

## HEALTH IMPLICATIONS OF DRUG ADDICTION AND SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA: THE WAY FORWARD

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### Abstract

*Drug addiction is a devastating condition that affects the brain and behavior of the users. It leads to inability to control the use of a legal or illegal drug or medication. This is characterised by compulsive, or uncontrollable drug seeking and use despite harmful consequences and changes, which can be long lasting. These changes in the brain can lead to the harmful behaviors seen in individuals who use drugs that could rather render them unproductive and as treats to security stability for national development. Drug addiction as a relapsing disease has the capacity of causing the user to always want to return to drug use after attempts to stop. Among the social and medical ills of the twentieth century militating against attaining sustainable development of any country, substance abuse ranks as one of the most devastating. Drug problem and insecurity today is a major global concern including Nigeria. Security is freedom from, or resilience against, potential harm or other unwanted coercive change caused by others. Beneficiaries technically referents of security may be of persons and social groups, objects and institutions, ecosystems or any other entity or phenomenon vulnerable to unwanted change by its environment. Drug addicts have the tendency to ferment violence at any given time. Hence, the aim of this study was to review the health implications of drugs addiction and security challenges in Nigeria, channeling a way forward. The study considered an overview of drug addiction, causes of drug abuse, types and signs of drug addiction, security challenges in Nigeria, drug addiction and its effect in attaining sustainable development and the health implications of drug addiction and treatment. Suggestions were enumerated on the adverse effect of the irrational use of drugs and how the menace can be curbed.*

**Key words:** Drug, drug use, drug abuse, drug addiction, mental health, security challenges

### Introduction

The place of youths in the development of any nation cannot be undermined nor overemphasised. Uzornoh (2000) opined that over time, it has been noticed that addiction is common among

these category of people which can seriously interfere with the peace of daily life expectations. Addiction is a chronic dysfunction of the brain system that involves reward, motivation, and memory. It is about the way the body craves a

substance or behavior, especially if it causes a compulsive or obsessive pursuit of reward and lack of concern over consequences. In agreement to the submission of Uzornoh (2000), Makinde (2005) added that someone experiencing an addiction will be unable to stay away from the substance or stop the addictive behavior, display a lack of self-control, have an increased desire for the substance, dismiss how behavior may be causing problems and lack an emotional response. It also causes serious damage to families, relationships, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods and national security. People experiencing addiction are also prone to cycles of relapse and remission, this means they may cycle between intense and mild use. It can lead to permanent health complications and serious consequences like bankruptcy. It is important for anyone who is experiencing addiction to seek help for confidential assistance and treatments that includes guidance on prevention, mental and substance use disorders. The most well-known and serious addiction is to drugs and alcohol. Of the people with a drug addiction, more than two-thirds also abuse alcohol. However, some habits or social behaviors look like addiction, but in the case of an addiction, the addict typically reacts negatively when reward is denied. For example, someone addicted to coffee

can experience physical and psychological withdrawal symptoms such as severe headaches and irritability. (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services SAMHS, 2018).

A report of the first ever survey on drug use in Nigeria has given an insight into how deep rooted the drug problem is. According to the survey supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the European Union UNODC (2017), about 14.3 million Nigerians, representing about 14.4% of the population of the country between the ages of 15 and 64, were said to have abused drugs in the past three year. This is very worrisome because of the deleterious effects of drug or substance abuse on both the abuser and the security treats to national development. (Punch newspaper, 2019).

### **Overview of drug addiction**

The findings of Ngbale (2007) revealed that drug addiction is also called substance use disorder, it is a disease that affects the brain and behavior and leads to an inability to control the substance. Substances such as alcohol, marijuana and nicotine also are considered drugs. When the user is addicted, despite the harm it caused by its use, the addict finds it very difficult to stop. It can start with experimental use of a recreational drug in social situations, and, for some people, the

drug use becomes more frequent. For others, particularly with opioids, drug addiction begins with exposure to prescribed medications, or receiving medications from a friend or relative who has been prescribed the medication. Uzornoh (2000) maintained that drugs are sensitive substances that should not be toyed with under any circumstance, other health experts maintain that any medicine in the wrong hands is a potential poison. In agreement to the submission of Uzornoh (2000), Fareo (2012) stated that unfortunately that is usually the case among users in Nigerian. Anyone can lay hands on any drugs so far the where about of such drug is known. Worried by the unregulated access to drugs, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA 2018) raised alarm over the unusual demand for some classes of prescription drugs by youths in the country. It was observed that more young people are abusing codeine and tramadol. These drugs are concocted to get high. The worst is the abuse of tramadol which is supposed to be a prescription drug. These consumers ask for cough syrups that contain codeine and when the demand are restrained, the users go to illegal drug stores in the neighborhood to buy it. Tramadol is an opioid like analgesic that works on the central nervous system. It puts the brain to sleep so that its ingredients can relieve pain. It is actually meant to be a pain relief

