

**DRUG ABUSE AND ADDICTION: A MOTIVATING FORCE TO CRIME
AND VIOLENCE: IN EBONYI SOUTH SENATORIAL ZONE**

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Abstract

In the world today the problem of drug abuse or addiction cannot be over emphasized. This study looks into substance use and abuse in Ebonyi South Senatorial Zone, Nigeria. Two local Government Areas were selected from the zone for the study which includes Onicha and Afipko South Local Government Areas. The study being a survey research, used FGD to gather data from the two LGAs. A sample of 10 interviewees were selected using Judgmental Sampling technique. These interviewees were aware of the issue that constitutes the focus of study. The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive and narrative style while personality deficiency theory was adopted for the study. The result revealed that majority of the youth are abusing various kinds of drugs/ and other substances and they tend to be violent, fierce and ready to engage in crimes. They are discouraged in productive endeavor as a result of addiction. With many young people involved, the future is not bright for most of them. The recommendations are on ways to correct this social ill by the government and individuals looking at the devastating effect of drug abuse and addiction that has turned most of the young people into drug addicts and carriers.

Keywords: Drug abuse, effect, addiction, crime, dosage, violence

INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria today, there exist various forms of criminal dispositions known to have been motivated by drug abuse and addiction. South East is not an exception. In many communities and villages the young people have been involved in different forms of crimes and other unruly behaviors such that they cannot take certain jobs to sustain themselves economically. In addition, they have moved from stealing resources from their homes (theft) to outright robbery, vandalizing public or individual property and other criminal activities (Bryan, 2013).

This is to maintain their addiction to drugs and extravagant lifestyles. Research has shown that these young individuals cannot engage in meaningful ventures except they abandon such addiction which is very difficult. With some levels of mental derailment, they feel that they are still reasoning well. In order to satisfy their urge for drug they involved in criminal and violent activities. These criminal activities helps them get resources for more purchases of dangerous substances which in most cases is very expensive. Some of the activities which these youths can be hired to perform includes political assassination, assaults, killings, militancy, destruction of lives and property in various towns and villages, raping, theft and reprisal attacks, kidnapping and abduction etc. They become a workforce for attaining criminal and violent aims for some members of the community and for themselves (Jonathan & Mark, 2014).

Being addicted to drugs makes the youth to source funds unlawfully in order to keep the pace of drug use. This is because they have great attachment to it and feel that if they do not take their next dose, their life will be in danger. For this consciousness, they can pick from anywhere valuables belonging to their friends or other members of the family or community (EMCDDA, 2007). They engage in misconducts; stealing from the household, money or other items which can be sold for money, sales of properties ranging from small to large values depending on their experience in the use of such substances; getting involved in paid-violent missions and killings in order to money for drug use.

Drug addicts cannot be found doing jobs that demands skills they prefer what they call light jobs which must be criminal in nature. Their deviant attitude does not allow them to stay in a job for a long time. They only need ad-hoc or temporary job for a hand-to-mouth living (USAJ, 1994:1).

Today, the rate of drug abuse and addiction has become very high in our society. About fifty percent of our youth are found abusing drugs in one form or the other. The result is high rate of violence, crime, gangstarism, joblessness, unemployment, lawlessness, disobedience, headstrong (NWT, 2016).

In this study, we are to anchor this research on the following questions:

1. Why are more youths getting involved in drug addiction?
2. What are the impacts of this behavior to the society and those addicts?
3. What can be done by government, organizations and individuals to correct this societal ill?

The Scope of the Study:

Although the phenomenon is noticeable everywhere, the focus of this study, Drug abuse and addiction as a motivating factor to crime and violence: a community experience in south east Nigeria will cover levels of drug addiction in Ebonyi South senatorial zone Ebony state Nigeria. The dangers, of drug abuse and its impacts will also be investigated.

