

Determinants, patterns and problems of drug use and abuse among Nigerian undergraduates: A review of literature

EZEUGU Beckley-Jones Ifeanyi

Department of Sociology,
Madonna University, Nigeria
Okija Campus

ABSTRACT

Drug use refers to any scope of use of illegal drugs; heroin use, cocaine use, tobacco use among others. Drug use is socially patterned in the society due to the social learning aspects this paper reviewed the determinants, patterns and effects of drug use among Nigeria undergraduates. The differential association theory by American Sociologist Edwin Sutherland was used in explaining how drug use behaviors among undergraduates are fueled through socialization, as students learn to use drugs from peers. The various determinants of drug use and abuse can be seen in different forms. It could be as a result of peer pressure, promotion of drugs and pain killers, parents pathological background, enjoyment and ignorance of the harm and dangerous caused by intake of drugs. The prevalence rate of drug abuse is mostly seen in the North West followed by South West, South east and North Central. Mostly taken drugs are cannabis, followed by benzodiazepines, and amphetamine stimulants. It appears more among the males and less among females. These drugs are mostly gotten from joints in campuses, under flyover in Onitsha, Ajegunle in Lagos, uncompleted buildings. The effects of these drugs can be witnessed in the negative activities and crimes perpetrated these individuals. Such as cultism, accident, killings and diseases. The government should make the possible legislation and policies to eradicate drug abuse in the federation through the Nigerian Drug Law and Enforcement Agency.

Keywords: Drug, Drug use, Drug Abuse effects.

Introduction

Nigerian society comprises a network of social activities and people and because of its heterogeneous nature, social problems often emerge. Drug abuse is one of the numerous problems emanating from the dynamic nature of the Nigerian Society. It often times constitutes a major source of wrong to the school authorities and government in terms of the way students use drugs (Desmond, 2009).

Drug use refers to any scope of use illegal drugs; heroin use, cocaine use tobacco use. (Desmond 2009). Drug misuse is used to distinguish improper or unhealthy use from use of medication as prescribed or alcohol in moderation. These include the repeated use of drugs to produce pleasure, alleviate stress and/or alter than prescribed or using someone else's prescription.



Social and cultural environment are one of the factors that lead to drug use. Social structure can be used in variety of ways, each of which is useful. They include; the roles, relationship and domination associated with categories of, for example gender, race and class, the social, economic and cultural characteristics of a society and the societal systems and institutions (education system, welfare policies, and law). (Ford, 2009).

Culture is divided into drug-specific and non-drug specific cultural influences on drug use. Drug specific cultural influences are norms regarding acceptable patterns of drug use while nonspecific cultural influences refer to those aspects of Western culture that influence general attitudes and norm. example; individualism, neo-liberalism and secularism.

The broader culture can influence individual risks factors of drug use such as cohesion and social exclusion, societal systems and institutions. Drug-specific cultural influences vary with factors such as drug type, setting , group characteristic and historical time. For example smoking has been fashionable and acceptable in earlier times. But is now either fashionable or acceptable among the general population. Drug specific norms and values are shaped by a range of factors, such as mass-media (news marketing), trend in youth culture (heroin chic) and laws and their enforcement.

According to Lindsey 2011, the social patterns of drugs abuse include: gender, race and ethnicity, education and religiosity. In the study of crime and deviance, gender is an important predictor; males are more likely than females to commit the more serious forms of crime and deviance such as homicide, robbery and burglary. This pattern generally hold true for drug use of various types. A common thread underlines gender difference in criminality and drug use of various kinds and that is masculinity (Lindsey, 2011).

Race and ethnicity differences in drug-use of various types exist to some extent but are less clear-cut than the gender differences. For alcohol use, whites have the highest rate of drinking and nature Americans, despite the popular image that they have alcohol problems, have the lowest rate. Despite some minor differences, African Americans, Native Americans and whites have the highest life time use of Marijuana, while Asians



and Hispanics have the lowest use. This explains that race and ethnicity affects the use of drugs by individuals. (Substance abuse and mental health services administration, 2011).

Education differences in drug use depend on the type of drug. For alcohol, higher level of education are associated with higher likelihood of drinking because people with lower levels of education are more likely to be religious and people who are religious are less likely to drink. For tobacco, college-undergraduates are more likely to use tobacco than the graduates (substance abuse and mental health services Administration, 2011).

A growing number of studies finds that religiosity (how religious someone is) affects how often people use various drugs. The more religious people are, the lower their drug use; conversely, the less religious they are, the higher their drug use (Desmond and Purpura, 2009). Religion works hand in hand with the moral beliefs that people have.

Negative drug-use seems to be a prominent social problem in Nigeria especially among our undergraduates. According to Nwaiwu 2002, this negative drug use (drug abuse) leads to serious health hazards for drug addicts. The negative use of illegal drugs can also lead to violence, individual lack, crimes and even death among undergraduates in Nigeria universities.

