

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG YOUTHS IN KASHERE TOWN:
A THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS**

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Abstract

Substance abuse is a global social problem. The study was conducted in Kashere town of Akko Local Government Area, Gombe State. The study specifically explored whether the youths are aware of the dangers of substance abuse, the types of substance used and abused, and the major causes and effects of the substance abused. A sample size of 138 including one hundred and twenty youths aged 13 – 35 years, four ward leaders (Masu Angwa), two youth leaders, two religious leaders, three Police officers, two union leaders (National Union of Road Transport Workers and Okada Riders Association), three community-based associations (Vigilante) and two students residing in Kashere town were drawn using multi-stage and purposive sampling techniques. The data for the study were collected using questionnaire and in-depth interview (IDI).The

quantitative data collected were analyzed using simple frequencies and percentages with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 software; while the qualitative data generated were analyzed using content analysis. The findings revealed that majority of the youths are not aware of the dangers associated with substance abuse and that there are many factors, such as peer influence, lack of parental care, broken homes, frustration and emotional stress influencing substance abuse in the study area. The study proffered recommendations, among others, that the police and NDLEA officials should partner with informal security group (vigilante) and community leaders to organize sensitization programmes on the dangers of substance abuse, especially among youths.

Keywords: Adolescents, Drugs, Drug Abuse, Illegal Drugs, Gombe State

Introduction

Substance abuse, which is the abuse of psychoactive materials that exert their major effects on the brain resulting in sedation, stimulation or change in mood of person is a universal social problem. According to the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC, 2005) World Drug Report, substance abuse is a major public health problem all over the world. Thus, an estimated 208 million people, or nearly 5% of the world's population between the ages of 15 and 64 years consume illegal drugs. One hundred and forty-four million people abuse cannabis (marijuana), making it the most prevalent illicit substance, followed by amphetamine type stimulants, opiates and cocaine. Thirty-five million used amphetamine type stimulants, sixteen million are opiates and thirteen million are cocaine users (Naqshbandi, 2012).

Substance abuse does not only expose the individual to major health problems but also serve as a predisposing factor for crimes. The involvement of Nigerians, especially the adolescents in drug abuse and trafficking or narcotic crimes impair the country's image (both at home and abroad), as it has led to the execution of the lives of many Nigerians abroad (Botvin, 1995). The need to control the supply and reduce the demand for narcotic drugs in Nigeria led to the establishment of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in January, 1990 by the then Ibrahim Babangida Administration (Nyameh, Yakubu, Teru and Titus, 2013).

According to Oliha (2014), majority of the Nigerian youths ignorantly depend on one form of substance or the other for their various daily activities including social, educational, political, moral, etc. Such substance or drug include narcotic: analgesics, morphine, opium, heroin, brown sugar, pethedine: stimulants, cocaine, amphetamine, depressants: alcohol, barbiturates, diazepam, hallucinogens d-lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), mescaline, phencyclidine, psilocybin and cannabis: ganja, charas, hash oil, etc. (Nnaqshbandi, 2012). Sa'ad (2016) asserts that drugs could be classified into three broad categories: licit, illicit and undocumented drugs. The licit drugs include many prescriptive drugs, such as antibiotics, stimulants, analgesics, sedatives and some over-the-counter drugs. The illicit drugs include some hard drugs like cocaine, Indian hemp, steroids, etc. The undocumented drugs are substances that are hardly considered as drugs but in reality, they are. Such substances include tobacco/nicotine, alcohol, cola nuts, bath salt, lizard

excreta/faeces, adhesive solutions, etc. National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA, 2016) asserts that the following drugs and substances have been found to be commonly abused globally: alcohol, marijuana, club drugs amphetamine (ecstasy/molly), opioids, tobacco/nicotine, inhalants, hallucinogens, heroin, steroids anabolic), cocaine, synthetic cannabis (k2/spice), synthetic cationones (bath salts) and prescription drugs and cold medicines.

The prevalence and consequences of substance abuse among youths in Kashere town of Akko Local Government Area (LGA), Gombe State has become a matter of concern to the government, scholars, parents, teachers, non-governmental organizations and all other relevant agencies to mount strategies of curtailing the substance abuse and equipping the youths with skills of living devoid of the menace.

Statement of the Problem

Youths are the future leaders of any society. They constitute a significant part of the productive sector, globally. Unfortunately, in Nigeria (Kashere inclusive), many youths who are supposed to work for the productive sector have jeopardized their lives as a result of anti-social behaviours, such as substance abuse. They abuse drugs, such as cocaine, nicotine, marijuana, tobacco, alcohol, amphetamine derivatives and even sniffing glue and so on to feel high and enhance social performance to their own detriment Nyameh, Yakubu, Teru, and Titus, 2013).