Methodology:

The study used non-probability sampling method and adopted judgmental sampling technique in selecting 10 persons that made up the focus group discussion (FGD) and interviewed 10 village/community leaders, who were also interviewed. Drug addicts will find it difficult to reveal the impact of drug use. As a result of that those who had lived such life and those who had managed to leave such habit and others who seem very friendly to make some confessions as rightly disposed ones were also considered in the interviews. Also included are patent medicine dealers from these areas of study. The study used descriptive and narrative style in analyzing all various issues raised.

Below are names of persons selected for the focus group interview, their communities, age, date of the interview and educational qualification.

Figure I: Onicha Local Government

S/n	Names	Com/Village	Age	Date	Edu. Quali.
1	Godfrey Njoku	Anioma Isu	30	4/11/21	B.Sc
2	Chigozie Nwachukwu	Onicha	40	5/11/21	H.N.D
3	Scater Maintain	Anioma	29	6/11/21	S.S.C.E
4	Jame Odi	Mgbaleze	50	7/11/21	FSLC
5	Chukwu Theophilous	Mgbaleukwu	28	8/11/21	N.D

Afikpo South Local Govt.

S/n	Names	Com/Village	Age	Date	Edu. Quali.
6	Olugbu Nkama	Owutu	35	9/11/21	B.Sc
7	Godwin Ibiam	Assaga	36	10/11/21	B.Sc
8	Agwu Okpani	Owutu	50	11/11/21	SSCE
9	Osinachi Ibiam	Nguzu	45	12/11/21	B.Sc
10	Peter Nkama	Oso Edda	60	13/11/21	B.Sc.

Objective of the Study:

The aim of the study is to find out how drug addiction has led young people into various crimes and violence, it is hoped that the awareness can help those yet to join not to. The study also looked at possible ways out of drug abuse as well as it's negative and corrupting effects on our youth.

Literature Review

Various scholarly surveys had indicated the relationship between drug and crime in Nigeria. However, from a survey involving students, it was evident that drug use persisted more than delinquency and that those involved had not entered conventional adult social roles (military, marriage, occupation) after 8 years were significantly more likely to be using drugs than those who had assumed conventional adult social roles by young adulthood, (Albert, 2013).

Illegal drugs are, widely used and significant number of young people from any social background have, therefore, engaged in criminal activity through their use of illegal substances, mainly cannabis (Colin, 2018).

Students, school leavers, unemployed, employed, and in fact people of all age groups from the age of 12 abuse drugs. But it is most profound among the youth (Dialoke, 2007).

There is expectation that the future will see an increase in drug abuse, trafficking and cultivation in Nigeria (Nwopetu & Ajonye 2011). Poverty and unemployment have been listed as part of the conditions that encourage drug abuse but drug addiction itself is a major source of stress that encourages acts of misconducts in the society like, prostitution, robbery, raping, cultism etc. (Ifeagwazi, 2016).

It is obvious that there is a relationship between use of drugs and crime. This vary among individuals and in different environments. Thus, it may be difficult to ascertain crimes that are psychopharmacologically committed and those carried out by economic compulsion, both is mutual relationship (EMCDDA, 2007).

On economic and health impact of drug abuse, studies had indicated that when people are incarcerated the loss of productivity is treated as a productivity cost while the government has also spent high amount outside premature deaths, loss of productivity in adults etc. (NDIC, 2011).

One of the effects of drug abuse is that it causes various health challenges which includes lung cancer as a result of tobacco, marijuana etc. (Jonathan & Mark, 2014). The US Department of Justice (1994:1) acknowledge that:

Drugs are related to crime in multiple ways. Most directly, it is a crime to use, possess, manufacture or distribute drugs classified as having a potential for abuse. Cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and amphetamines are examples of drugs to have potential. Drugs are also related to crime through the effects they have on the user's behavior and by generating violence and other illegal activities in connection with drug trafficking.

