

## **Social Impact of Drug Abuse of Tertiary Students in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

The study is of social impact of drug abuse of tertiary students in Nigeria. The study was guided by three research questions. Self-made questionnaire was adopted for data collection and the analyses were carried out descriptively. The study sample constitute student from different academic level of study. The result indicated that several factors lead to drug abuse of which predominant among which is anxiety, depression, peers influence, among others. The study also indicates that drug abuse has impact of social and academic lives of drug abusers as it leads to declining grades, absenteeism, and potential for dropping out of school as well as leads in low level of commitment to education, among others. Finally, the study revealed that drug abuse had a negative impact of users; and based on the result, conclusion was drawn and recommendations made.

**Keywords:** Drug abuse, social impact, tertiary students

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The abuse of drugs is reported to negatively impact on society, family, health, and life in general, thus constituting an epidemic worldwide. The group mostly at risk regarding the abuse of drugs is the youth (Tarig, Cathrine, Alaa, *et al.*, 2016). There are recent indications of an increasing trend globally of students in tertiary institutions indulging in this unhealthy habit of drug abuse. The period of study for a lot of students at the university or tertiary is also regarded as a period of independence from family supervision, forming of new relationships, acquiring new habits, making independent decisions, balancing life and academic pressures and becoming generally exposed to various values and cultures (Makanjuola, Abiodun, and Sajo, 2014). This newly acquired independence often result in influencing youths to yield to unhealthy behaviours such as drinking, smoking and use of hard drugs (Makanjuola, *et al.*, 2014). Tarig, *et al.* (2016) pointed out that the abuse of substances such as drug is on the increase in African countries.

A lot of sub-saharan African countries are on the verge of social, cultural, and economic transitions; and these has created an enabling environment of for the use of socially disruptive substance. These substances include heroin, inhalants, tranquilizers, cocaine, alcohol and tobacco which have become quite popular among higher educational institutions. The abuse of drugs has contributed to psychosocial problems among youths.

Nigeria, an African country is not exempted from these social problem rampaging higher institutions as evidenced in Ogunsola, Fajemisin, Aiyenuro and Tunde (2020) which compared Nigeria with other third world countries and disclosed Nigeria to be high in the ranks of countries with high number of dangerous drug users. The reason for the availability and prevalence of psychoactive substances was attributed to traffickers using Nigeria as a channel in the transportation of drugs from South East-Asia and South America to European countries. Other contributory factors for this prevalence include peer pressure and the desire of youths to explore and experiment. A research conducted on students in the University of Lagos, Nigeria revealed a great awareness of these students to drug abuse and an inability to properly identify the predisposing factors to drug use and the inherent risks.

### **Statement of research problem**

Previous research has indicated an increased trend in the abuse of drugs, and this is peculiar to young adult in most countries. This trend varies from country to country but is more prevalent in Africa, Europe and America. Drug abuse is a significant problem affecting youths, most times occurring from an earlier age, usually as an experiment and by the time they get to higher education levels, their usage level becomes remarkably higher. Drug abuse has been recognized as a barrier in the achievement of educational objectives. Research carried out in Nigeria has shown that drug abuse is common among students of tertiary institutions and this is influenced by factors such as family, economic, school, psychological and financial. The impact of this is a monstrous effect on the society. No one is immune from addiction as anyone can be addicted, and when it occurs, has serious social impacts on every aspect of an addicts' life. The impact could be loss of relationships, legal actions, and termination of employment, health and in the case of students, expulsion from the educational

institute. In spite of governmental efforts at curbing this growing menace of drug abuse by youths, it appears to still be on the increase probably because of the addictive result following its usage (Kanmodi, Omoleke, Aliyu *et al.*, 2020). In view of this, the study seeks to determine the social impact of drug abuse of tertiary students in Nigeria.

### **Research objectives**

The study generally assessed the social impact of drug abuse of tertiary students in Nigeria. The specific objectives are;

1. To determine the factors responsible for drug abuse.
2. To assess the extent to which it affects the social life of students in tertiary education.
3. To investigate the impact of drug abuse on the education of students in tertiary education.

### **Research questions**

1. What are the factors responsible for drug abuse?
2. To what extent does drug abuse affect the social life of students in tertiary education?
3. What is the impact of drug abuse on the education of students in tertiary education?

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Drug abuse is the illegal intake of drugs including prescription medicine, alcohol and other substances either in large doses or in the wrong way. It is a condition that is said to be chronic and is identified by habitual drug seeking and use, regardless of its harmful consequences (Barerah, 2018). Drug abuse is when substances that are either legal or illegal are used in ways that they should not be used. People abuse drugs to ease off stress, feel good or avoid reality altogether and when they are unable to stop; they become addicted (Kumar & Dangi, 2019).

