

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE FACTORS PREDISPOSING DRUG
ABUSE BY YOUTHS IN KANO METROPOLIS, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT: The abuse of drugs and other dangerous substances constitutes one of the major social problems bedevilling youth today. This undesirable and anti-social act hinders their progress and predisposes them to arbitrary over-dependence or misuse of drugs, thereby jeopardizing society's future, and destroying societal moral values. This study aimed to investigate the factors associated with drug abuse among young people in Kano metropolis and to investigate how joblessness predisposes young people to substance abuse in Kano Metropolis. Additionally, we examined the influence of peer groups on the spread of drug abuse among the young people in Kano Metropolis, studied the influence of broken homes and parenting styles as factors in drug abuse in Kano Metropolis and investigated whether corruption among law enforcement agents led to drug abuse among young people in Kano Metropolis. This study reviewed related literature on drug abuse by youth, including; the concept of drug abuse, the types of drugs commonly abused and effects of the abuse. The theoretical framework of the study included two relevant theories; differential association theory, and availability proneness theory of which differential association theory was adopted as the leading theoretical guide for the research. The methodology used was descriptive survey research; the sample size for the study was 350 respondents selected through availability, purposive and snowballing sampling techniques and 322 questionnaires were returned on the basis of which the analysis was performed. A questionnaire and in-depth interview were used for data collection, and both the qualitative and quantitative data obtained were analysed using relevant statistical methods. The findings revealed that peer group influence, unemployment and poor parenting style have a significant influence on precipitating drug abuse among youth, while corruption within law enforcement agencies reinforced factors that help the spread and persistence of drug abuse among youth in Kano Metropolis. Therefore, based on the study findings, it was recommended that the government should build more institutions of higher learning and subsidize education to enable teeming youth to acquire knowledge for better living. Parents and guardians should be extra vigilant in monitoring their children's movements and behaviour as well as with whom they associate. Finally, NGOs, CBOs, and religious and community leaders should embark on sensitization campaigns and preaching on the dangers of drug abuse.

Keywords: Drug Abuse, Investigation, Predisposing Factors, Youth,

INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse is a well-known problem that is condemned virtually everywhere in Nigeria and worldwide. The abuse of various types of drugs is a common problem among young and mature adults. The effects and consequences of drug abuse pose a great concern because the perpetrators and victims are young people who are the future leaders of society. Over the years,

the use of dangerous drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, sedatives, alcohol and others has drastically increased among youth in the Kano metropolis (NDLEA, 2011). Kano metropolis comprises eight local government areas that include Dala, Fagge, Gwale, Kumbotso, Municipal, Nassarawa, and Tarauni and Ungogo local governments.

Drugs may simply refer to any substance that changes the physiological function of a living organism through its chemical actions. According to Kester (1990), cited in Lawal; (2003), a drug is defined as any foreign chemical whose normal physiology leads to the alteration of thoughts, feelings, moods and actions. Similarly, Musa (ibid); defined drugs as any substance that causes a change in the human body. Webster's new collegiate dictionary defines a drug as any substance other than food that affects the structure or function of the body of any living organism.

Drug abuse, on the other hand, can be defined in various ways, so there are as many definitions as people who care to define the concept, depending upon one's sociological cultural, physiological and moral background (Lawal 2003). Drugs are abused when they are used without a prescription, contrary to the recommended dose, or as a matter of habit rather than for a cure. Kester (1990), as cited in Lawal (2003), opined that drug abuse is the use of a drug when it is not medically necessary, when it is used against legal prohibition or when there is excessive use of socially acceptable drugs. Garba (2005), in his own definition, defines drug abuse as the nonmedical use of drugs that can alter mood and perception, and produce and have the ability to make the user continue to want to use the drug despite the health, social and physical impairments the drugs may cause to the user.

With their involvement in drug-related activities, youths are at risk of societal development, which predisposes them to arbitrary over-dependence or misuse of drugs and other mind-altering substances, thereby jeopardizing society's future, destroying societal values, undermining sustainable human development and subsequently exposing them to other criminal and deviant activities.

Although there is no single factor that can be identified as the sole cause of youth's involvement in drug abuse in Kano Metropolis, many people believe that certain factors are responsible. These include; peer influence, emotional problems, curiosity, youth's desire to experiment with and test drugs, performance enhancement, personal or family problems, lack of adequate parental supervision, and availability of drugs.