Despite the efforts of many concerned individuals and groups, such as scholars, police and NDLEA to stem the tide of illegal drugs use, the menace is still on the increase, as one can easily observe the act among youths in Kashere town. Thus, substance abuse has become an issue of concern in Kashere community, as it has become a wide-spread social phenomenon affecting all segments of the community including health and academics. It is in light of the above that the study specifically explores whether the youths are aware of the dangers of substance abuse, the types of substance use and abuse, and the major causes and effects of the substance abuse among the youths in Kashere town.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Odejide (2000) posits that a substance/drug abuse occurs when its use is not pharmacologically necessary, especially when used in the face of legal prohibition or when a socially acceptable beverage is used excessively. A drug refers to a substance that could bring about a change in the biological function through its chemical actions (Okoye, 2001). It is considered as a substance that modifies perception, cognition, mood, behaviour and general body function (Balogun, 2006). Thus, the reason other than that of medical prescription constitutes drug abuse and people; especially youths engage in the act due to peer influence, unemployment, divorce or separation of their parents, poverty, stress and frustration, among others (Amosun, Ige and Ajala, 2010). Chronic use of substances can cause serious and sometimes irreversible damage to youths' physical and psychological development (Sambo, 2008). Although, all age groups are affected by using psychoactive substances, adolescents and teenagers are particularly affected. Many studies have discovered that the consequences of substance abuse are enormous. Fayombo and Aremu (2000) found that the misuse of marijuana had reached an epidemic level in the present

Nigerian society, and that drug abuse could lead to reduction in academic achievement or even halt one's entire academic process. Okorodudu and Okorodudu (2004) and Odejide (1997) posit in their respective works that there is no restriction to the problem of substance abuse. Accordingly, it hinders the development of any society, as it is a threat to life, health, dignity and prosperity of all individuals and groups.

There are many theories that can be used to explain the prevalence of substance abuse in Nigerian society, as it has no single cause. Thus, Bandura and Walter developed a social learning theory based on the assumption that behaviour is learned and personality can be explained in terms of cumulative effects of a series of learning experiences. Similarly, Sutherland and Cressey in their Differential Association Theory observe how and otherwise obedient person through stages of successive events begins to engage in deviant or anti-social behaviour, such as substance abuse. The theory shows how deviant behaviour is learnt without so much biological and psychological defects (Siegel, 2004). Many youths are engaging in substance abuse as a result of the influence of those they associate with. It is learned from those already involved in the practice. Impersonal agencies of communication, such as movies, television, radios and newspapers play an important role in the genesis of anti-social behaviour. Substance abuse as a form of anti-social behaviour can be learned through these media. However, there is no scientific fact to prove the extent to which these agencies have facilitated the youths into substance abuse in Nigerian society. Some of those thought to have been influenced by these media into the habits actually copy them from their peers and parents, as they may not have access to the media. Broken homes in Nigerian society have caused or increased the prevalence of youths in substance abuse. But more distractive than the broken homes in a child's growth where parents live together in atmosphere of tension and unhappiness. Some people believe that some parents are responsible for their children's substance abuse by exerting enormous pressure in dictating the career goals of their children even if they are not naturally gifted in the specified areas. Also, some youths tend to match the achievements of family members that may be beyond their capability. When they fail, they resort to drugs. Frustrations and emotional stress due to misfortunes, failures, sorrows or miseries of life tend to influence people to substance abuse. Merton posits that differential opportunity causes frustration that drives people into anti-social behaviour. He asserts that modern societies put a very high premium on material success, the form of wealth by which education and hard work open the doors to the success and status symbols but at the same time the same societies fail to make adequate institutional means for the average person, especially the poor to achieve the goals (Bartol and Bartol, 2005). Thus, poverty tends to be a characteristic of social deviants including substance abusers. The broken windows theory as developed by Wilson and Kelling (1982) suggests that effective crime prevention should start with what are considered as "minor" offenses (such as substance/drug abuse) within a society. Thus, ignoring such minor offenses and problems is an invitation for more serious crimes. An analogy of broken window theory is that within a neighborhood, if one window of a house is broken but left unrepaired; the rest of the windows will soon be broken. That is because such neglect (of one unrepaired window over time) serves as a signal that "no one cares" about the house, making it susceptible to vandalism and even burglary.

