESE “FOR LENT SEASON”

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### ABSTRACT

*Drug abuse is a global health and social problem with conditions and problems that vary locally. The use of psychoactive substances among adolescents and young adults has become a subject of public concern worldwide. Majority of the Nigerian adolescents both the secondary and tertiary students ignorantly depend on one form of drug or the other for their various daily activities—social, educational, political, moral etc. Such drugs include: Tobacco, Indian hemp, cocaine, morphine, Heroine, Alcohol, ephedrine, Madras, Caffeine, Glue, Barbiturates, and Amphetamines. Drug abuse among youth's and adolescents is a matter of concern to all Nigerians especially the society, government, school heads, religious leaders, groups and other NGOs. This menace has led to increase in violence and crimes, increase in Hepatitis B and C virus, increase in HIV/AIDS diseases. Government has tried in Nigeria to curtail, eradicate or discourage the use, sale, trafficking and recycling of illegal drugs by promulgating various decrees against such drug use. The major treatment/rehabilitation methods in use in Nigeria, includes; Non-Governmental Based Treatment/Rehabilitation, Community Based Treatment and rehabilitation, Hospital based Treatment and Rehabilitation, Religious/Faith Based Treatment / Rehabilitation. The earlier the society accepts its responsibility, the better future for our future generation.*

### INTRODUCTION

According to the Holy Bible in **LEVETICUS Ch 19 V1-2, 17-18**: “And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto the , you shall be holy for I the Lord your God am Holy, But thou shall love thy neighbour as thy self.” **1 Corinthians Ch. 3 V 16-23**: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, And that the spirit of God dwelth in you?”. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is Holy, which temple you are.” Let no Man deceive himself..... Whether Paul or Apollo's or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or the things present, or things to come all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is Gods.” **Mathew Ch. 5. V 38-48**; “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect.”

World Health Organization (WHO), defined health “**as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not a mere absence of disease or infirmity**”. (Daniel Challahans, 1973) This state of complete well-being have been challenged in several ways and means including the one caused by the inappropriate action or inaction of the individuals or group of individuals including use drugs, alcohol and traditional herbs.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defined drug abuse as “the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs. (Ekpang, Abuo, 2015) Bolugun et al described it as a substance that modifies perceptions, cognition, mood, behaviour and general body functions. They are often term as chemical modifiers of the living tissues that could bring about physiological and behavioural changes. (Ekpang, Abuo, 2015) Hamisu et al described drug abuse as “arbitrary” over dependence or miss-use of one particular drug with or without a prior medical diagnosis from qualified health practitioners. (Hamisu, Othman, 2014)

Man has used and abused certain substances since time immemorial. In almost all cultures, there has been the desire for man, consciously or unconsciously to escape from monotony, frustration and pains and to seek euphoria or a sense of well-being when taking part in different achievement tasks. Substances such as alcohol, marijuana and tobacco are no exception. These substances are included among the psychoactive substances. (Awosusi, Adegboyega, 2013) Drug/substance abuse is a major problem facing the world in which Nigeria is not an exception. Abuse of drugs is common among high school students aged between 13 and 18 years.

The use of mind altering substances of natural origin has been known since the prehistoric times. For centuries, man has tried to either complement some pleasant features of life or escape from the unpleasantness of life, whether real or imaginary, by using fermented liquor and different plant products. For example, drinking of palm wine and locally brewed alcohol such as “ogogoro”, “burukutu” as well as chewing of different stimulating plants and their products in Nigeria have been known for ages. Reports have it that the use of these substances was more of occasional and in moderation with few exceptions. (Agwogie, Vanguard News, 2016) This was the trend of substance use in Nigeria until after the Second World War in the 40s when cannabis (hemp) was introduced through the war veterans who brought back the cannabis seed from India. . The 70s and 80s witnessed the introduction of other drugs like cocaine, heroin, amphetamines and pharmaceutical opioids (codeine, morphine etc). This trend changed dramatically in the 90s to include the abuse of non-conventional drugs such as volatile solvents or inhalants (gasoline, correction fluid, rubber solution, aerosol, nail polish removal, kerosene, petrol, and bytul nitrate). These volatile solvents produce psychoactive vapour which when inhaled goes straight from the nose to the brain, heart and lungs with instant intoxication and diverse consequences. (Agwogie, Vanguard News, 2016) All these lead to the defilement of the holy temple of God which our body supposed to be.

