

## **Consequences and Stages of Overcoming Substance Used Disorder (SUD) among Nigerian Adolescents and implication for Counselling.**

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### ***Abstract***

*Drug/substance abuse and addiction are some of the most frequently occurring disorders in adolescents, young adults and the general population. It continues to be major risk behaviour specifically among people, accompanied by physical, psychosocial and or mental health consequences. WHO (2014) regarded an adolescent as an individual in the age bracket of 10 years to 19 years , who is in a critical phase marked as a period of biological, social and psychological transition between childhood and adulthood. Major consequences and stages to follow in combating drug addict adolescents from bad acts of drug abuse and addict. The study recommended periodic Guidance and Counselling programs in worship places such as church and mosques as well as social gatherings to enlighten parents on the negative consequences of substance abused by adolescents on their health and its social vices.*

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**Key Words:** *Substance Use Disorder (SUD), Adolescent, Drug Abuse, Counselling*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Drug/substance abuse and addiction are some of the most frequently occurring disorders in adolescents, young adults and the general population. It continues to be major risk behaviour specifically among people, accompanied by physical, psychosocial and or mental health consequences. Consumption of illicit drugs and the use of psychoactive substances such as alcohol; inhalant solvents and other harmful pharmaceutical drugs have increased at an alarming rate over the years in the country (Nigeria Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA, 2008) United Nation Office of Drug Control (UNODC, 2018) report on drug use and health in Nigeria has estimated that, one in every five people who had abused substance in the past- year in the country is suffering from substance use disorder (SUD).

WHO (2014) regarded an adolescent as an individual in the age bracket of 10 years to 19 years, who is in a critical phase marked as a period of biological, social and psychological transition between childhood and adulthood. Sambo (2012) and Longbap & Momoh (2005) observed that substance abuse, like other forms of aggressive behaviours characterized during adolescents' period, for example, stealing, delinquency; antisocial behaviour and recklessness are among the ways in which adolescents react to tension created by home, school and community problems. These adolescents are ill-equipped to cope with the life crisis; they resort to substances abuse as a measure of solving their problems. Aminu (2023) and Mayo Clinic (2017) contributed that biological (genetic), psychological, experimentation and environmental factors such as peer group influence, broken family and lack of parental supervision play a significant role in causing adolescent to drug/substance abuse intake.

Counselling is aimed at assisting an individual to understand his/her potentials and work towards improving clients to be able to function and live effectively with others. Counselling also helps in rehabilitating members that might become maladjusted with stress and psychosis as a result of substance use disorder. It is against this background that this paper seeks to ex-ray consequences and stages of overcoming substance use disorder among adolescents and its implications to counselling.

## **THE CONCEPTS OF DRUG, DRUG ABUSE, ADDICTION AND ADDICTS**

The word drug according to Levin (2004), originates from the Dutch word drug, which means dry. This is because most of the early and traditional medicines are from dried leaves of plants and animal products. Human beings have been using drugs of one sort or another for thousands of years. The wine was used since from the time of the early Egyptians; narcotics from 4000 BC; and medicinal use of marijuana has been dated to 2737 BC in China. Meanwhile, during the American Civil War, morphine and opium were used freely, and wounded Veterans returned home with their kits of morphine and hypodermic needles.

Furthermore, according to Ray & Kasir (2004), drug can be defined as any substance, natural or artificial other than food that by its chemical composition alters structure or function in the living organism; while Oloyede (2002) sees drug abuse as the use of drugs/substances in a way that differs from generally approved medical and social practice. Drug addiction can be defined as drug demand behaviour of addict that lead to significant impairment of his/her physical, social and emotional well-being. However, Luxuryrehab.com (2017) sees an addict as

someone who is physically and psychologically dependent on a drug, and each time he/she fails to consume a hard drug he/she falls sick and becomes psychologically and physiologically disturbed.

### **SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER (SUD)/DRUG ADDICTION**

According to Columbia Encyclopedia (2016), drug addiction is also called substance use disorder (SUD), is a disease that affects a person's brain and behaviour and leads to an inability to control the use of a legal, illegal drug or medication. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2015) asserts that substance use disorders (SUD) occurs when the recurrent use of substances and/or drugs causes clinically and functionally significant impairment, such as health problems, disability, and failure to meet major responsibilities at place of work, school, or home.