Therefore, what is important in crime prevention is to fix and uproot a small issue before the situation deteriorates (Wilson and Kelling, 1982). Such analogy could also be applied on the ground of substance abuse prevention among youths in Kashere town. If we consider the issue of substance abuse in Kashere town as still limited to a minority of youths and as such do not consider it necessary to sufficiently address the root of the issue, the situation would worsen in the nearest future.

Materials and Methods

Kashere town is one of the seventeen (17) District areas under Pindiga Emirate Council in Akko Local Government Area (LGA) of Gombe state. The town plays host to Federal University, Kashere (FUK) established by Goodluck Jonathan Administration in 2011. The study is a survey research design with both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The population of Kashere is 77,015 (Census, 2006). There are six cluster areas that made up Kashere town. These include Ungwan Tafida, Ungwan Tumburu, Ungwan Santuraki, Ungwan Wakili, Ya'adda and Ungwan Ubandoma. The total sample size for the study is 138 respondents. This comprises of one hundred and twenty youths aged 13-35 years for questionnaire administration and eighteen participants for in-depth interview. Multi-stage cluster and purposive sampling techniques were used for the study. Thus, four out of the six cluster areas in Kashere town were randomly selected using simple random sampling technique (lottery method). This was done for the six cluster areas to have equal chances of being selected. The four sampled cluster areas include UngwanTafida, Ungwan Tumburu, Ungwan Santuraki and Ungwan Ubandoma. Thus, thirty youths were selected from each of these four areas using accidental sampling technique, making a total of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents for the questionnaire administration. Purposive sampling technique was also used to select four ward leaders (Masu Angwa), two youth leaders, two religious leaders (one each from Islam and Christianity), three Police officers, two union leaders (National Union of Road Transport Workers and Okada Riders Association), three community-based associations (Vigilante) and two students residing inKashere town, totaling eighteen (18) for in-depth interview (IDI). This was done in order to obtain a wider range of information for the study. The quantitative data collected were analyzed using simple frequencies and percentages with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 software, while the qualitative data generated were analyzed using content analysis.

Findings

Table 1 shows the results of the respondents' opinion on whether the youths are aware of the dangers of substance abuse and types of substance abuse among adolescents in Kashere town. The table indicates that 45.0% of the respondents are aware of the dangers of substance abuse, while 55.0% (or the majority) are not. Also, the table indicates that 29.2% of the respondents claimed that the type of substance abuse among the youths are cannabis, 21.7% the narcotic, 20.0% the depressants, and 19.2% the others like sniffing glue, adhesive solution, and lizard faeces, etc. respectively.

Table 1: Respondents' Opinion on Whether the Youths are Aware of the Dangers of Substance Abuse and Types of Substance Abuse among Adolescents

Items		Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Awareness on the dangers of substance abuse	Aware	54	45.0
	Not aware	66	55.0
	Total	120	100
Type of substance abuse among adolescents	Narcotic	26	21.7
	Cannabis	35	29.2
	Depressants	24	20.0
	Pathedine	12	10.0
	Others	23	19.2
	Total	120	100

Source: *Field Survey, 2017*

A key informant during the in-depth interview (IDI) said:

Some of the youths are not aware of the dangers of substance abuse. This is because if they are aware of the effects of sniffing glue or solution, smoking marijuana, other than making them sleepy, feel unhappy and without hope, etc. they would have been deterred. Thus, there is need for various sensitization programmes on the dangers of substance abuse, especially among youths, who are said to be the future leaders of any society (IDI with a Police Officer, 8/6/17).

Similarly, another informant during the IDI opined that:

Most of the adolescents are not aware of the menace of drug use and/or abuse, as no sensible person will engage in any activity that will ruin his/her life. Substance abuse has really destroyed many people's life, especially the youths. We see them in our area of residence, which is Kashere town of Akko LGA, Gombe state, as they smoke marijuana, sniffed glue or solution, etc. (IDI with FUK student, 5/5/17).