### **Youths and drugs**

The abuse of drugs among youths is not only a menace to the sustainable development of a nation especially in developing countries like Nigeria but also a global, social, health and individual problem. A remarkable number of youths, who should be the major agents for change and development, have been rendered unproductive by the abuse of drugs. Drug abuse has adverse effects of students' education in different academic institutions globally and is a major concern in Nigeria because of the effects on youths and the nation (Okafor, 2019). The earlier young people start to abuse drugs, the greater their chances of becoming addicted to them.

### **Impact of drug abuse**

The indiscriminate use of drugs either for a short period or a long period can have effects on the brain that are long lasting as the need to experience that same high from drug use will be irresistible to the brain and that feeling experienced cannot be replaced by anything.

**Social impact of drug abuse:** An individual addicted to drugs can experience loss of friendship of both friends and family as relationships can become strained due to the behaviour of the addict. Drugs or substance abuse can strain family relationships, making them dysfunctional thereby transforming them into burdens rather than assets to the society.

The Social effect looks at issues associated with drug abuse like dealing with the increasing rate of criminal activities like robbery, burglary, rape, destruction of public properties, increasing rate of HIV/AIDS, the congestion of reformatories where the government spends more in the maintenance of prisoners, and also the increasing number of destitute which our social welfare administration system cannot provide for thus draining government's budget (Eric, 2017).

**Health and psychological impact:** Drug abuse can cause health related problems like high blood pressure, sleep disorder and heart disease in adulthood (MedlinePlus, 2016). Drug abuse and addiction produces various physiological, organic and psychological problems, distinctive sort of drugs cause different issues like stimulant and hallucinogenic drugs produce mental illness with suspicions, intemperate fears, mood disorders and depression. Narcotics and liquor harm the liver, stomach, brain and nerves which lead to memory loss, restlessness and so on. Essentially cannabis elements similarly trigger emotional instability or a general loss of enthusiasm among clients. Drug dependence is plague which controls the user as well as cause physical and fervent trouble in the family (Wani & Sanker, 2016).

### **Measures of dealing with the problem of drug abuse among youths**

Efforts to avert the rising burden of drug abuse in Nigeria include the identification of evidence-based information on the magnitude of the problem, from epidemiological studies. Till this day, most of the

information relating to drug abuse in Nigeria is recounted by the media both electronic, print and online (Abubakar et al., 2021). The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has been launching enforcement activities nationwide to confiscate drugs of abuse and arrest drug abusers in the country. Also, sensitization program, rehabilitation and border patrol are carried out frequently to check trafficking of illicit drugs to and from Nigeria (NDLEA, 2020).

The National Agency for Foods and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) which is an agency of the Federal government of Nigeria, banned the production, importation and sale (without a valid prescription) of codeine and codeine-containing syrups in Nigeria. Recently, The Federal government of Nigeria banned the operation of open drug markets in Nigeria, through Pharmacists Council of Nigeria (PCN) which is an agency in charge of regulating the practice of pharmacy in Nigeria, (Ojoye, 2018). This measure was introduced to sanitize the system of drug distribution in the Nigeria and prohibit the handling of drugs by unlicensed personnel, particularly prescription and controlled-only drugs.

### **Theoretical review**

#### **Thornberry's interactional theory**

This theory was first proposed in 1987 with focus on how drug use in adolescence and youth is linked with delinquency. It proposes that young people that do not bond well to their parents are more likely to experience weakened bonds to school and vice versa. This weak social bond might facilitate association with delinquent peers and learning of rebellious activities and behaviours (Thornberry, 2014). Also, the relationship with delinquent peers in adolescence and/or youth will increase the likelihood of weak conventional attachments later in life, thereby facilitating deviant behaviours such as illegal drug use and crime. This theory helps for a better understanding of the analysis of drug abuse because it recognizes difference in the social control and learning methods and integrates them in a single theoretical mode

### **Empirical review**

Considering the social implications of drug abuse on undergraduate students, Okafor (2019) examined the causes and the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and a simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents from the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria for the study. The instrument used was a questionnaire and it was revealed from the findings of the study that; students majorly involved in drug abuse because they needed to cope with their academic challenges; low self-esteem was a major consequence of drug abuse; based on gender and faculty/department, there were no significant differences.