Drugs become problematic when their use results in negative drawbacks to the person who uses them or to the larger society. These drawbacks may be physical, mental, emotional, social, or economic as a result of too much use of the drug, self-prescription, use for too long, use for the wrong reasons or improper drug combination.

Statement of the Problem

Youths worldwide are the leaders of tomorrow. Ideally, the future of these youth should be bright, promising and full of positive motivations not otherwise. The dilemma of the youth of today and the confusion they experience predispose them to negative attitudes, including drug use, abuse and addiction. In this case, it is rather unfortunate. This research study in a multi-cultural, multi-religious and heterogeneous society such as the Kano metropolis is an attempt to answer the question of the predisposing factors that push the youth of today into drug abuse

in the Kano metropolis of Nigeria. Kano, is one of the most densely states in Nigeria with a projected population of more than twenty-two million. The menace of drug abuse by young people and adults is not only alarming but a cause of concern. This study is an attempt to delve into such a social problem of dire societal consequences.

LITERATURE

The relevant literature that provided insight into this topic was reviewed. The literature for the study focuses on key concepts related to drug abuse and substance abuse.

Drug

Drug use is a phenomenon that has taken a wider and frightening dimension worldwide. In Nigeria, adolescents and youths of both sexes constitute a high-risk group (Dukku, 2010). In an attempt to provide a conceptual definition of drugs, Garba; (2003) defined drugs as “any substance that by its chemical nature, affects the structure or functions of a living organism”. This indicates that all substances, including food, beverages, herbs, cigarettes, food additives eaten, inhaled or injected into the body to stimulate or slow down activities/metabolism are classified as drugs. Similarly, in his view, Abdullahi (1995) cited in (Dukku, 2010) that the term drug is defined in a variety of ways; it takes a broad meaning not only restricted to modern but also traditional forms.

Drug Abuse

According to Lawal (2003) the problems of drug abuse have always existed as long as the history of man; in certain parts of the world, the leaves; and seeds of plants are usually ingested during traditional ceremonies to attain some heights spiritually. A typical example is the use of cocoa leaves and seeds of cannabis in Far East Asian countries, which are regarded as acceptable practices. However, modernization has changed many things, hence a widespread trans-continental consumption of all these substances (Lawan 2003).

The “term drug abuse” generally refers to the excessive and persistent self-administration of a drug without regard to medically or culturally accepted patterns (Haladu 2003); it can also be viewed as the use of a drug to the extent that it interferes with the health and social function of an individual (NAFDAC, 2008). The 1991 UNDCP Report on Drug Abuse Assessment in Nigeria (cited in Haladu 2003) defines drug abuse as the nonmedical use of drugs that can alter mood and perception, produce euphoria and have the ability to help the user continue to use the drug despite the health, social and physical impairments the drug causes.

Youth

Goessel (1956) in Radda (2005) refers to youths as young people whose years fall between 10 and 16, while the report of the political Bureau in Abdullahi (2003) classified youths as those between 6-and 30 years of age. This latter classification confirms the formal education years, the tampering of which may endanger the youth’s life and subsequently society at large. The vision 2010 report defined youths as persons aged between 12-50 years. However, Abdullahi (1982) in Siro (2008) defined youth as anybody in the period between early childhood and old age.

These few classifications show the importance of youths to the survival and progress of any society because they contribute much to social, economic, and political development as well as the defence of their societies. Thus, today's societies are regarded as vibrant, virile and progressive if the quality of their youth is high, strong and viable; in most cases, this potential is what differentiates development from underdevelopment.

Theoretical Framework

In an attempt to provide a theoretical explanation of the factors associated with youth engagement in substance abuse in Kano Metropolis, two theories were analysed as the theoretical frame of reference, namely; differential association theory and the availability-proneness theory of illicit drugs, out of which differential association theory was adopted as a theoretical guide, and provided the theoretical basis for this study.

Differential Association Theory

This theory was developed by Sutherland in the 1930s to explain the process of becoming deviant such as drug abusers. This theory explains that similar to all other behaviour, drug abuse occurs through interactions with others, especially peers and other closely related associates. The theory emphasizes that youth learn techniques, motives and drives associated with the abuse of dangerous drugs from those already in acts of substance abuse. In the Kano metropolis, a large number of youths indulged in drug abuse through peer group influence.