Table 2: Causes of Substance Abuse among Adolescents

Causes	SA	A	D	SD	U	Total (F) and (%)
Lack of parental care	26(21.7)	44(36.7)	32(26.7)	18(15.0)	0(0)	120(100)
Broken homes	34(28.3)	46(38.3)	25(20.8)	13(10.8)	2(1.7)	120(100)
Frustration and emotional stress	31(25.8)	27(22.5)	18(15.0)	23(19.2)	21(17.5)	120(100)
Peer influence	43(35.8)	29(24.2)	22(18.3)	23(19.2)	3(2.5)	120 (100)
Unemployment	24(20.0)	32(26.7)	27(22.5)	36(30.0)	1(0.8)	120 (100)
Educational stress	25(20.8)	28(23.3)	26(21.7)	29(24.2)	12(10.0)	120 (100)

**Figures in parentheses represent percentages*

Source: *Field Survey, 2017*

Table 2 shows the results of the causes of drug abuse among adolescents. It indicates that 36.7% of the respondents agreed and 21.7% strongly agreed that lack of parental care causes substance abuse among adolescents, while 26.7% disagreed and 15.0% strongly disagreed, respectively. The table shows that 38.3% agreed and 28.3% strongly agreed that broken home causes substance abuse, while 20.8% disagreed and 10.8% strongly disagreed; and 24.2% agreed and 35.8% strongly agreed that peer influence causes substance abuse, while 18.3% disagreed and 19.2% strongly disagreed, respectively. It shows that 26.7% agreed and 20.0% strongly agreed that unemployment causes substance abuse, while 22.5% disagreed and 30% strongly disagreed; and 23.3% agreed and 20.8% strongly agreed that educational stress causes substance abuse, while 21.7% disagreed and 24.2% strongly disagreed, respectively. It also shows that 22.5% agreed and 25.8% strongly agreed that frustration and emotional stress causes substance abuse, while 15% disagreed and 19.2% strongly disagreed and 17.5% undecided, respectively. A key informant during the in-depth interview said:

The main causes of substance or drug abuse among adolescents and even teenagers in Kashere town are multifaceted. They include high level of illiteracy among parents and children, inadequate or lack of skill among the youths, lack of awareness on the dangers of drug use and abuse, decaying moral values, broken homes due to divorce and above all inadequate effective crime prevention measure, such as effective partnership, especially among the stakeholders in the area (IDI with FUK student, 5/5/17).

Another key informant during the IDI said:

I felt the causes of drug abuse are the loss of moral values, especially among the youths and disobedience to parents, guidance and law of the society. Many teenagers and youths act based on friends' advice more than that of their parents that is the more reason they get into trouble. In fact there is something wrong with this generation (IDI with Mai Angwa,10/5/17).

Table 3: Effects of Substance Abuse among Adolescents

Effects	SA	A	D	SD	U	Total
Increase in youth crime	59(49.2)	32(26.7)	16(13.3)	13(10.8)	0(0)	120 (100)
Poor performance	43(35.8)	39 (32.5)	16(13.3)	19(15.8)	3(2.5)	120 (100)
Increase in school drop-out	23 19.3)	58 (48.3)	21(17.5)	18(15.0)	0(0)	120 (100)
Increase in diseases	32(26.7)	51 (42.5)	17(14.2)	14(11.7)	6(5.0)	120 (100)
Mental disability and /or disorder	29(24.2)	55 (45.8)	24(20.0)	12(10.0)	0(0)	120 (100)
Decaying moral values	21(17.5)	34 (28.4)	53(44.2)	12(10.0)	0(0)	120 (100)
Increase in poverty due to loss of job	17(14.2)	24 (20.0)	32(26.7)	38(31.7)	9 (7.5)	120 (100)
Accidents which lead to injuries or death	49(40.8)	37 (30.8)	19(15.8)	15(12.5)	0(0)	120 (100)

**Figures in parentheses represent percentages.*

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 3 shows the results of the effects of substance abuse among adolescents. It indicates that 26.7% of the respondents agreed and 49.2% strongly agreed that substance abuse among adolescents result to increase in youth crime, while 13.3% disagreed and 10.8% strongly disagreed, respectively. The table shows that 32.5% agreed and 35.8% strongly agreed that substance abuse results to poor performance while 13.3% disagreed and 15.8% strongly disagreed; and 48.3% agreed and 19.3% strongly agreed that substance abuse results to increase in school drop-out, while 17.5% disagreed and 15.0% strongly disagreed, respectively. It shows that 42.5% agreed and 26.7% strongly agreed that substance abuse results to increase in diseases, while 14.2% disagreed and 11.7% strongly disagreed; and 45.8% agreed and 24.2% strongly agreed that substance abuse results to mental disability and/or disorder, while 20.0% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed, respectively. It also shows that 28.4% agreed and 17.5% strongly agreed that substance

abuse results to decaying moral values, while 44.2% disagreed and 10.0% strongly disagreed; and 20.0% agreed and 14.2% strongly agreed that substance abuse results to increase in poverty due to loss of job, while 26.7% disagreed and 31.7% strongly disagreed, respectively. Furthermore, the table indicates that 30.8% agreed and 40.8% strongly agreed that substance abuse results to accidents which led to injuries or death, while 15.8% disagreed and 12.5% strongly disagreed, respectively. A key informant during the in-depth interview said:

One of the major effects of substance abuse is increase in youth crime. Most criminals are under the influence of drugs. The drugs or substances they abuse gave them the false impression that they will not be caught, thereby engage in criminal acts. This is because, when a potential criminal knows that he/she will be caught, he/she may be deterred (IDI with Police officer, 8/6/17).