Similarly, a study carried out by Masenga (2017) investigated the impact of drug abuse on academic performance of students in public secondary schools in Kishapu District in Tanania, aiming specifically to identify common types of drugs the students abuse, explore causes of drug abuse among students in the study area, to assess rate of school attendance among children involved in drug abuse as well as their terminal and annual examination performance. Questionnaires were used to collect data and from the findings, it was revealed that marijuana was most frequently abused closely followed by cigarette and alcohol. Also, the class attendance for students who abused drugs was observed to be poor resulting in low performance in academics.

Tarig, et al (2016) investigated the prevalence and factors related with substance use using 500 students of a higher institution. Questionnaire was used for data collection and analyzed using IBM SPSS version 20. The study found an overall prevalence of substance of 31%, and identified curiosity as the major factor influence substance use. It also found adverse effects of substance used to be theft and health problems, while peer pressure was identified as the main source of obtaining the substance. Recommendations made by the study to curb the prevalence included provision of educational programmes by the university to improve awareness and consequence of these substances.

Kanmodi et al. (2020) determined the prevalence and pattern of drug abuse, as well as assessed the health and socioeconomic impact on students in School of Health Technology (SHT), in Jega, Kebbi State, Nigeria. Questionnaire was administered to 254 students in order to collect data which was analyzed using the SPSS Version 20 software. The study found that most of the respondents who disclosed a positive history of drug abuse had directly or indirectly suffered socio-economic and health consequences such as engagement in crime, strained relationships and job loss.

## **III. METHODOLOGY**

The study was carried out among students of University of Lagos, Lagos state, Nigeria. The number of students enrolled in the school as at 2018 numbered approximately 55,000 students. Simple random technique was used in the selection of 305 students to participate in the study. Data was obtained by means of questionnaire. The questionnaire elicited information as to the socio-demographic information of the students, while the second part focused on the research questions formulated to guide the study. The students were

requested to gather in one of the large lectures halls within the campus and were duly informed about the purpose of the survey, as well as informed that participation was voluntary and purely for research purposes. Of the students gathered 305 were randomly selected using the simple random sampling technique. The questionnaires were self-administered and only properly filled ones were used for the study. Descriptive statistics was adopted in data analysis using frequencies and percentages.

#### IV. DATA ANALYSIS

305 questionnaires were distributed but only 300 questionnaires were properly filled and returned. Table 1 below presents demographic information of the respondents which involves students from all levels through master degree holders. As indicated in the table, the participants comprise both genders, selected from across different levels of undergraduate up to master’s students; with majority of the students from 200levels (40%); this is followed by those from 100 level (30.7%) as indicated in the table with the least coming from master’s student (5%). The same table presents a list of some common drugs used among students. As indicated above, majority of the study – about 41.3% consume Tramadol, this was followed by those who consume Amphetamine (18.7%); then those the consume alcohol (12.1%), those who take cough syrup (10.9%); heroin (10.3%) and the least in the group are those who consume cannabis (8%). From the foregoing, it seems that tramadol is very popular among the students. One can also infer from this study that most students value drugs more than they consume alcohol.

**Table 1a: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

SN	Variables		Frequency	Percentage
1	What is your gender?	Female	188	62.6
		Male	112	37.4
		<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>
2	What level are you?	100	92	30.7
		200	120	40.0
		300	50	16.5
		400	23	7.7
		Masters level	15	5.0
		<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>
3	Most commonly used drugs	Amphetamine	56	18.7
		Cannabis	24	8.0
		Alcohol	35	12.1
		Aphrodisiacs	31	10.9
		Heroin	30	10.3
		Tramadol	124	41.3
		<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey 2021

Table 1b is an extension of demographic information. It accounts for the level of drug consumption with a yes or no response. As indicated in the table, 65% of the respondents agreed that they have used drugs, different from those recommended for medical reason which means only 35% of the respondents yield to medical prescription. Again, the result indicates that 92.3% of the respondents abused the prescription given to them at one time or the other; while 66.3% indicated that they cannot get through an entire week without using drugs. In fact about 59.7% of the respondents can even engage in illegal activities just to get drugs. This indicates a high level of drug consumption among university students.