Today, ingenuity has been introduced into drug abuse with complex mixtures, experimentations and new discoveries. This has resorted to the abuse of lizard dung (especially the whitish part), pit toilet/soak away fumes (bio generic gas), “gokolo” a concoction of unimaginable substances, robin blue powder cocktail, “gadagi” (a substance resembling tea leaves), pharmaceutical products (tramadol, rohypnol) and many more. Codeine containing cough syrup mixed with soft drinks is gradually taking over alcohol in youth parties. Due to new technologies which have improved the mass production of some of these drugs, many of them have become very cheap and therefore affordable. Unfortunately, the presence of new substances of abuse are usually not detected until someone suffering from the consequences visits the hospital for treatment or law enforcement personnel intercept or seize a supply of suspected substances. Substance abuse in Nigeria and the new trend is becoming a significant medical, psychological, social and economic problem facing the nation. More worrisome is the increasing number of secondary school and tertiary institution students who are getting involved in drug abuse. Drug Abuse is the harmful use of mind altering drugs. In added the term usually refers to problem with illegal drugs, which also include harmful use of legal prescription drugs, Such as in self-medication.

## **EPIDEMIOLOGY**

Majority of the Nigerian adolescents ignorantly depend on one form of drug or the other for their various daily activities—social, educational, political, moral etc. Such drugs include: Tobacco, Indian hemp, cocaine, morphine, Heroine, Alcohol, ephedrine, Madras, Caffeine, Glue, Barbiturates, and Amphetamines. (Hamisu, Othman, Lian, 2014) Oshikoya et al described drug abuse amongst Nigerian adolescents identified dependence and addiction as one of the major consequences of drug abuse, characterized by compulsive drug craving seeking behaviours that persist even in the face of negative consequences. (Hamisu, Othman, Lian, 2014) In the education many students who don't read get scarred when examination is approaching and so they resort to take hard drugs in the name of giving confidence in the face of examination fever.

These changes are maladaptive and inappropriate to the social or environmental setting, therefore may place the individual at risk of harm. Drug use among youth's and adolescents should be a matter of concern to all Nigerians especially the society, government, school heads, religious leaders, groups and other NGOs. Experiment with drugs during adolescence (11–25 years) is common. At this age, they try so many new things. They use drugs for many reasons, including curiosity and desire to find out the effectiveness of a particular drug, to feels good, to reduce stress, or to feel grown up. Using alcohol and tobacco at a young age increase the risk of using other drugs later. In one of the WHO's and the World Heart Foundation's data,

posit that in Nigeria, 22.1 percent of school youth age between 12 to 17 years use tobacco. According to (Ekpang and Abuo, 2015) the common drugs that are often abused by secondary school students include alcohol, heroin, cocaine and marijuana.

Young people use drugs as a way of rebelling against parents or authority, in order to feel like adults, to fit in and belong to a group of other youths, to satisfy their curiosity and to simply derive pleasure from the short term effects of drugs. And this has in part contributed significantly in the recent times to the menace caused by the BOKO HARAM insurgency that has devastated the North-Eastern sub-region. Abusers with underlying social or psychological problems are particularly at high risk of drug abuse. It was asserted that drug abuse is associated with a broad range of high risk behaviour which has a profound health, economic and social consequences. For instance, some adolescents participate in deviant peer groups, unprotected sexual intercourse, inter-personal violence, destruction of property and of course perform poorly in their studies. Many youths seem to think of experimentation with hard drugs as an acceptable part of transition into adulthood. It is thus worsened by complex socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, poverty and crime in general in a report by United Nations in 2008). (Ekpang, Abuo, 2015)