medication but rapist, kidnappers and bandits put it in drinks to put their victims to sleep. Codeine is an opiate and it has some ingredients that ease the nerves which make people feel good and get high. Many have taken it and gone into coma (NDLEA, 2018). In agreement with the findings of NDLEA, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime UNODC (2017) world drug report stated that the world is battling with the abuse of synthetic drugs and psychoactive substances especially among youths who are still in their productive years. It was further stated that much work needed to be done to address the many harms inflicted by the increasing use of illicit drugs to health, sustainable national development, peace and security. It is also estimated that a minimum of 190,000 persons died prematurely due to the use of opioids, while 70% of national unrest has been linked to drug addicts.

### **Pattern of drug abuse**

In the views of Dewan (2014) drug addiction is a condition that comes in phases and in a process of use, misuse and abuse.

- **Early Phase:** In this phase, the addict is preoccupied with thoughts of drugs, always thinking about when to take drugs and how to buy drugs. When anyone talks about drugs, the addict feels guilty and moves away. The addict

does many irrational things while under the influence of drugs and later forgets all that was done.

- **Middle Phase:** At this stage, the addict keeps giving reasons for taking drugs or lies in defense to hide the habit. The addict may stop taking drugs for a period of time thinking it is not difficult to give up the habit.
- **Chronic Phase:** The addict keeps stocks of drugs because, being afraid to be without them. At this phase, the addict does not care anymore about what others think when it comes to drug use. The experiences of severe withdrawal symptoms becomes the order of the day. Violence, quarreling, unpleasantness and continuous threat to national security become a regular feature of the life of the addict and there on, the drug addict becomes a loner, thereby completely cutting away from anyone different.

### Causes of drug abuse

There are various factors that could be responsible for drug addiction. Fareo (2012) highlighted the following as the main causes of drug abuse

- **Experimental curiosity:** Curiosity to experiment the unknown facts about drugs thus motivates individuals into drug use. The first experience in drug abuse produces a state of arousal such

as happiness and pleasure which in turn motivate the users to continue.

- **Peer group influence:** Peer pressure plays a major role in influencing many youths into drug abuse. This is because peer pressure is a fact of teenage and youth life. Dependence on parents becomes less, while dependency and trust on partners in crime increases. These youths seek acceptance of other youths and in a bid to earn it, most of such youths are been influenced.
- **Criteria to belong:** some secret societies make the taking of hard drugs a major condition for initiation of new members. All over the place there are sponsored thugs going around as body guards for the influential in the society, these thugs live on hard drugs and are always ready to perpetrate evil or cause violence capable enough to put the community in commotion.
- **Lack of parental supervision:** Many parents have no time to supervise their children. Some parents have little or no interaction with family members, while others put pressure on children to pass exams or perform better in school. These phenomena initialise and increases drug abuse.
- **Personality problems due to socio-economic conditions:** individuals with personality problems arising from social conditions have been found to

abuse drugs. The social and economic status of most Nigerians is below average. Poverty is widespread, broken homes and unemployment is on the increase, therefore, many individuals roam the streets looking for employment or resort to begging, thereby being susceptible to enhancing security instability.

- **The need for energy to work for long hours:** The increasing economic deterioration that leads to poverty and disempowerment of the youth has driven many individuals to go all out in search of a means of earning something for contribution to family income. These set of people engage in hawking, bus conducting, head loading, scavenging, and serving in food canteens and so on and are prone to drug taking so as to gain more energy to work for long hours.
- **Availability of the drugs:** In some countries, the government enact laws and regulate policies to control the availability of such abused drugs for the gain of national development.
- **The need to prevent the occurrence of withdrawal symptoms:** If a drug is stopped, the user experiences what is termed withdrawal symptoms. Pain, anxiety, excessive sweating and shaking characterise such symptoms.

The inability of the drug user to tolerate the symptoms motivates continuity.