**Table 1b: Level of consumption of drug the Respondents**

Options	Yes	No
1 Have you used drugs other than those required for medical reasons?	F 195	105
	% 65.0	35.0
2 Have you abused prescription drugs before?	F 277	23
	% 92.3	7.7
3 Can you get through the week without using drugs?	F 199	101
	% 66.3	33.7

4	Have you engaged in illegal activities in order to obtain drug?	F	179	121
		%	59.7	40.3

Source: Field survey 2021

**RQ1: What are the factors responsible for drug abuse?**

The first research question was therefore formulated to identify factors that are responsible for drug abuse. From the list of factors identified, the study revealed with above 70% in agreement that the following factors are responsible for drug abuse: peer influence, educational stress, nature of extra-curricular activities, emotional stress, experimental curiosity, poor teacher-students relationship. The least of these factors is lack of parental care with 55% approval. This shows that about 45% of the respondents indicating that parents are exonerated from the children’s drugs activities. It is not surprising given that at university level, it is expected that students are mature enough to take responsibilities of their action.

The factors responsible for drug abuse

		SA	A	UN	D	SD	Total responses in agreement (%)
Lack of parental care	Count	63	125	103	10	0	55
	%	20.9	41.8	34.1	3.3	0	
Peer influence	count	149	103	43	7	3	83.6
	%	49.5	34.1	14.3	2.2	1.1	
Educational stress	count	178	69	30	7	17	82.4
	%	59.3	23.1	9.9	2.2	5.5	
Nature of extra-curricular activities	Count	116	135	36	13	0	83.6
	%	38.5	45.1	12.1	4.4	0	
Emotional stress	count	149	102	43	7	0	83.6
	%	49.5	34.1	14.3	2.2	0	
Poor teacher-student relationship	count	149	73	56	23	3	73.7
	%	49.5	24.2	18.7	7.7	1.1	
Experimental curiosity	Count	149	102	43	7	3	83.6
	%	49.5	34.1	14.3	2.2	1.1	

Source: Researcher’s field Survey Result, 2021

**RQ2: To what extent does drug abuse affect the social life of students in tertiary education?**

The second research question investigated the extent to which drug abuse affect the social life of the student in tertiary education. As indicated in table 4 below, the study revealed with above 70% in agreement that drug abuse strained relationship with friends (83.6%); reduces sense of value (77%), increases impulsivity and risk-taking behaviours (80.3%); leads to indiscipline (81.4%); as well as increases the tendencies of crime (83.6%).

Table 4: showing the extent to which drug abuse affect the social life of students in tertiary education

Statement		SA	A	UN	D	SD	Total responses in agreement (%)
Strained relationships with friends	Count	149	102	43	7	3	83.6
	%	49.5	34.1	14.3	2.2	1.1	
Reduces sense of value	count	96	135	20	30	20	77
	%	31.9	45.1	6.5	9.9	6.5	
Increased impulsivity and risk-taking behaviors	count	132	109	36	23	0	80.3
	%	44.0	36.3	12.1	7.7	0	
Indiscipline	count	155	89	26	20	13	81.4
	%	51.7	29.7	8.8	6.5	4.4	
Increases crime tendencies	Count	149	102	43	7	3	83.6
	%	49.5	34.1	14.3	2.2	1.1	

Source: Researcher’s field Survey Result, 2021

**RQ 3: What is the impact of drug abuse on the education of students in tertiary education?**

The final research question was meant to determine the impact of drug abuse on the education of students in tertiary education. As indicated in the table below, 65.8% are in agreement that drug abuse results in declining grades; 82.5% of the respondents support that drug abuse result in absenteeism from school and other activities. The same table indicates that 83.8% are in agreement that drugs abuse leads to potential for dropping out of school. The same table indicated that 79.2% are in support that drug abuse leads in low level of commitment to education. Drug abuse leads to problems with working memory due to changes in adolescent brain activity (84.6%). This shows that drug abuse has negative impact on the education of students in tertiary education.

**Table 5: Showing the impact of drug abuse on the education of students in tertiary education.**

	Statement		SA	A	UN	D	SD	Total responses in agreement (%)
1	Declining grades	Count	69	125	76	17	13	65.75
		%	23.0	41.75	25.3	5.5	4.4	
2	Absenteeism from school and other activities	count	145	102	43	7	3	82.5
		%	48.4	34.1	14.3	2.2	1	
3	Potential for dropping out of school	Count	132	119	43	7	0	83.8
		%	44.0	39.6	14.3	2.2	0	
4	Low level of commitment to education	Count	102	135	36	21	3	79.2
		%	34.1	45.1	12.1	7.7	1.1	
5	Lead to problems with working memory due to changes in adolescent brain activity	Count	149	105	46.2	3	0	84.6
		%	49.5	35.1	15.4	1.1	0	

Source: Researcher’s field Survey Result, 2021

**V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

One of the findings in this study indicates the following factors as responsible for drug abuse among students: peer influence, educational stress, mature of extra-curricular activities, emotional stress, experimental curiosity, poor teacher-students relationship; and lack of parental care. This clearly shows that several factors are responsible for lack of encouragement. This study is in agreement with the earlier study by Samuel-Kayode (2020). In same vein, Ajala (2012) also identified some factors influencing drug abuse to include peers pressure, depression and frustration. In same vein, Staff (2012) also identified some of the factors impacting students’ involvement in drug abuse. According to the study, some need drug because of emotional stress, some are tense, especially during examinations which increase the rate of their intake of drugs while a lot others do so just to please their friends.