### **THEORIES OF DRUG ABUSE**

Some writers have supported drugs abuse with theories, which they believe have both cultural and scientific backing. These theories have been summarised below;

1. Socio-cultural Theory of Drug Abuse: This theory maintained that drug abuse is determined by socio-cultural values of the people. For example, certain cultures permit the consumption of alcohol and marijuana, while other cultures do not. Among the tribes in Nigeria for example, Edo, Ijaw, Igbo, Ibibio, Urhobo, Itsekiri and Yoruba, alcohol is used in cultural activities. In the northern part of Nigeria any form of drug is not allowed.
2. Personality Theory of Drug Abuse: The major emphasis of this theory is that there are certain qualities of characteristics in the individuals that abuse drugs. Such personality characteristics are in ability to delay satisfaction, low tolerance for frustration, poor coping ability and low self-esteem, poor impulse control and high emotional dependence on other people. People with these personality characteristics find it difficult to abstain from drug abuse.
3. Biological Theory of Drug Abuse: The theory maintains that drug abuse is determined by the individual's biological or genetic factors which make them vulnerable to drug addiction.
4. Learning Theory of Drug Abuse: The theory maintains that usage or dependence of drugs occurs as a result of learning. The learning could be by the means of instrumental learning, conditional learning, or social learning

Akannam and associates (Akannam, 2012), reported from the record of drugs abuse in Nigeria, the Northwest has a statistics of 37.47 percent of the drug victims in the country, while the Southwest has been rated second with 17.32 percent, the south-East is been rated third with 13.5 percent, North-central has 11.71 percent, while the North-east zone has 8.54 percent of the drug users in the country. In Nigeria, the estimated life time consumption of cannabis among the population is 10.8 percent, followed by psychotropic substances like benzodiazepines and amphetamine-type stimulants 10.6 percent, heroin 1.6 percent, and cocaine 1.4 percent, in both urban and rural areas. Drugs abuse appears to be common among males with 94.2 percent than females 5.8 percent, and the age of first use is 10 to 29 years. The use of volatile organic solvents is 0.53 percent, and is widely spread among the street children, in school youth's and women. Studies have revealed that most of the drug addicts started smoking from their youths. As they grow older they seek new thrills and gradually go into hard drug abuse. (Oshodi, Aina, Onajole, 2012) A nationwide survey of high school students reported that 65 percent used drugs to have good time with their friends 54 percent wanted to experiment to see what it is like, 20 percent to 40 percent used it to alter their moods, to feel good, to relax, to relieve tension and to overcome boredom and problems. (Abudu, 2008) No single factor could be defined as solely responsible for the abuse of drugs but the following are some of

the causes of young people vulnerable to drug abuse in Nigeria, but the following are described;