Availability-prone theory

The theory was developed by Smart (1980) to highlight the way in which the availability of drugs facilitates the involvement of people in drug abuse, especially those who are prone. The theory involves the proposition that drug abuse occurs when a prone individual is exposed to a high level of availability. The theory explains that in Kano metropolis due to the availability of dangerous drugs in circulation, young people are at risk of becoming prone to the abuse of drugs and other dangerous substances. Therefore, the theory attempted to account for the initiation and continuation of drug abuse by youth in the Kano metropolis, which is related to the high availability of drugs and the proneness of the youth.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, and both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to gather the data for the study. A questionnaire was used to obtain quantitative data from a sample of 350 respondents selected from eight local government areas that formed the Kano metropolis including the Dala, Fagge, Gwale, Kumbotso, Municipal, Nassarawa, Tarauni and Ungogo local government areas. Cluster, availability, and snowball sampling techniques were used as sampling techniques. This group consisted of young people (both male and female) 15-45 years of age who abused drugs and other dangerous substances in Kano Metropolis that were available during the study. In-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted to obtain qualitative data from 20 respondents including relevant security agents and opinion leaders, through a purposive sampling technique. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the quantitative data, and the qualitative data obtained were also analysed to support the quantitative data in a prose style.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section presents and analyses the data generated for the study. The study analysis was guided by four research questions based on 322 retrieved questionnaires. The qualitative data were also used in the analysis below in a prose style to support the quantitative data in the analysis.

Research Question 1: Is Joblessness a Factor in Predisposing Youth to Drug Abuse in Kano Metropolis?

Table 1: Response on Employment Status of Respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Employed	118	36.6
Unemployed	204	63.4
Total	322	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

The data from Table 1 above reveal that 63.4 % of the respondents were unemployed, while 36.6% percent respondents were employed. This shows that 63.4% of the respondents who abused drugs in the Kano metropolis did not engage in any socioeconomic activities that could make them busy earning income with which to sustain life. Frustration and poverty as a result of unemployment in the Kano metropolis pushed a myriad of youth into substance abuse. In this respect, a respondent (drug user) in an in-depth interview said:

Life has been difficult for me and nobody cares about my condition...I need to lead a normal life like all other people to attend school, to marry and have family, and to help my parents...but no reliable work. To forget life tension, one needs a drug.

Research Question 2: Does peer group influence encourage substance abuse among youth in Kano Metropolis?

Table 2: Respondent's Views on Learning Drug Abuse from Peers

Response	Frequency	Percentage
From peers	222	68.9
Out of frustration	72	22.4
From family members	9	2.8
Others	19	5.9
Total	322	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Table 2 above shows that 68.9% of the respondents learned to abuse substances due to peer pressure, 22.4 % of the respondents learned about their habits out of frustration, and 2.8% learned about substance abuse from family members (who serve as role models and whose behaviours can be easily imitated by their children). Finally, 5.9 % of respondents reported experiencing substance abuse through other means. This indicates that peer influence is the major means through which the culture of substance abuse is transmitted among young people

in the Kano Metropolis. Many respondents in an interview, attested to the influence of peer groups on drug abuse. In this respect, a woman (drug user) said:

My school friends introduced me to cigarette smoking and gradually to other powerful drugs to have more energy to read and pass exams ...before graduating, our group attracted many other students, most of whom are now drug victims.

Research Question 3: Are Broken Home and Parenting Style Factors in Predisposing Youth to Substance Abuse in Kano Metropolis?

Table 3: Whether Respondents' Parents Are Alive or Not Alive

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	256	79.5
No	66	20.5
Total	322	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Table 3 above reveals that 79.5% of the respondents had their parents alive, while the remaining 20.5% of the respondents had lost their parents. This indicates that being one's parents alive does not necessarily prevent one from engaging in deviant activities such as drug abuse. A high percentage of respondents have their parents alive but become substance abusers. In relation to this, a community leader interviewed mentioned:

“the most annoying part of this problem is that most of these children (those abusing substances) have their parents alive; they do nothing either as a result of love or irresponsibility until when things become worse.”

Table 3.1: Responses of Parents Living Together

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	204	79.7
No	52	20.3
Total	256	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Considering the data in Table 3.1 above, the figures indicate that 79.7 % of the respondents had their parents living together, while 20.3 % of the respondents' parents did not live together for one reason or the other. This shows that the majority of the respondents are from stable families, while only a few of them (20.3%) are from broken families. This finding indicates that being from a stable family does not prevent the child from becoming involved in substance abuse, as being from a broken home does not push a child into substance abuse; what matters here is the effectiveness or otherwise of the socialization the child received. This finding differs from what Maisto, Galizio and Connors (1999) cited in Siro (2008) found in their study. They indicated that “. Family disintegration is one of the reasons that push individuals into drug abuse....” Therefore, it can be concluded that broken homes do not seem to be a predisposing factor for substance abuse among youth in Kano Metropolis.