### **Types and signs of drug addiction**

America Center for Addiction (ACA 2010) and American Psychiatric Association (APA 2015) stipulated that most signs of addiction relate to impaired ability to maintain self-control of the individual. This includes changes that are social and health related, such as seeking out situations that encourage a substance or behavior with increased secrecy. Sobowale, (2014) classified the warning signs of drug addiction to look out for that is capable of affecting the health of the users as:

1. Physical warning signs of drug abuse: bloodshot eyes, pupils larger or smaller than usual, changes in appetite or sleep patterns, deterioration of physical appearance, runny nose or sniffing, sudden weight loss or weight gain, tremors, slurred speech, or impaired coordination and unusual odors on breath, body, or clothing
2. Behavioural warning signs of drug addiction: increased drug tolerance, the need to use more of the drug to experience the same effects one used to achieve with smaller amounts, using drugs to avoid or relieve withdrawal symptoms such as nausea, restlessness, insomnia, depression, sweating, shaking and anxiety and loss of control over drug use like using more than

intended and unable to stop. Life revolves around drug use such as always thinking of using, figuring how to get more, or recovering from use, abandoning enjoyable activities like hobbies, sports, and socializing to use drugs and continuing to use drugs regardless of negative consequences like blackouts, infections, mood swings, depression and paranoia.

3. Psychological warning signs of drug abuse: appearing fearful, anxious, or paranoid, with no reason, lack of motivation; appearing tired or spaced out, periods of unusual increased energy, nervousness, or instability. Sudden mood swings, increased irritability, or angry outbursts and unexplained change in personality or attitude

### **Security challenges in Nigeria**

Security is a fragile and significant issue which conveys different meanings to scholars, analysts, policy makers and organizations across the globe. Fundamentally, security has to do with the presence of peace, safety, gladness and the protection of human and physical resources or absence of crisis or threats to human dignity, all of which facilitate development and progress of any human society. Security, as a concept, has diverse dimensions. Buzan (1991) and Obasanjo

(1999) described security as an ambiguous and multidimensional concept in which military factors have attracted misappropriate attention. In line with the submissions of Buzan (1991), Rihannia (2000) opined that security has to do with the process connected with assuaging any kind of threat to people and their precious values. This is why Makinde (2005) asserts that security is about freedom from threat and ability of states to maintain independent identity and their functional integrity against forces of change, which they see as hostile while its bottom line is survival Bodunde, Alabi, & Afolabi (2014). From the foregoing, security is generally agreed to be about feeling of being safe from harm, fear, anxiety, oppression, danger, poverty, defense, protection and preservation of core values and threat to those values. Thus internal security could be seen as the freedom from or the absence of those tendencies, which could undermine internal cohesion, and the corporate existence of a country and its ability to maintain its vital institutions for the promotion of its core values and socio-political and economic objectives, as well as meet the legitimate aspirations of the people. The Commission on Human Security (CHS 2012) in one of its work defines human security as the ability to protect the vital core of all human lives in such a way that it enhances human

freedoms and human fulfillment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms that are the essence of life, protecting people from serious and persistent threats and situations, using processes that build on strengths and aspirations of the people, creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity. It is important to state that human security covers every area of human needs. This is why it serves as the basis of all forms and categories of security. Hubert (2018) and Ngbale (2007) gave the importance and assert that human security means safety of people from violent and non-violent threat. It is a condition of being characterised by freedom from pervasive threat to the rights and lives of people. Security as often said is the responsibility of all and sundry. Musonga (2013) posited that there are seven dimensions of security that could affect humans which include economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. Rihana (2000) opined that there are four major areas which security challenges are linked with drug addiction that the nation must tackle, they are:

**Boko Haram:** The militant Islamist group has destabilised the North-East of Nigeria.

Since 2009 the group killed tens of thousands of people and displaced millions more. About 2.5 million people fled their homes and towns, and the direct consequence of the conflict was that the North-East was plunged into a severe humanitarian crisis as of 2018, one of the worst in the world, which has left about 7.7 million people in need of humanitarian aid.

**Farmer-herder clashes:** The Middle Belt region of Nigeria has faced prolonged violent clashes between the predominantly Christian farmers and the mostly Muslim cattle herders. At the core of the conflicts are disputes over access and rights to land and water resources and rapid desertification which has changed the grazing patterns of cattle. These clashes are not necessarily new, but since 2015, the disputes have become more frequent and violent. In 2018 alone, more than 2,000 people were killed in such clashes more than the number killed in the past two years combined. The conflict now claims an estimated six times more than the Boko Haram crisis.

**Suicide attacks, armed robbery and kidnappings:** This has been very rampant in almost all Nigeria roads and community and have been carried out by some yet to be identified group of people.