Conceptualization of key Concepts

Drugs and Drug Use: Drugs are chemical substances, typically of a known structure, which when administered to a living organism produces biological effects (Desmond, 2009). The term drug use is normally applied to excessive and addictive use of drugs. Because such drugs can have severe physiological and psychological as well as social effects, many government regulate their use.

In most instances, drug use and abuse constituted learned behaviours. Research has shown; for example that children whose parents used Marijuana have significantly increased likelihood of abusing alcohol and other substances as teens or young adults. An individual may also have a peer or peers who serve as role-models of drug-use behaviours and effectively normalize drug use (Desmond 2009).



Many persons face situations with which for one reason or another, they cannot cope successfully and in the pressure of which they cannot function effectively; either the stresses are greater than usual or the individuals' adaptive abilities are less than sufficient. In either instance, individuals may turn to any of a variety of tranquilizing and energizing drugs, which are used as a means of dealing with problems that they otherwise cannot face e.g. aspirin. People term this excessive use of drugs (whether legal or illegal) as drug support (Soper, 2009).

The nature of drug use includes why and how people use drugs which includes; personality, type of drugs and context of the drug use. These factors are connected and cannot be separated. They influence the reasons for drug use and the effects. Drug use may not always lead to drug abuse in some cases. According to Ford (2009), the stages of drug use include; experimental drug use, recreational drug use, dependent drug use and abstinence. Experimental use of drugs are most times associated with undergraduates that use drugs for the first time as an experiment, usually because of peer pressure. It does not last long and does not happen often. It depends on many factors: how easy it is to get the drugs, the group of friends involved among others. The effects of drug use at the stage are mostly not known by young people.

Recreational drug use involves individuals continually taking the drug's for fun. It becomes a regular thing, such as every weekend; and is part of a social life of undergraduates. This stage may seem to be controllable, therefore; they see it as a normal activity in their social-circle.

Dependent drug use involves using drugs for a long time heavily and not being able to control the use. This is also called "addiction" and can be physical or psychological. Physical dependence means that the body craves for the drugs while psychological dependence is when the individual cannot cope without it. This stage brings emotional, psychological and social problems.

Abstainers are individuals who don't take drugs or have been off drugs for a long time and does not want to use them again. These stages of drug use explain why the use could have negative or positive results on the individuals (Ford, 2009).



It is not uncommon to find undergraduates in Nigeria, who fit-in to the different stages and categories of drug use.

This review paper is intended to collate the views/findings of scholars with respect to determinants (causes), patterns and problems of drug use among undergraduates in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This work adopts the differential association theory as the theoretical framework. This theory was propounded by an influential early American Sociologist Edwin Sutherland in the Late 19th Century. It argued that all behavior is result of socialization through interaction. That is, how we act depends on how those around us desire us to act. How much we deviate from or conform to the norms depends on difference (or differentials) in whom we associate with.

This theory suits the analysis of the topic, determinants, patterns and problems of drug use among Nigerian undergraduates. This theory explains how behaviours of other students affect that of fellow students in terms of drug use, thereby making them act the way they are desired to by their peers who are already into drug use.

Review of Literature

Determinants of drug use and drug abuse among Nigerian undergraduates

There could be non-single factor defined as solely responsible for the abuse of drugs but the following are some of the causes of young undergrads vulnerable to drug use and abuse in Nigerian universities (Oshodi, Aina & Onajole, 2010, Igwe 2009, Abudu 2008, Oluremi, 2012, Ajubulu 2011).

- 1. Curiosity and Desire to find out the effectiveness of particular drug:** Curiosity to experiment the unknown facts about drug thus motivates undergraduates into drug use. The first experience in the drug abuse produces a state of arousal such as happiness and pleasure which in turn motivate them to continue. Some time

students take drugs in order to find out their effectiveness of a particular drug and if they find out that drug is effective they continue using the drugs.

2. **Lack of Parental Supervision: Many parents have no time to supervise their sons and daughters.** Some parents have little or no time for interaction with family members, while others put pressure on their children to pass exams or perform better in their studies. These problems initialize and increase drug usage.
3. **Promotions and Availability:** Nigerian undergraduates are being offered cigarettes through promotions and musical concerts. Some of them will experiment and stop, or continue to use occasionally without significant problems. While others will develop addiction, moving on to more dangerous and hard drugs. There is also considerable pressure to use legal substances. Alcohol and pain relieving drugs are regularly advertised on television.
4. **Socio-Economic States of their 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 on alarming factor to the total life of the children. By implication, the Socio-economic status of the parents may influence adolescents to abuse or not to abuse drugs even if the parents have very low income, low average income, high or very high income.
5. **Peer Group and Influence:** Peer group 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.
6. **Pathological Family Background:** Broken homes, illegitimate relationships, alcoholic parents or parent's involvement in anti- social and illegal activities.
7. **Enjoyment and Ignorance of the Dangers of illegal Drug use and Abuse:** Despite all the concerns about illicit drug use and the attendant lifestyle by undergraduates, it is probably still the case that the lives of most of the young people are centered on school, home and employment and that most drug use is restricted to the use of a particular subculture including the occasional and experimental use of illegal drugs without necessarily adopting the lifestyle.