Table 3.2: Reactions to Respondents' Involvement in Substance Abuse

Parents Reaction	Frequency	Percentage
Always care to advice	34	20.9
Always fight me	72	44.2
Are tired of my Habit	46	28.2
Indifferent	11	6.7
Total	163	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2021

Only 163 respondents believed that their parents were aware of their involvement in substance abuse. The above figures in Table 3.3 show that 44.2 % of the respondents' parents were fighting them, 28.2 % of the respondents' parents were tired of their habits, 20.9 % of the respondents received advice from their parents, and the remaining 6.7 % of the respondents believed that their parents were indifferent about their misdoings. This indicates that most parents who are aware of their children's involvement in substance abuse either constantly quarrel with the children to correct their behaviour, become frustrated and tired of their habit or are indifferent to their children's behaviour, as only 20.9 % of the respondents' parents care to advise them to abandon substance abuse (which is regarded as a more efficient mechanism for discouraging the youth from substance abuse). This finding is in agreement with the finding of Rochester (1999:179) in his youth development study Africa, where it was observed that "...the quality of parent-child relationship determines the impact of family processes (such as attachment, involvement and supervision) on delinquency". In relation to this, an official of the *Hisbah* interviewed stated:

"Parents should help the law enforcement agents and the community in general by controlling their children, not by coercion and force but rather through counselling, monitoring, and advising them on how to live a responsible life".

Therefore, we can conclude, based on these findings, that, the majority of the parents in the study area are aware of their involvement in substance abuse, and instead of adopting an effective parenting style that would help them control their behaviour (such as adequate supervision, good parental care, effective counselling and advice), the majority of the parents are either fighting them or abandoning them which further worsens their situation. On this basis, it can be said that, parenting style is one factor that predisposes youth to substance abuse in Kano Metropolis.

Most of the time, our people find it difficult to arrest these youth because they mostly abuse these drugs in secluded hide - outs that are in most cases either hidden from the public or known only to their neighbourhoods, such as uncompleted buildings, large culvert etc or they hide in places where people are doing lawful activities such as markets, motor parks, football fields etc.....The case of female youth is the most difficult, as most of them abuse these substances inside living houses.

This finding indicates that there is a need for more enhanced and improved strategies and the adoption of more effective crime control mechanisms from law enforcement agencies in order to ameliorate the menace of substance abuse among youth in the study area. Moreover, there

should also be a collaborative effort from the community to achieve the desired goal. In relation to this, an official of *Hisbah* (morality police) interviewed stated:

There is no way this problem can be addressed without the help of the members of the community as they are the ones living with these youths, they know better their movements and their hideouts, so they can easily identify and arrest them or at least report their activities: According to him,

"they (law enforcement agents) know all the places where these boys hide and abuse these drugs, they know their dealers, but they do nothing, even if they arrest them the next day you will see them on the street again"

On the issue of collecting bribes from the respondents, a head of community service in one of the metropolitan local government stated:

The problem will continue to persist unless there is a change in their attitude (law enforcement agents), because they usually collect huge amount of money from the dealers of these drugs, and even if they arrest abusers, they will just collect bribes and set them free.

DISCUSSION OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS

The major findings of this study are discussed below based on the objectives and the theoretical framework for the study;

Joblessness as a Predisposing Factor of Substance Abuse among Youths in Kano Metropolis

In relation to the above objective, the findings of this study reveal that 63.4 % of the sampled respondents (substance abusers) are unemployed, while 36.6 percent are employed. This finding coincides with Borodo's observation (2005:5) which states that '... Some of the factors responsible for drug abuse in our society today include; an increasing number of unemployed youths with inadequate Islamic and Western education....' This finding is consistent with the theoretical postulation of Sutherland's (1939) differential association theory which postulates that inadequate involvement in conventional activities such as educational and occupational activities predispose individuals to learn to violate societal norms and engage in deviant activities such as substance abuse. Therefore, unemployment can be identified as a predisposing factor youth substance abuse in Kano Metropolis.