Secondly, the result of the study revealed that drug abuse strained relationship with friends; reduces sense of value, increases impulsivity and risk-taking behaviours; leads to indiscipline; as well as increases the tendencies of crime. This finding is in harmony with the result from study by Kanmodi et al. (2020) who also revealed that drug about result in strained relationship and loss of job. The study further agrees with Masenga (2017) and Tarig, *et al* (2016) respectively with similar findings.

Finally, the study shows that drug abuse has impact on the education of students in tertiary education. This is so because it results in declining grades; absenteeism from school and other activities, leads to potential for dropping out of school as well as leads in low level of commitment to education. Drug abuse leads to problems with working memory due to changes in adolescent brain activity. This shows that drug abuse has negative impact on the education of students in tertiary education. The study agrees with Abubakar et al., (2021), Okafor (2019) Ojoye (2018) respectively. In their different studies they identified consequences of drug abuse which cut across, education setbacks, damage to heath, emotional instability, and anti-social lifestyle.

**VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The result of this study has clearly indicates that several factors motivate drug abuse in tertiary institution which great implication on their academic performance, their state of mental health, as well as their social and economic lives. In adverse stage, drug abuse could lead to mental health or insanity. Given the negative impacts of drug abuse among tertiary students, there is the need to eliminate or total eradication there is a need to eradicate drug abuse in tertiary students. As a result, the following recommendations were proposed:

The study recommends constant reminder to the students of the dangers of drug abuse and its implications to their studies, lives, or social and economic impact in drug abuse are to their app comment

The study further recommends rules and strict regulation to discipline those involved in drugs.

Finally, the study recommends that counseling centres be instituted to help individuals who has been addicted to drugs overcome their addictions.

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**SOCIAL IMPACT OF DRUG ABUSE OF TERTIARY STUDENTS IN NIGERIA  
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

Dear Respondent,

I am carrying out a study on “social impact of drug abuse of tertiary students in Nigeria”, and you have been chosen to be part of the study. This questionnaire is only for academic purposes. Kindly select the response which applies to you and all information will be kept confidential

**SECTION A**

**Gender:** Male ( ) Female ( )

**Age :**

- a) 15-20 ( )
- b) 21-30 ( )
- c) 31-40 ( )

**Level:**

- a) 100 level ( )
- b) 200 level ( )
- c) 300 level ( )
- d) 400 level ( )
- e) Masters level ( )

**Most commonly used drugs:**

- a) Amphetamine ( )
- b) Cannabis ( )
- c) Alcohol ( )
- d) Aphrodisiacs ( )
- e) Heroin ( )
- f) Tramadol ( )

**Have you used drugs other than those required for medical reasons?**

No ( ) yes ( )

**Have you abused prescription drugs before?**

No ( ) yes ( )

**Can you get through the week without using drugs?**

No ( ) yes ( )

**Have you engaged in illegal activities in order to obtain drug?**

No ( ) yes ( )

**SECTION B:**

Instructions: Please tick (√) as appropriate where

SA = Strongly Agree (SA), A = Agree, D = Disagree (D), SD = Strongly Disagree (SD)

**Key: Strongly agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1).**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
<b>RQ1</b>	<b>What are the factors responsible for drug abuse among students?</b>				
1	Lack of parental care				
2	Peer influence				
3	Educational stress				
4	Nature of extra-curricular activities				
5	Emotional stress				
6	Poor teacher-student relationship				
7	Experimental curiosity				
<b>RQ2</b>	<b>To what extent does drug abuse affect the social life of students in tertiary education?</b>				
8	Strained relationships with friends				
9	Reduces sense of value				
10	Increased impulsivity and risk-taking behaviors				
11	Indiscipline				
12	Increases crime tendencies				
<b>RQ3</b>	<b>What is the impact of drug abuse on the education of students in tertiary education?</b>				



<b>13</b>	Declining grades				
<b>14</b>	Absenteeism from school and other activities				
<b>15</b>	Potential for dropping out of school				
<b>16</b>	Low level of commitment to education				
<b>17</b>	Lead to problems with working memory due to changes in adolescent brain activity				

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