It is clear that apart from drug law violation, drug abuse also leads to many activities by the user those include; raping, cultism, child's violation, violence, disobedience of all kinds to authorities, example, church and traditional authorities, government, family etc. They are also very wild, such that they look for opportunities to destroy lives and property and loot the property of their victims through mob actions. In fact certain behaviors can inform one about the type of drug a person abuses. Bryan et al (2014:18); estimated annual number of shop thefts at 8.5 for cannabis only supplier and 1.10% for cannabis only user. For annual number of violent crime for heroin user at 0.64%.

Buyer, (2019; 5-7) recorded 13.6% drug related crimes committed during trafficking and after use. Mario et al (1990:1); noted complex relationship between substance abuse and violence which have posed challenges to the research community and public health professions for decades. A report from UNDOC (2018) shows that for years the "use of psychoactive substances in Nigeria, in particular, cannabis, the non-medical use of prescription opioids (mainly tramadol, and to a lesser extent codeine, or morphine) and cough syrups (containing codeine or dextromethorphan)". UNDOC (2018) further states;

...drug use in Nigeria is estimated at 14.4 percent or 14.3 million people aged between 15 and 64 years.
...The past year prevalence of psychoactive substances excluding alcohol, overall was high among men in Nigeria; however the gender difference in the non-medical use of prescription opioids, tranquilizers and

cough syrups was less marked. Drug use was most common among those who were between the ages of 25 and 39 years, while the rate of past year use were lowest among those who were below 24 years of age. Cannabis was the most commonly used drug followed by opioids, mainly the non-medical use of prescription opioids and cough syrup.

South east is placed third according to the prevalence because it has 13.8%. As opioids: heroin and pharmaceutical opioids have regularly been abused. Many has also misused, stimulants: amphetamines, cocaine and ecstasy. (Robert et al (2003:31). For its ability effect on the central nervous system and for increase alertness, heighten arousal etc (UNDOC 2018:29).

The effect of drugs (psychopharmacological effect) often leads the drug user into becoming vulnerable to criminal activities and intoxicated people appear more vulnerable than other targets for such offences as robbery, rape, or hate crimes. Also, intoxicated people are often obnoxious, annoying, and offensive in their appearance behavior and speech. They are unpredictable and ambiguous-intoxication impairs the transmission of clear signals to others.

Impacts of Drug Abuse and Addiction

The high rate of irresponsible people in the Ebonyi state is associated with poor upbringing. Among the effects is that drug abusers have more absenteeism, accidents on the job, medical claims and lost productivity than non-users (The Social Impact of Drugs Abuse, 1995). The ever increasing number of those who abuse all sorts of drugs in order to high always encourage all forms of deviant behavior even in our universities (Eze & Ajayi, 2009; Pre-Olof, 2013).

The costs of drug related crime – to victims, communities and drug misusers themselves – extend well beyond the immediate environment. There are serious impacts on a whole range of victims of and drug related crime. These consequences are experienced directly by crime victims, drug users themselves, their families, their children and their communities. There are also more subtle and long term forms of victimization; long term health consequences and reduction in educational and employment opportunities for adolescent drug users (Colin, 2019:9). Why should society treat any addict at all? The simple answer is that it costs too much not to. Looking at the leading causes of disability, alcohol and drug use come in fourth place regardless of the social policy. The leading cause of disability is unipolar depression. It is followed by iron deficiency anemia (the second largest cause worldwide, affecting 5% of the disabled population). Imposing a great risk to societal development (Murray &

Lopez in Deitch et al 2019:392). Trafficking in illicit drugs tends to be associated with the commission of violent crimes. Reasons for the relationship of drug trafficking to violence include: competition for drug markets and customers disputes and rip-offs among individuals involved in the illegal drug market individuals who participate in drug trafficking are prone to use violence locations where street drug markets proliferate tend to be disadvantaged economically and socially; legal and social controls against violence in such areas tend to be ineffective (USDJ, 1994).

Several studies have been conducted to show the use of drugs for social, rather than, medical purposes. In 2012, Nigeria ranked among the highest users of dangerous drugs such as alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, benzodiazepines, cocaine and opioids when to other developing countries (Fareo *et al.*, in Akinloye & Akinwusi, 2014).