**Niger-Delta:** The Niger Delta, the oil-producing core of Nigeria has for decades suffered from oil pollution which has led to serious health concerns and the loss of livelihoods and sources of food for locals. In the last decade, clashes between armed groups in the area and the security forces reached a very worrisome level in the country. Kidnappings were rife, and oil infrastructure destroyed at a phenomenal rate. In 2016, one of the most prominent armed groups in the region, the Niger Delta Avengers and other smaller groups, destroyed oil production infrastructure. One factor discovered to be common among the people responsible for various forms of violence and insecurity in Nigeria is drug use and alcoholism.

### **Health implications of drug addiction and treatment**

Drug use can have a wide range of short and long term, direct and indirect effects. From the findings of World Health Organisation (2017) these effects often depend on the specific drug or drugs used, how they are taken, how much is taken, the health of the consumer and other factors. Short term effects can range from changes in appetite, wakefulness, heart rate, blood pressure, and or mood to heart attack, stroke, psychosis, overdose, and even death. These health effects may occur after just one use. Longer term effects can

include heart or lung disease, cancer, mental illness, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, and others. Drug addiction is a brain disorder. Not everyone who uses drugs will become addicted, but for some, drug use can change how certain brain circuit work. These brain changes interfere with how people experience normal pleasures in life such as food and sex, ability to control stress level, decision making and ability to learn and remember. These changes make it much more difficult, having negative effects on life and inability to quit. It can affect nutrition, sleep, decision making and impulsivity, risk for trauma, violence, injury, and communicable diseases. Drug use can also affect the health of babies born to women who use drugs while pregnant.

### **Treatment of drug addiction**

Treatment of a drug addict can be effectively prevented, treated and managed by healthcare professionals in combination with family or peer support. However, the earlier the better (WHO, 2017 & United Nations International Children's Education Fund UNICEF, 2016).

Contrary to the views of WHO (2017 )and UNICEF (2016), Fareo (2012) stated that drug addiction can be treated but it takes lot of work and commitment from the care giver, it is not that easy. Since drug addiction is a behavioural challenge, people cannot simply stop using drugs for a few



days and be cured, most patients need long term or repeated care to stop using completely and recover. Addiction treatment must help the addict to stop using drugs, stay drug free and be productive in the family, at work, and in society. Based on other scientific research since 1970 in support with Fareo (2012) the following key principles should form the basis of any effective treatment program:

- no single treatment is right for everyone.
- people need to have quick access to treatment.
- effective treatment addresses all of the patient's needs, not just his or her drug use.
- staying in treatment long enough is critical.
- counseling and other behavioral therapies are the most commonly used forms of treatment.
- medications are often an important part of treatment, especially when combined with behavioral therapies.
- treatment plans must be reviewed often and modified to fit the changing needs of the patient.
- treatment should address other possible mental disorders.
- medically assisted detoxification is only the first stage of treatment.
- treatment doesn't need to be voluntary to be effective.
- drug use during treatment must be monitored continuously.
- treatment programs should test patients for HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B and C, tuberculosis, and other infectious diseases as well as teach about steps to be taken to reduce risk of these illnesses.

There are many options that have been successful in treating drug addiction as stated by Dewane (2014) which includes behavioral counseling, medication, medical devices and applications used to treat withdrawal symptoms or deliver skill training, evaluation and treatment for co-occurring mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, long term follow up to prevent relapse.

**Withdrawal:** Medications and devices can help suppress withdrawal symptoms during detoxification. Detoxification is not in itself treatment, but only the first step in the process. Patients who do not receive any further treatment after detoxification usually resume drug use. One study of treatment facilities found that medications were used in almost 80 percent of detoxifications (SAMHSA, 2018). In November 2017, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted a new indication to an electronic stimulation device, NSS-2 Bridge, for use in helping reduce opioid withdrawal symptoms. This

device is placed behind the ear and sends electrical pulses to stimulate certain brain nerves. Also, in May 2018, the FDA approved lofexidine, a non-opioid medicine designed to reduce opioid withdrawal symptoms.

**Relapse prevention:** Patients can use medications to help re-establish normal brain function and decrease cravings. Medications are available for treatment of opioid (heroin, prescription pain relievers), tobacco (nicotine), and alcohol addiction. Scientists are developing other medications to treat stimulant (cocaine, methamphetamine) and cannabis (marijuana) addiction. People who use more than one drug, which is very common, need treatment for all of the substances used.