1. Curiosity and Desire to find out the Effectiveness of a particular drug: Curiosity to experiment the unknown facts about drugs thus motivates youth's 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. Some time youth's takes drugs in order to find out their effectiveness of a particular drug and if they find out that the drug is effective they continue using such drugs.
2. Peer group Influence: Peer group pressure plays a major role in influencing many youth's into drug usage. This is because peer pressure is a fact of teenage and youth's life. In Nigeria, and other parts of the world, one may not enjoy the company of others unless he conforms to their norms.
3. Environment: Many young people live in communities which suffer from multiple deprivations, with high unemployment, low quality housing and where the surrounding infrastructure of local services is splintered and poorly resourced. In such communities drug supply and use often thrive as an alternative economy often controlled by powerful criminal groups. As well as any use that might be associated with the stress and boredom of living in such communities, young people with poor job prospects recognise the financial advantages and the status achievable through the business of small scale supply of drugs.
4. Promotion and Availability: There is considerable pressure to use legal substances. Alcohol and pain relieving drugs are regularly advertised on television. The advertising of tobacco products is now banned, but research from Strathclyde University published by Cancer Research concluded that cigarette advertising did encourage young people to start smoking and reinforced the habit among existing smokers. Despite legislation, children and adolescents have no problems obtaining alcohol and tobacco from any number of retail outlets. Breweries refurbish pubs with young people in mind, bringing in music, games, more sophisticated decor and so on while the general acceptance of these drugs is maintained through sports sponsorship, promotions and other marketing strategies.
5. Enjoyment: Despite all the concerns about illicit drug use and the attendant lifestyle by young people, it is probably still the case that the lives of most young people are centred on school, home and employment and that most drug use is restricted to the use of tobacco and alcohol. They may adopt the demeanour, fashion and slang of a particular subculture including the occasional or experimental use of illegal drugs without necessarily adopting the lifestyle. Even so, the evidence of drug use within youth culture suggests that the experience of substances is often pleasurable rather than negative and damaging. So probably the main reason why young people take drugs is that they enjoy themselves.
6. Lack of Parental Supervision: Many parents have no time to supervise their children. 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 problems initialize and increases drug usage.
7. Socio-economic Status of the Parents: Socio-economic status of the parents entails direct costs which are very important to families; particularly this is related to every aspects of the family's life and caring to children. The implications of family relationship on students have remained an alarming factor to the total life of the children By implication the socio-economic status of the parents may influences adolescents to abuse or not to abuse drugs even if the parents have very low income, low income average, high, or very high income.
8. Self – medication of primary psychological disorders.
9. Pathological family background – broken homes, illegitimate relationships, alcoholic parents or parent's involvement in antisocial and illegal activities.
10. Ignorance of the dangers of illicit drug use.

## **CLINICAL MANIFESTATION**

Some of the most noticeable symptoms of drug abuse are those that affect the body's inner workings. For example, your body's tolerance to a drug occurs when a drug is abused for long enough that increased quantities or strengths are required to achieve the previous effects. This desire for a more intense high, achieved through these means, is extremely dangerous and can easily lead to overdose.

The diminishing effects set in after the first time, and the user constantly tries to replicate the first high he or she gets from the drug by taking increasing amounts. This is extremely dangerous and can quickly lead to overdose. Changes in appearance can be additional clues to possible drug use and may include:

Bloodshot or glazed eyes.

Dilated or constricted pupils.

Abrupt weight changes.

Bruises, infections, or other physical signs at the drug's entrance site on the body.

Disruption to normal brain functioning, changes in personality, and heart and organ dysfunction can be signs of long-term drug abuse. Signs will vary based on the substance.

### **BEHAVIORAL SYMPTOMS**

Drug abuse negatively affects a person's behaviour and habits as he or she becomes more dependent on the drug. The drug itself can alter the brain's ability to focus and form coherent thoughts, depending on the substance. Changes in behaviour, such as the following, can indicate a problem with drug abuse:

Increased aggression or irritability.

Changes in attitude/personality.

Lethargy.

Depression.

Sudden changes in a social network.

Dramatic changes in habits and/or priorities.

Financial problems.

Involvement in criminal activity.

Learning to recognize the physical or behavioural signs of drug abuse can help prevent the problem from progressing further.

Other forms of psychosocial maladaptation includes;

Changes in activity such as loss of interest in school, play, home or work.

Changes in sleeping pattern; induces sleep disorders by disrupting the sequence and duration of sleep states and by altering total sleep time. Changes in personality; reflecting in mood changes, fighting with friends and with family members or truancy.

Manifestations of depression, such as poor attention span, difficulties in concentrating, lack of interest and boredom

Trouble with law enforcement.

Multiple or frequent accident related injuries

- School failure

- Blackouts

- Inability to control outward expression of anger also plays a key role in alcohol-related aggression. (Ekpang and Aina, 2015, Chia, 2008)

### **EFFECT OF DRUG ABUSE ON HEALTH OF THE VICTIM**

Substantial good number of work have been carried out and the health implications of drug abuse on the Nigerian youth are thus documented:

Physical/ Disease Domain of Health

Cardio-vascular diseases (hypertension, stroke, cardiac arrest, heart failure, etc)

HIV Infection and sexually transmitted infections

Cancer of the lungs, throat, stomach.