The government and rural people were not the only group of people adversely affected, many stakeholders and prominent individuals, including politicians, celebrities, and community leaders, have expressed concerns over the effects of deadly substances and lending their voices for a concerted effort to stem the tide that is capable of wiping a generation. It will be necessary to mention some of these incidents for the purpose of this study. On October 19, 2021, a boy allegedly killed his father in Adazi Ani in Anambra State and took the father's N50, 000 just to buy Mkpuru mmini (**Methamphetamine**). He was apprehended by youths of the community, beaten to stupor and burnt alive. Another one died in neighboring community as a result of debilitating effects of Mkpuru mmini. In Umudioka, Anambra, two siblings, after taking Guzoro, chased their mother with machetes and prevented the woman from coming to the family house for three days until the village vigilante officials intervened. In Obeagu Isu, same happened when a young man addicted to mpkurumini beheaded his follow man with mixt reations from the youth of the areas in the year 2021. There are numerous trending videos on social media platforms from different communities in Ebonyi South Senatorial zone. Information emanating from the zone shows that many youths are becoming mentally derailed through drug use (Ojiego, 2021).

A Collaborative Approach

Moral persuasion has yielded much result in checking drug abuse. The society, individuals, groups and organizations are major stakeholders in attempts to find solution to drug abuse successfully. Therefore calls for a diverse strategy for solutions to this negative trend. Victims of drug addiction may not

be aware as to which events altered their life course, particularly how events in their childhood and adolescence affect the adult self. And there is truly no way any individual can know how much dysfunction impacted (Jonathan & Mark, 2014).

Establishment of drug courts contributed to other problems in the criminal justice system. One is that most drug courts require participants to plead guilty as a condition for programs participation, this means that people who are innocent of any drug law violation might end up behind bars, and the collateral consequences of a criminal conviction. Another is that drug courts appear to manifest the same social disabilities that exist within other parts of the criminal justice system such as drug doing, a poor job of collecting and reporting relevant data. (Drug Policy Alliance, 2017). It means that even when moral grounds without restrictive measures partly helps in reducing the rate of drug use, no complete results are achieved. Yet societal ethical expectations can also drive the fight to a greater extent while some might directly reduce drug-related violence (Robert. 2013).

Efforts are still needed by all stakeholders in drug abuse and addiction prevention no matter the challenges in form of policy strategies, cooperate commitments and geographical exceptions. The ills of drug addiction cannot be tolerated by any organized state. As already noted, the negative effect of drug use and addiction cannot be over-emphasized. For individuals, efforts are supposed to be geared towards minimizing young people's involvement. At societal level, restrictions are important against such addiction while at institutional levels churches etc. are liable to correct this wrong conduct through viable moral ethics.

As already noted, the negative effect of drug use and addiction cannot be over emphasized. For individuals, efforts are supposed to be geared towards minimizing young people's involvement so as to reduce the rate their influence on these younger generations. At organizational level, restrictions are important against such addiction while at institutional levels churches, groups, associations etc. are liable to correct this negative and immoral conduct through viable cherished ethics (Omonobi, 2022, UNDOC, 2022).

It is on the basis of the above ground of that the Anambra state government has been partnering with these stakeholders at ensuring that efficient efforts are made against drug addiction and all forms of trafficking in the state. For instance, the Anambra state command of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) is partnering with the Anambra state university

to check the menace of drug abuse. The NDLEA team, under the State commander, Mr. Momodu Sule. Mr. Sule explained that the purpose of the partnership is to explore areas of cooperation between the NDLEA and the university, considering the fact the institution trains many youths who may be exposed to illicit drugs. He stressed the need for the university to establish a Drug free Club or Anti-Drug Abuse society, as a way of discouraging the students, who are mainly youths, from the use of illicit drugs. The NDLEA commander made a startling revelation that Anambra state has the highest number of drug barons in Nigeria, while her citizens are the highest users of class a drugs, such as cocaine and heroin. In addition, the state has the highest number of people in prison custody outside the country for dealing in illicit drugs. The university authority assured the NDLEA of working collaboratively towards stamping out drug abuse and cultism in the university. As a result, about five hundred students renounced their membership of about twenty-six different cult groups. This partnership will include the area of orientation of new students as well as seminars for the older students on the dangers inherent in the consumption of hard drugs (ANSU, 2022).