Prevalence rate, patterns and accessibility of drugs among Nigerian undergraduates

From the record of Drug Abuse in Nigeria, the North West has a statistics of 37-47 percent of the drug victims in the country, while the South-West 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. (Akannam, 2008).

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, heroine 1.6 percent, and cocaine 1.4 percent in both urban and rural areas. Drug use and Abuse appear 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 youth's and women. Multiple drug use happen nationwide with 7.88 percent varying degree (UNODC 2007).

The Accessibility of these drugs are so easy in Nigeria society. They are variously found in motor-parks, streets corners, joints on campuses, uncompleted buildings, under flyovers. From Ring Road outlets in Benin City, Ajegule in Lagos, Mabush in Abuja, under flyover in Onitsha will astonish you of the undergraduates and teaming youth's involved in the intake of cannabis and other drugs (Abudu 2008, Oshodi, Ani and Onajole, 2010).

Effects and consequences of drug use and abuse among Nigerian undergraduates and Nigeria at large

Drug abuse is rapidly growing global problem (Lackhanpal, Agnilotri, 2007). The problem of the drug abuse places a significant threat to health and the entire nations. (Oshodi, Aina, and Onjole, 2010). Almost every country in the world is affected from one more drug being abuse by its citizens. The increase of drug abuse globally has brought problems such as increase in violence and crime, increase in Hepatitis B and C, increase in HIV and



Aids diseases, collapse of the veins and collapse in the social structure (UNO DC, 2007, Oshodi, Aina and Onajole 2010).

Horrible youthful activities in widespread in Nigeria. In primary schools, peers engage in organized form of crimes and disrupt normal academic programmes. In secondary schools and most Nigerian Universities, the activities of secrete cults are known to have been source of threat to lives and property. Outside campuses, a lot of ritual killings are taking place (Abudu, 2008).

How to curb this menace

According to Gaid (2011), any nation being used by drug barons as a transit route have the potentials of becoming a drugs abuse consumer's country, tearing apart our societies, spawning crime, spreading diseases such as aids killing our youths and our future.

Therefore, we are aware that the Federal government on its own has tried in Nigeria to curtail, eradicate or discourage the use, sale, trafficking and recychip of illegal drugs by promulgating various decrease against such drug use. There is the popular Anti-narcotic Decree under which was set up. In 1989, the Federal Military Government enacted decree 48 now Cap N30 law of the Federation establishing the National Drug Law enforcement Agency. The agency is charged with dual responsibility of reducing the supply and demand of drugs. The federal government of Nigeria appreciates the fact that drug supply reduction efforts along cannot solve the drug problem hence emphasis on Demand Reduction (NDLEA, 2009).

Conclusion

Drug use and abuse is a multi-etiological universal phenomenon with significant adverse impact on public health. Early drug dependence has implication in the future of university students and may result in psychiatric disorders, hence preventing early drug related problems which will reduce the risk of these problems in later adulthood when the magnitude of life stresses is greater. It has been suggested that universities should bring about behavioural change in collaboration with the government ministry of Education and peer educators should be involved in providing education. Health education is



paramount. Student's awareness of drugs and their harmful consequences should be raised by incorporating health education in the curriculum. Parents also need to be made knowledgeable of the types, risks and circumstances that lead to substance use among university students and how to provide guidance to their children.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in order to fight against the problems that arise from drug use among Nigerian undergraduates.

1. National drug law enforcement Agency should organize its workshop and seminars on drug free education in Nigerian higher institutions at regular intervals, preferable on monthly basis.
2. The mass media should play a key role highlighting the harmful effects of excessive drug use. Their daily programming should accommodate drug education content.
3. Availability of educational activities, materials and leadership opportunities for undergraduates are necessary to keep them busy. This would control problems of drug use.
4. Government should also set up more rehabilitation centers to aid victims of drug use.
5. Furthermore, legislation should be enacted, strengthened and fully implemented whereby haulage companies especially transporters who do not implement and enforce procedure to prevent misuse of their facilities by drug traffickers are penalized. To combat drug use and trafficking, the penalty should be made equal with their profits because profits made by drug deals far exceed the risk thus making them involve themselves.
6. Parents should sincerely re-orient their children on the dangers of drug abuse on their health and others, since, they say charity begins at home.
7. The ministry of education (Federal and State) must add to their circular a Drug-Education for both the primary, and post primary schools, along with lecturers,



seminars, relies, and film shows for the youth's and adolescent's on the adverse effect of drug abuse.

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