Liver cirrhosis

Hepatitis B and C



Reproductive problems (impotence, low sperm count, )  
Tuberculosis  
Diabetes mellitus  
Injuries obtained from road traffic accidents  
Low birth weight babies, babies with foetal alcohol syndrome  
Mental Domain of Health  
Substance use disorders (insomnia, restlessness, auditory and visual hallucinations,)  
Drug / Substance dependence  
Over dose on drugs which can lead to premature death  
Social Domain of Health, Increase in crime and violence, Cultism  
Loss of family, friends and job  
Dropping out of school  
Collapse in the social system  
From the health implications of drug abuse on the Nigerian youth, their health status is poor.  
(Chia, 2008)

### **TREATMENT AND PREVENTION OF DRUG ABUSE**

Management of drug abuse on both the organic/physical and psychosocial health effect Intel's multi-prong and collaborative approach:

**Clinical psychology role:** which employ the use of what was described as "LISTEN FIRST" (LF), this is a therapeutic initiative that is built of motivational interview which is technique used to elicit behavioural changes; and has been applied in the psychosocial intervention in in victim of substance abuse disorders.

**Parental role:** Parents have the most influence in helping their children grow happy and learn to cope well in difficult life situations. Even in difficult circumstances, a strong bond between children and parents can mean less risky behaviour's such as drug use. A strong bond is created by the parent listening attentively to the child and showing that you care and are concerned and interested in what the child is saying. Spending time with the child even when it is a short period, giving the child your attention, praise and encouraging the child for what he or she does right no matter how little. The children of parents that have a warm parenting style and know where their children are and what they are doing, are five times less likely to use stimulants or opioids (even only once during their lives). Set clear rules for behaviour, when rules are broken stay calm making sure there are consequences. Ask your child what you need to know, where he or she is, what he is doing, who he or she is with, etc. When parents monitor their adolescents closely and have good knowledge about their where about, adolescents are 20% less likely to use marijuana. (United Nation on Drug and Crime/WHO, 2016)

**Church and religious leader's role:** Right from childhood we are being taught our various religious do's and don'ts and therefore any child who is well trained in his/her religious tenets and adhere to it as his transition into juvenile/adolescent age will be smooth. However in spite of this good background, some children especially while at school, whether at secondary school level or at tertiary level where many of the experimentation with substance abuse is carried out without prohibition. The church should still be looked up to for guidance and modulation throughout our growth physically, spiritually via regular moral educational programme such as seminar. This is so important that the Holy Bible in Mathew: you are the salt and light of the People, the clergies are the society both moral and physical guide, therefore they should never waiver in their role as shepherd of the people.

**Psychiatric and psychologist in hospitals:** it should well equipped with both human resources and equipments to rehabilitate these victim of drug abuse.



**School authority role:** At secondary school level where most of this experimentation starts, at University level where this substance abuse is expanded into empires, the authorities should be held responsible as they are the custodian of the youngsters while in their various institutions.

**Law enforcement agencies:** Police force, National drug law enforcement agencies, custom and excises all have role to apprehend and prosecute the importer and producers of the substances and drugs they are illegal to use. The prison services have role to provide rehabilitation centres where the victims are transformed back to normal society.

**PERSONAL ADVICE:**

Nigerian Catholic students are the like of the world; you are the shining example to project the Church of Christ on this Earth. Just as the holy Bible said you are the temple of God and you should keep it holy by abstaining from drugs and substance abuses. Your acts, conduct, approach to situation like studies, examination should be free from stain of malpractices and drug addiction related offences.

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion our youth are the future leaders of our country and their future has to be safe guarded against drug and substance use and abuse and its health implication. The period of adolescence is characterized by a lot of changes in the life of the child who requires a warm and supportive relationship to grow psychologically healthy and discover his or her potential and actualize them. This can only be achieved if parents, religious leaders, guardians, teachers and custodians of children and all of us the good people we “listen first” to them before the wrong people do so that our child and adolescents become the leaders we wish. Just like the quotation from the holy scripture stated, our body should kept holy for it is the temple of God.



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