Another key informant during the IDI said:

Drug abuse has effect on the individuals, who engage in the act and the society he/she lives. Thus, it poses a threat to life, health, dignity and prosperity of all individuals, who engage in the act and impedes the development of society (IDI with a youth leader, 15/6/17).

A student interviewed during the IDI opined:

...the effects of substance abuse among youths, who constitute a larger percentage of the entire population of students in Federal University, Kashere located in the study area are so enormous. Substance abuse influences the low academic attainment and/or even lead to the termination of a student's entire academic pursuit (IDI with FUK student, 12/6/17).

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that majority of the youths are not aware of the dangers associated with substance abuse and that unemployment, frustration and emotional stress are not the major factors influencing substance abuse in the study area. However, the findings revealed that peer influence, lack of parental care, broken homes, frustration and emotional stress are the major causes of substance abuse among the youths in Kashere town. Many adolescents engage in substance abuse as a result of the influence of their associates, who are already involved in the act. This is supported by Bandura and Walter Social Learning Theory and Sutherland and Cressey Differential Association Theory that behaviour is learned and personality can be explained in terms of aggregate effects of series of learning experiences, especially among close associates. Lack of parental care probably due to broken homes as a result of divorce or separation led to frustration and emotional stress which tend to cause substance abuse. The research findings revealed that substance abuse has enormous effects on individuals, group or society. As individuals or group, substance abuse results to poor performance, such as low working capacity and academic output or even school drop-out, increase in diseases, mental disability or disorder

and accident which lead to injuries or death, thus hampering the overall development of the society. This finding is in line with Okorodudu and Okorodudu (2004), Fayombo and Aremu (2000) and Odejide (1997) position that substance abuse impedes the overall development of any society, as it threatens the life, health, education, dignity and prosperity of all individuals and groups.

Conclusion

Substance abuse is not only a public health problem but also a predisposing factor for criminal activities. The findings of the study revealed that the inability of parents to control their children is one of the contributing factors to substance abuse. Children without proper home care easily fall victims to peer-pressure. In most cases, substance abuse emanates from an array of psycho-social reasons; for example peer-pressure, depression, frustration and sometimes to build-up self-esteem. Thus, one can infer that substance abuse has become an issue of concern in Kashere community. It has become a wide-spread social phenomenon affecting all segments of the community, as it leads to poor academic performance, poor health status, changes in brain structures and increased risk of death. Therefore, the fight against its menace in Kashere town should be taken seriously and considered necessary to sufficiently address the root of other criminal activities in the community. Thus, all hands must be on deck to stem the tide of substance abuse and general insecurity not only in Kashere community but in Nigeria as a whole.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations of the study:

1. Government through her agencies, such as the police, NDLEA, etc. should partner with informal security group (vigilante) and community leaders including *Masu Angwa*, youth leaders, leaders of NURTW and *Okada* Riders Association as well as students to organize sensitization programmes to create awareness on the dangers of substance abuse, especially among youths, who are said to be the future leaders of any society. The members of informal security groups and community leaders know more about the security situation in the study area, as they are residents of the area and may provide information to security agencies if encouraged.
2. The security agencies should encourage the members of informal security groups and the community leaders to provide information on crime, such as substance abuse. The encouragement could be in form of keeping the information provided secret and not divulging the source of such information to the criminals.
3. There should be joint patrol between the police and the NDLEA officials in the study area to fetch out the drug addicts thereby reducing the rate of crime in the area since substance abuse results to increase in crime, especially among youths.
4. A similar study should be conducted in the study area and/or other neighbouring communities in the state in order to fill the information gap that broken homes due to prevailing divorce results to frustration and emotional stress which is one of the major predisposing factors of substance abuse, especially among teenagers and adolescents in the study area so as to curtail the trend.

5. Further research also should be conducted to investigate the decaying moral values which influence substance abuse and as a predisposing factor of other criminal activities among the youths not only in the study area but in Nigeria as a whole.

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