

The Effects of Drug Abuse in North-East Senatorial District of Jigawa State, Nigeria: A Case Report

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ABSTRACT

Drug abuse is a global phenomenon which countries are battling with. Abuse of narcotic substances and their prevalence led to morbidity and mortality among the users. The present study investigates the effects of drug abuse on the physical and mental health of the users taking the North-East Zone of Jigawa State, Nigeria as the study area, the health consequences, and the recent trend of substance abuse among youth are outlined. A case report was employed to collect qualitative and quantitative data from 5 drug addicts who were randomly selected and acquired the data through in-depth interviews. The present study reveals the rampant usage of prescription drugs in the area and the local substances that are not as well familiar as drugs. Majority of the drug addicts are male, young and married and have low education and income levels their peers and environment influenced them and they were ignorant about the consequences of drug abuse. They use drugs especially Tramadol for energy booting. Some of the health issues the respondents were affected with, were mental and physical health problems Tramadol, Diazepam, Exzol and Marijuana are the most commonly abused drugs in the area. Further studies should be conducted to address the unattended areas the study was unable to cover.

KEYWORDS: *Drug abuse, Illicit, Mental health, Physical health, Marijuana, Tramadol*

Background

The incidence of drug abuse among youth has become a universal social problem. The frequent intake of drugs leads to many health issues both physical and mental. Physical health impairments such as liver disorders, inability to take care of one's physical health, and cardiovascular diseases are common among drug addicts. Impairments such as 'neuropsychological' problems such as "problems with decision making, reasoning, retentivity to problems with keeping a job" are some of the common mental health problems drug addicts are affected with (Fernandez-Serrano et al, 2009). Governments of various nationals of the world focus their attention only on physical health issues. Most countries' budgetary allocations were spent on physical health issues neglecting mental health. In an actual sense, Physical and Mental health are mutually exclusive, other words physical and mental health are inseparable, unfortunately, little or no attention is given to mental health; therefore, a minute amount is allocated to mental health in their annual budgetary allocations. The issue concerning general health care to the persons affected with mental health problems was neglected. Programs such as immunisations are only given to the children of physically fit individuals to the detriment of mentally sick children.

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The problem of non-inclusion of some local substances such as *Zakami*, Dollop solution and new substances such as Exol among the dangerous and illicit drugs in the country's law as well as the drug trafficking offences are among the triggering factor that hinders the fight against the illicit drugs use and abuse in Nigeria. Another issue is the case of light sentencing by the Nigerian courts.

According to the World Drug Report (2014), the incidence of drug abuse in developed countries varies from one country to another. It is of varying degree in European countries for instance; In

Greece, it is approximately 3 per cent and it is 9 per cent in the United Kingdom per every 1,000 persons aged between 15-64 years. The report further stated that the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain recorded a higher rate while countries such as Greece, Germany and Hungary recorded a low incidence of drug abuse. Roughly 3 per cent of US citizens' equivalent to 7 million people aged 12 years and above are suffering from drug dependency Syndrome. The report rated cannabis as the most widely abused substance; followed by opioid analgesics and cocaine. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2014), approximately 3 per cent of the Canadian population 15 years and above have suffered from either physical, psychological or social problems due to drug abuse (UNODC, 2014).

A research carried out in Nagaland, India by the Nagaland State Aids Control Society (NSACS), 1998-2005 reveals most of the persons who are suffering from health issues such as Tuberculosis, Renal failure, Hepatitis, HIV/AIDS, and other deadly diseases leading to the death of the victims prematurely are narcotics drugs and alcohol-dependent persons. The reports further narrated that a significant number of substance abusers are injection-type users and are prone to be infected with HIV/AIDS. "The reoccurrence median rate is roughly 1.22 per cent in the year 2006 in Nagaland. Approximately 40,000 present and past drug addicts in Nagaland suffered from such discrimination and a certain kind of stigma".

In Sub-Saharan African nations, Drug abuse is rampant despite the risks and danger the menace is associated with such as various types of crimes, social unrest and suicide (Nsimba, 2010). A study in South Africa shows a similarity between the mean ages of the youth substance abusers, the first-time drug abusers which is 12 years of age with those of European countries (Karen Lesly, 2008). In another study conducted by Pluddermann, Parry & Bhana, (2007) in de-addiction centres of three provinces of, Northern Cape, North West and Free State in South Africa, Alcohol was found to be the most frequently abused substance among the

inmates. A study carried out in Cape Town the capital of Western Cape Province discovered that over 10 per cent of adolescents aged 11 to 17 years were found to take alcohol over two times.