**Behavioral therapies:** helps in modification of attitudes and behaviors related to drug use of the patient, it also increase healthy life skills and persist with other forms of treatment like medication. Patients can receive treatment in many different settings with various approaches such as Outpatient Behavioral Treatment (OBT), and this includes a wide variety of programs for patients who visit a behavioral health counselor on a regular schedule. Most of the programs involve individual or group drug counseling, or both. These programs typically offer forms of

behavioral therapy like: *cognitive behavioral therapy*: which helps patients recognize, avoid, and cope with the situations in which they are most likely to use drugs, *multidimensional family therapy*: this is developed for adolescents with drug abuse problems as well as their families which addresses a range of influences on their drug abuse patterns and is designed to improve overall family functioning, *motivational interviewing*: which makes the most of people's readiness to change their behavior and enter treatment and *motivational incentives* or contingency management: this uses a positive reinforcement to encourage abstinence from drugs.

**Inpatient or Residential Treatment:** can also be very effective, especially for those with more severe problems including co-occurring disorders. Licensed residential treatment facilities offer 24-hour structured and intensive care, including safe housing and medical attention. Residential treatment facilities may use a variety of therapeutic approaches, and they are generally aimed at helping the patient live a drug-free, crime-free lifestyle after treatment. Examples of residential treatment settings include:

➤ *Therapeutic communities*: which are highly structured programs in which patients remain at a residence, typically for 6 to 12 months. The entire

community, including treatment staff and those in recovery, act as key agents of change, influencing the patient's attitudes, understanding, and behaviors associated with drug use.

- *Shorter-term residential treatment* which typically focuses on detoxification as well as providing initial intensive counseling and preparation for treatment in a community-based setting.
- *Recovery housing* which provides supervised, short-term housing for patients, often following other types of inpatient or residential treatment. Recovery housing can help people make the transition to an independent life. For example, helping them learn how to manage finances or seek employment, as well as connecting them to support services in the community (Musonga, 2013).

### The way forward

Bodunde, Alabi and Afolabi (2014) is of the view that while it seems challenging to prevent anyone and everyone from using drugs, there *are* things that can be done to avoid drug abuse and addiction. Here are six ways forward against drug addiction and security challenges:

#### 1. Effectively deal with peer pressure.

The biggest reason individuals start using drugs is because of peer pressure. No one likes to be left out, they find themselves doing things they normally would not do, just to fit in. In these cases, the individual may find a better group of friends that will not pressure them into doing harmful things, or learn how to say no to vices. Parents should know the activities of their children and always pay attention to their whereabouts as well as set good example at home.

2. **Deal with life pressure.** People today are overworked and overwhelmed, and often feel like a good break or a reward is deserved, but in the end, drugs only make life *more* stressful and many often fail to recognize the health effects attached. To prevent using drugs as a reward, find other ways to handle stress and unwind. Take up exercising, read a good book, volunteer with the needy, and create something. Anything positive and relaxing helps take the mind off using drugs to relieve stress.

3. **Seek help for mental illness.** Mental illness and substance abuse often go simultaneously. Those with a mental illness may turn to drugs as a way to ease the pain. Those suffering from some form of mental illness, such as anxiety, depression or post-traumatic

stress disorder should seek the help of a trained professional for treatment before it leads to substance abuse.

4. **Examine the risk factors.** If one is aware of the biological, environmental and physical risk factors involved, one may likely overcome. A history of substance abuse in the family, living in a social setting that glorifies drug abuse and or family life that models drug abuse can be risk factors.
5. **Keep a well-balanced life.** People take up drugs when something in life is **not** working, or when the present and future seems not to be promising.
6. **Government intervention.** The Government should engage and adopt these three most important aspects on how to deal with Boko haram, farmer-herder clashes, suicide attacks, armed robbery, kidnappings, Niger-Delta: curtailing, managing the consequence of violence and dialogue. But in the event of failure of the above, particularly dialogue, government should apply and enforce diplomacy by other means to curb all their activities.

## Conclusion

This study has shown the health implications of drug addiction and security challenges in Nigeria. Drug abuse and drug addiction in Nigeria seems to be on the

increase with crime and insecurity being the other of the day.

## Recommendations

From the evaluation of this study, the following recommendations were made.

- The government should enact laws to regulate the sales and consumption of drugs from across the counter.
- Treatment and interventions should be appropriate for the development and rehabilitation stages of the users who are addicted and tailored to individual integration back to the system.
- The issue of security should not be left to the government alone as it concerns everyone
- Regular evaluation of the health implications of drug addiction should be undertaken, and the information obtained from the evaluation should be the basis for policy making.

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