Theoretical framework

The study is anchored on Interactional Approach to Narcotic addiction which can also be called personality Deficiency theory. Drug addiction is encouraged by the favourable access to it in favour of cultural attitudinal tolerance for addiction practices or individual personality predispositions (Ausubel, 1966). The theory emphasizes attitudinal tolerance towards the practice in the individual cultural, sub-cultural, racial, ethnic and social class milieu. Ausubel (1980) further argues that addicts engage in nonviolent, remunerative crimes to support their habit, ego is also responsible.

In explaining drug addiction, the operation of multiple causality within the individual, in the environment, and in the interaction between them (Ausubel, 1961). A prominent factor in narcotic addiction is degree of access to narcotic drugs (Ausubel, 1962). This explains why some places have higher rate of the cases than the other. For instance the case could be higher in urban slums than in middle-class suburbs and why the addiction ranks zero during wars like the World War II when normal commercial routes of illicit drug trade were disrupted.

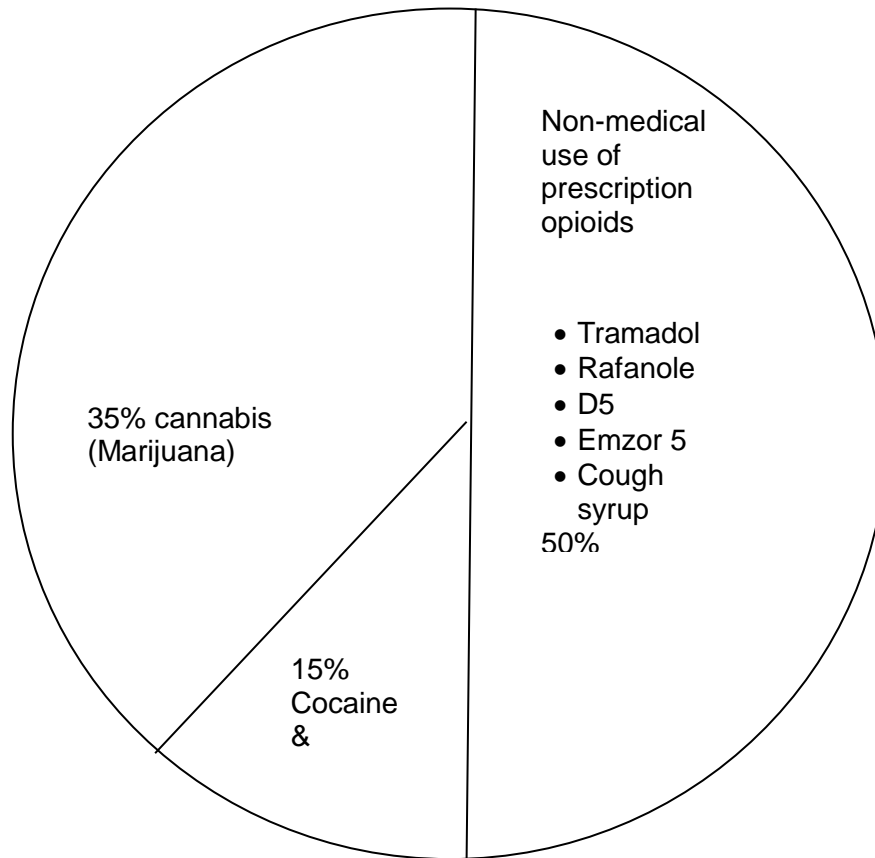
Findings and Discussion

The study revealed that most young people had abused all forms of drugs in Ebonyi South Senatorial zone. And it is difficult to isolate the few among the population who is not among drug addicts. It is also a mark of pride while the very few who do not abuse drugs are seen to be very inferior from their stand point.