According to the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) report (2012), Nigeria is rated number one in drugs-related menace from addiction to trafficking among the West African States. Roughly 50 per cent of African drug barons detained in foreign countries in 2011 were Nigerians. The press release by the National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) Nigeria listed number one on the issue of both illicit drug trafficking and addiction in West Africa. The number of substance abusers is geometrically increasing in Nigeria, especially in the Northern Region which has become an issue of serious concern (Dangana et al., 2016). A study carried out by NDLEA (2018) on the issue of drug abuse in the Northern Region has rated Kano and Jigawa States as having the highest number of substance abusers in the country. In a related study by the Nigeria Health Watch (2018), revealed that over 3 million bottles of codeine syrup were consumed daily in these States. The present study investigates the issues related to substance abuse in people of the North-East Senatorial District of Jigawa State (Hadejia emirate). Further research is recommended to study the rates and effects of the reoccurrence of substance misuse in the area to address the unattended problems which this study is unable to cover.

Materials and Methods

A Case Study method is employed as an effective research methodology (methods of data collection) to gain detailed knowledge on the issue of the reoccurrences of substance misuse in the Northeast zone of Jigawa State, a case study method was selected. Case study research is “an empirical study that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident” (Yin, 2009:18). A case study was conducted in two places, first was the

communities purposively selected from the 3 local governments’ areas of Northeast Senatorial Zone of Jigawa State (Hadejia emirate) and second Hadejia Medium Security Prison /correctional centre. The face-to-face interviews were conducted between December 2018 to April 2019. Five respondents were selected as a case study, three respondents were recruited from three communities; Gatafa (Auyo Local Govt), Hadejia out-sketch (Malamadori Local Govt) and Matarar Ganji (Kirikasamma Local Govt) and the remaining two were recruited from the inmates of Medium Security Correctional Centre Hadejia.

Results

Case Study I

Mutari is a 26-year-old farmer and a manual borehole driller, married with children, and has only attended Qur’anic school, he has no Western education and therefore, can only read and write in Arabic numeric. He spent almost a decade abusing illicit drugs and what predisposes him to take drugs is curiosity, he wants to test and discover what people feel when they abuse drugs. He wants to get more money in addition to what he obtained from his farm after harvest, as such, he joins a group of manual borehole drillers who are mostly immigrants from the neighbouring Niger Republic. Prior to his engagement with the foreigners to drill boreholes some of the drugs Mutari abused were cigarettes, Exzol and marijuana. As he started the manual borehole drilling business, his colleagues introduced Tramadol tablets to him. They encourage him to try it, that it would heal all distress, discomfort and fatigue a person will encounter as a result of excessive labour. At the initial stage he had no interest in it, but later, took a little of it to fill the sensation associated with it. Gradually, as he started tasting it, he became addicted to Tramadol to the extent that he could not even work if he did not take it.

He narrated a shocking true-life story regarding the harmful side of tramadol abuse, which led to the death of his closest friend Aminu who lives in the neighbouring village. The two friends

engaged themselves in a competition who could take 10-15 tablets of tramadol of 400mg each without being hampered. they took 4000-6000 mg and they eventually collapsed and both of them became unconscious. Mutari was lucky that he could breathe slowly but Aminu could not. The two friends remain in this condition for almost 12 hours without convalescing. Mutari narrated that by the time he woke up, he was told that his friend died and he was buried according to Islamic injunction. He then quickly rushed to the neighbouring village and went to his friend's Aminu family house. Unfortunately, he met a large number of people symbolising that something is wrong in the village. Among the people he met was the village chief Imam who told Mutari that his friend Aminu died and was buried. Mutari quickly responded that Aminu was alive, shouting Aminu was *alive – he was buried alive- he was buried alive*. "He lost consciousness because of a Tramadol overdose". The Chief Imam together with the elders of the deceased family rushed to the graveyard and dug the grave. Unfortunately, he died but the piece of close his body was wrapped with was found squeezed and scattered, which was an indication that he might likely wake up but could not withstand the situation as there was no oxygen to breathe, and he eventually died.

Islamically, a dead person will quickly be buried without delay whenever he or she is confirmed to have died. Since Aminu's death, Mutari developed a mental illness. His case was referred to a traditional health healer for treatment on several occasions. He was depressed. This scenario predisposed him to take more illicit drugs despite the death of his friend. There is a sign of schizophrenia (i.e. disorganised speech and also, he used to isolate himself from the other people in the village) in him.