Peer Group Influence and Drug Abuse among Youths in Kano Metropolis

Considering the data obtained above, the study revealed that the majority of the respondents learned how to abuse substances through the influence of their peers. On the number of respondents as peers who are involved in substance abuse, the findings indicate that all the sampled respondents are living within a social group with peers who are substance abusers, either in school, in youth joints, or in their neighbourhood. This finding corresponds with what Abdullahi and Haruna (1991:31) found in their study, which states that "... inmates at Dawanau Rehabilitation Centre Kano learned about the habit of drug abuse from friends,

workmates and other associates....” At the same time, this finding interprets the theoretical postulation of Sutherland’s differential association (1939), which posits that “... People learn to become deviants in the same way that human capability is processed within young people. They do so due to a high rate of association with youthful peers who are already in the circle. Enabling environment which favours this association matters a lot for deviance (like substance abuse) to spread....” Siegel, (2005:226). On this basis, it can be said that, peer group influence encourages the spread of substance abuse among youth in Kano Metropolis.

Broken Homes and Parenting Styles as Factors Predisposing Substance Abuse

In relation to the above, the findings of the study indicate that the majority of the respondents have their parents alive. The study also revealed that a significant majority of those whose parents are alive, have their parents living together (in a stable family) compared with those whose parents are not living together (broken family) for one reason or the other. This finding differs from what Maisto, Galizio and Connors (1999) as cited in Siro (2008) found in their study. They indicated that “... Family disintegration is one of the reasons that push individuals into drug abuse”. Therefore, it can be concluded that broken homes do not seem to be a predisposing factor of substance abuse among youth in Kano Metropolis.

However, with regard to parenting style, the findings of the study revealed that the majority of the respondents whose parents were alive believed that their parents were aware of their involvement in substance abuse, and instead of adopting appropriate measures that would help them abandon their habits and live a responsible life such as good parental care, advice and guidance, majority of the parents are either fighting them, are tired of their behaviour or completely indifferent with the involvement in substance abuse. This finding is in harmony with the finding of Rochester (1999:179) in his youth development studying Africa, where it was observed that “...the quality of the parent-child relationship determines the impact of family processes (such as attachment, involvement and supervision) on delinquency”. Therefore, it can be concluded based on these findings that, the majority of the parents in the study area are aware of their involvement in substance abuse, and instead of adopting an effective parenting style that would help them control their behaviour (such as adequate supervision, good parental care, effective counselling and advice,) the majority of the parents are either fighting them or abandoning them which further worsens their situation. On this basis, it can be said that, parenting style is one factor that predisposes youth to substance abuse in Kano Metropolis.

Corruption among Law Enforcement Agents and Substance Abuse in Kano Metropolis

In relation to the above, the study revealed that that despite the rampant manner in which young people abuse substances in Kano Metropolis, the majority of them were never arrested by law enforcement agents. The findings also revealed that most of those few who were arrested by police or NDLEA officials. Furthermore, the study revealed that out of those who were ever arrested, only very few were convicted, majority were either released by police bail or by offering bribes. On the respondents’ assessment of the role played by the law enforcement agents in tackling substance abuse in the study area, the study revealed that many people were not satisfied with the role of law enforcement agents as very few respondents believed that law enforcement agents are playing a satisfactory role. This finding corroborates what Chambliss (1967) cited in Siro (2008) found in his comparative study of Nigeria (Ibadan and Lagos) and the United States (Las Vegas and Seattle) where he says “... there is in fact a common

symbiotic relationship between the law enforcement political organization of these four cities and a group of local (as distinct from national) men who control the distribution of vices....” Thus, it can be said that previous studies, similar to this study, have indicated the existence of corruption among law enforcement agents. Therefore, corruption among law enforcement agents is a factor that leads to the persistence of substance abuse among youth in the Kano Metropolis.

Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion and analysis, it can be discerned that the problem of substance abuse particularly among youth, constitutes a menace and a threat that has devastating effects on the future of our society. The key findings of this study revealed that joblessness, peer group influence, parental ineptitude, corruption and availability of drugs all were factors predisposing young people to drug and substance abuse in the Kano metropolis. The recent economic hardship in the country, the increasing joblessness and youth restiveness are triggers to drug proneness, deviant and criminal activities. Unless something is done urgently as a recipe.

Recommendations

Based on the data generated and findings analysed in this study, the following recommendations are worthy of consideration: -

1. Parents/guardians and community members should monitor the movement and behaviour of their children and the company they keep to ensure that they develop and maintain an acceptable and legitimate relationship and prevent them from becoming victims of wrong associations.
2. Since, most of those involved in substance abuse do so out of ignorance of its dangers and consequences, governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) should embark on parents who also need to develop the habit of being good parents for their children by imparting proper socialization that will help them respect societal norms.
3. There are massive campaigns against the dangers of substance abuse.

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