The drugs that these young people abuse includes; Tramadol, Rafanole, Diazepam (D5), Emzors, and many other pharmaceutical products that contains codeine. This is common during elections when young people get involved in thuggery and the use of illicit drugs becomes very effective. Through reports from parents, teachers, students etc., young people indulge themselves in tablets like valium to sleep, drink cups of concentrated coffee to prevent sleep, smoke Indian hemp/marijuana to make them high, reasons are attributed to curiosity and experimentation while the user may have little or no knowledge (Osakinde, 2009).

The effects of this misuse of drugs has brought the energetic population of the society into life styles that is a complete derivation of social order. They violently abuse the rights of others and enjoy being involved in crimes like extortion, robbery, kidnapping, raping, gambling, child abuse, thuggery etc. All these amount to child abuse which is indeed so devastating and usually difficult to combat. It is almost impossible for the child to regain his normal personality that was earlier damaged, brutalized, injured, condemned and destroyed (Ezeoke et al 2009).

However, it is drug addiction that has encouraged the feelings that it is not profitable again to engage in any type of business or skill but to do some soft jobs like drug trafficking, yahoo, as sycophants, errand boys to some notable personalities, coordinating braking of shops, sale of stolen property, spies, and hired assassins and so on. In fact, having chosen not to engage in profitable jobs, they lack zeal for conventional endeavors resulting to joblessness, since most of them could not acquire sound education and skills, the rate of unemployment tends to heighten among these addicted young people. At the present time, all measures at preventing drugs deal has recorded minor success (UN, 2017).

Figure II: Use of Drugs in Percentages

Source: Field Survey (2021)

The investigations as recorded in figure II above revealed that marijuana/cannabis are used at 45% rate of consumption. Cocaine and heroin are less used within 5%. The factors for this less consumption rate can be attributed to environmental factors. Other non-medical use and abuse of drugs containing codeine, etc. rank high at 50% (Field Survey, 2021).

The negative effects of drug abuse and addiction has become a burden to all strata the society. This necessitates a serious effort at combating the scourge. To an extent, our young ones are likely to be useless by drug use, there is eminent cry against criminality and violent acts of all sorts, and even the reasoning of young people have changed for worse as a result of addiction (David et al, 2015).

The teeming population that should receive the welfare of the state via policies has become uncertain thereby making the evaluation of government's efforts at providing the people basic people oriented constitutional requirements.

It has become very needful for drug abuse and addiction to be treated with national consciousness in order to redeem the image of the country.

Conclusion

Drugs have been abused for many reasons. There are numerous reasons why people abuse drugs yet under the law, this is prohibited. However, considering the danger of drug abuse and addiction in the society and the impact it has had on the youth, much effort is needed on the part of both government and civil society in a bid to fight drug addiction. In addition to that the youth should understand that the abuse of drugs is a fastest way reducing them to nothing in all sphere of life. In fact, the near future will produce youth that will be useless and unreasonable if this dangerous trend is not reversed. This is because drug use has increased murder, violent crime, and accident on road etc. (CIPC, 2015; EMCDDA, 2018) and has worsened the health situation of the people including the spread of HIV/ AIDS.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made as a way forward:

- Government should liaise with patent medicine dealers in order to control the distribution of these drugs and ensure strict compliance of medical prescriptions while dealers of these illicit drugs are made to face drug law offences.
- From the village to Local Government levels, an anti-drug addiction taskforce be inaugurated to strictly report to government and its agencies about the person selling or using these drugs. And a stiffer penalty be provide like serving a 50 year jail term without option of fine in order to deter people from the use of drugs and other substances.
- A drug addiction test should be conducted for job applicants and students to determine job opportunities or admission into schools, this will discourage youths from all cultures and backgrounds from abusing drugs and consequently becoming addicts and falling prey to criminal tendencies.

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