Case Study II

Halima is 30 years old, is a food seller, a divorcee and a primary school dropout. She earned 15,000 Naira a month (less than half a dollar far month). A broken home is the main reason that

predisposes her to start smoking cigarettes and marijuana at the tender ages of 15 and 18 years respectively. As an adult, she takes different types of drugs such as Exol, injection, marijuana, Tramadol and cigarettes. Her Peers influenced her as she lacks parental control and depression is what predisposes her to use illicit substance. She got married at a tender age also and as a result of her habits (drug abuse) she was divorced, when divorced she found it difficult to cope with the living situation. Her parent died; therefore, she was the only person left in the family because other family members rejected her since she was divorced. He therefore remains in a persistent depressed mode. In order to overcome and ease her situation, she was advised to take other drugs she then started using Tramadol and an injection type of drug for relief purposes. She was once infected with Tuberculosis due to excessive intake of tobacco and marijuana and subsequently was treated with the 9-month vaccine at Tuberculosis (TB) and Leprosy Referral Hospital, Hadejia. She later got infected with another health problem HIV/AIDS through intravenous injection. After she was divorced; getting daily food to eat became difficult for her. Whenever she gets some money, she would be contemplating whether to buy drugs or food. In many instances, she chooses to get drugs because she is seriously addicted to them. This lifestyle coupled with cigarettes made her infected with tuberculosis but she was luckily treated as the TB and Leprosy diseases treatments are free, the Doctor strongly warned her to stop drug abuse, especially cigarette and Indian-hemp. She initially abided by the doctor's warning/advice and stopped using any substances but later, she resorted to using the injection type, dollop solution inhalants and tramadol as substitutes for the initial substances she was using before. The injection-type drugs she was using were between her and Ilu (a male drug addict) they injected one another using the same syringe and after some days she started feeling feverish and headache, as she visited the doctor and went for HIV/AIDS screening, she was found HIV positive.

Case Study III

Ibrahim is 35 years old farmer and fish seller, married with 5 children. He has only attended Qur'anic School but has not attended any Western education, therefore, can only read and write in Arabic numeric. He earned enough money from his two businesses, between ₦300,000 to ₦500,000 monthly (\$188- \$313). Ibrahim has been taking Tramadol tablets and cola nuts for over a decade. He resorted to abusing tramadol to boost his energy during farm cultivation work as he was told that tramadol encourages more work on the farm; they were ill-advised by the drug sellers *that Tramadol was a magical drug that could make people happy, stronger and more powerful*. It is used to enhance the energy of both the farmers and those whose job is hard labour. Ibrahim has been carried away by the amount of work done by his friends on their farms within a just day. They worked tirelessly throughout the day on their farms. He was once affected with anaemia and was transfused with bags of blood due to the overuse of tramadol tablets. He was also admitted to Jigawa State Psychiatric Hospital in Kazaure twice for drug-induced psychoses. He behaved vulgarly and decided to stop going to market and farm, he even started distributing his fish for free to the buyers, another problem he was unable to remember who he precisely owed.

Case Study IV

Hamisu is a 35-year-old farmer, from the neighbouring Kano State, a family man with a wife and 2 children. He is a diploma holder and is doing well with his farming business. Hamisu was imprisoned in the Hadejia Medium Security Correctional Centre. The offence committed is having raped the wife of his neighbour under drug influence and sentenced to life imprisonment by the Kano State High Court. He took multiple drugs, excess Tramadol, injection and inhalant at the same time and unconsciously broke into his neighbour's house and raped his wife. Hamisu had confessed to the offence committed during the interrogation. He also reaffirmed that the same when taken to court,

and that was the main reason for his verdict to live imprisonment. It is a law in Kano State Nigeria that whoever is found guilty of rape offence will be sentenced to life imprisonment. During the interview, he was found regretting what had happened to him and promised to stop the substance use forever if he is given another chance that is if he may be pardoned or considered for parole.

Case Study V

Yawale is a 38-year-old drug seller, a polygamous family man with two wives and 12 children. He sells and abuses Tramadol and marijuana and earns ₦600,000 to ₦700,000 monthly equivalent to (\$398- \$415). He attended a tertiary institution and obtained a diploma; therefore, he can read, write and speak English. He was arrested and sentenced to only 6 six months even though he was found guilty by a court of law. He narrated, that there are two things involved, first, how drugs came to his hand in large amounts, and second, the amount of money involved in the business. *Whoever is in the drug business, will never think about the risks involved in it because everybody likes money, even law enforcement agents most of them are part of us, either our customers or they are part of the substance abusers* He narrated. He also asserts that whenever he gets arrested, the same people will set him free. He narrated how the drugs come to their hands; firstly, through lorry drivers who transport goods from the southern part of Nigeria to the North, and secondly, from 'Igbo traders' 'Igbo' are people of southeastern Nigeria who speak Igbo language as their mother tongue, thirdly, through foreigners and lastly, through the law enforcement agents.

Discussion

Five case study reports were presented regarding the effects of drug abuse on the physical and mental health of the users. The study reported that most of the clients were males and of youth and had some problem related to their psyche age 25 to 35 which is within the youth age range stipulated by the African Charter. Chikezie and Ebuanyi, (2019)

study on youth Tramadol users in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria supported this claim. The clients were poly-drug users they used Valium, and marijuana apart from Tramadol. A similar finding from the previous studies conducted by (Goreishi, & Shajari, 2013:70, Onyecho, et al. 2018, National Bureau of Statistics, 2018 & Albermany, 2019). Goreishi & Shajari (2013) supported this finding, they conducted a study in three Iranian Universities in the Zanjan region, and their findings revealed that “hookah, cigarette, codeine, ibuprofen, alcohol, diazepam, tramadol, cannabis, opium, grass, heroin, crack, X pill, morphine, marijuana and Librium”, were the widely abused drugs among these university students. A related study conducted in Borno State categorised Tramadol, Valium, marijuana and cigarettes as the most widely abused substance in the state capital (Maiduguri metropolitan). “Tramadol was ranked by 56 per cent of participants as the most problematic if cessation occurred, followed by cannabis 46 per cent, cigarette 38 per cent, alcohol 24 per cent, codeine 17 per cent and lastly Rohypnol 11 per cent” (Onyecho, et al., 2018:1). A related study conducted in the North-West Zone of Nigeria by the National Bureau of Statistics (2018) reported: “the use of cannabis and non-medical use of opioids (tramadol, codeine, morphine) and cough syrups (containing codeine or dextromethorphan) is also the most common in this zone”. With regards to respondents’ reasons for abusing drugs, especially tramadol, it is noticed that there was a general misconception about the actual medical usage of most tramadol in the area of study. The general belief of the people from this area was that the drug was just an energy booster. This perception and belief are in line with the Terry-McElrath et al., (2011) finding in research conducted among American youth reason for taking psychoactive drugs as energy-busting substances. It is also in line with a study carried out by Peprah et al (2020) in the cities of Kumasi and Accra in Ghana, the studies also revealed the frequent usage of tramadol tablets for non-medical purposes. They mostly use the drugs for energy busting and as sexual enhancement. It is noticed that the

respondents are taking the drugs not because they are willing to do so but rather due to many reasons, therefore, the majority of them are into the habit under duress. This is because, from the available data, it is clear that the respondents’ responses show their willingness to stop substance abuse. Four out of the five respondents declared their intention to stop abusing drugs. This finding is supported by studies by Saxena et al. (2010) in a high school in the Dehradun district of Uttarakhand State, India. The study narrated that 80.2% of drug abusers declare their interest in stopping their substance misuse habit. Another study conducted by Abhay, e, al. (2008) in Mumbai city also reveals the same per cent of adolescents with substance abuse habits expressed their willingness to quit.

The finding further reveals the frequent intake of the drugs led to the prevalence of both morbidity and mortality among the users. Cardiac arrest, hepatitis and neurological problems were discovered to be the most common health problems associated with substance abuse persons in this study. The above finding is in tandem with Schulte & Hser, (2013) and De Hert, M., et al. (2011). Both their findings revealed that prolonged and persistent use of substances such as marijuana, cigarettes, and alcohol and overdose of prescription drugs led to various health defects in adolescence period, adulthood and older age. The main mental disorders suffered by the drug addicts in this study were depression, neurosis, psychosis, anxiety reaction and schizophrenia. This finding is supported by the National Policy for Mental Health Services Delivery (2013) the report revealed that like other parts of the world, the prevalence of mental health problems is frequent in Nigeria. It is among the major causes of incapacitation and disabilities, death, poverty and lost economic productivity. Drug addicts stand a higher risk of losing their lives as seen in case report 1 where the overdose of Tramadol tablets led to the death of the person. This is supported by a report by the World Health Organization in 2014 which stated that excessive use of Tramadol when it is taken in large dosages may affect the work of the central nervous system

the proper functioning of body organs like the heart and decrease breathing and would subsequently result to loss of consciousness, coma, and potentially even death. The study is conducted in a particular zone of a state and only five substance abusers' cases were reported which would be sufficient to generalise the findings to the entire country. More study needs to be carried out on the issues of drug abuse in Jigawa State and Nigeria in general.

Conclusion

The abuse of narcotic substances for non-medical use is at an alarming rate in the area of study. Most of the drugs abused are prescription drugs and Tramadol is the most widely abused substance followed by cannabis, Exzol and diazepam. five case studies clearly explained the prevalence of drug use and abuse in the Hadejia zone. Based on the above case studies we can easily understand the level of drug menace in Jigawa State and the North-East Zone (Hadejia senatorial zone) in particular. Ignorance of the danger of drug abuse, peer group influence, light sentencing by the High Court Judges, the activities of some human rights organisations, and endemic, corrupt practices among law enforcement agents are among the contributing factors that lead to drug abuse and its danger to the health and in some instances result in the death of the user. Still, much work is needed to understand the efficacy of drug abuse laws on the individual's drug users and society in general. More attention should be given to where these illegal drugs come from and more capital punishment should be given to the drug dealers. Further research is recommended to address the unattended cases of drug abuse in the areas of study and Nigeria in general.

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