Moreover, SAMHSA added that the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), no longer uses the terms drug abuse, substance abuse and substance dependence rather it refers to substance use disorders (SUD). Substance use disorder is defined according to DSM-5 as 'mild, moderate, or severe' to indicate the level of severity, which is determined by the number of diagnostic criteria met by an individual. Hartney (2011) cited in NIDA (2018) reports that the DSM-V recognizes substance-related disorders resulting from the use of 10 separate classes of drugs: alcohol; caffeine; cannabis; hallucinogens (phencyclidine or similarly acting arylcyclohexylamines, and other hallucinogens, such as LSD); inhalants; opioids; sedatives, hypnotics or anxiolytics; stimulants (including amphetamine-type substances, cocaine, and other stimulants); tobacco; and other or unknown substances.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF SUBSTANCE USED DISORDER**

Sambo (2008) believed that chronic use of substances can cause serious and sometimes irreversible damage to peoples' physical and psychological development. Lauren in Luxeryrehab, com (2017), Sambo (2012) and Saleh, (2019) identified three major adverse consequences of substance use disorder, namely, physical, psychological, and socioeconomic:

#### **Physical consequence**

Some of the effects of substances include damage to vital organs like the brain, liver, and pancreas, hypertension, chronic cough, and above all some research has shown that HIV infection associated with drug addiction is becoming a significant socio-pathological problem in Nigeria (Sambo 2012). Injuries due to accidents such as car accidents, physical disabilities and diseases, and the effects of possible overdoses are among the health-related consequences of drug abuse. The significant number of deaths from road accidents has also been traced to the act of persons under the influence of drugs (Adamson, Ogunlesi, Morakinyo, Akinhanmi & Onifade, 2015). Most youth involved in alcohol and other drugs face an increased risk of death through suicide, homicide, accident, and illness. Drug addiction causes irregular heartbeat, high blood pressure, respiratory failure, nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain as well as liver overexertion, seizures and strokes, and cardiovascular conditions, including heart attacks and collapsed veins.

#### **Psychological consequences**

Drug abuse leads to depression (state of being in low spirit), anxiety, dementia (loss of memory), hallucination (hearing or seeing an image when this is not real), moodiness, and

aggressiveness leading to the degeneration of the individual. Many pieces of research attest that cognitive and behavioural problems experienced by alcohol- and drug-abusing adolescents may interfere with their academic performance and present obstacles to learning. Such individual with these characteristics is a waste to themselves and society. Other psychological consequences on the individual include insomnia, amnesia (acute loss of memory) inability to control emotions, euphoria, restlessness, panic attacks, and increased rate of mental illness. Sambo (2012) added that chronic use of substances could cause serious and sometimes irreversible damage to people's physical and psychological development.

### **Socio-economic consequences**

Socio-economically, the consequences of drug abuse to individuals and the nation at large are quite serious. The number of youth addicts roaming on the streets affects the economy negatively because of low productivity and shortage of efficient workforce. Other damaging consequences on an addict's social and economic well-being include loss of employment relationships, loss of incarceration, financial trouble, homelessness, and risky sexual behavior. Lauren in Luxeryrehab, com (2017) reports that when people are abusing substances, they may spend time with others who have similar habits. They may hang out with a new group of people who may encourage unhealthy habits. Public safety is at risk, as drug addiction is leading to the incitement of both sexes to prostitution and criminal behaviour.

Narconon.org (2018) and Saleh (2019) are of the view that most of the violence recorded in various communities in Nigeria leading to blood shading, arson, rape, and stealing has a link with drug abuse. Homelessness, violence, riot in schools, arm robbery, kidnapping, and assassination have been linked with drug abuse. Legal problems are common for drug addicts and can stem from buying or possessing illegal drugs and spending money to support drug use takes away money from other needs, which could lead to debt and illegal or unethical behaviours.

### **STAGES OF OVERCOMING SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER**

There are four main stages in the model of overcoming addiction; they are pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, and action. Additional stages of maintenance and relapse are sometimes included. These stages can be represented as a cycle and it is suggested that people go through these stages in sequence. The sequential model provides a way of understanding the process of change and gives a structure to how changes in addictive behaviours can be secured. (Hartney, 2011& CRC Health, 2018).

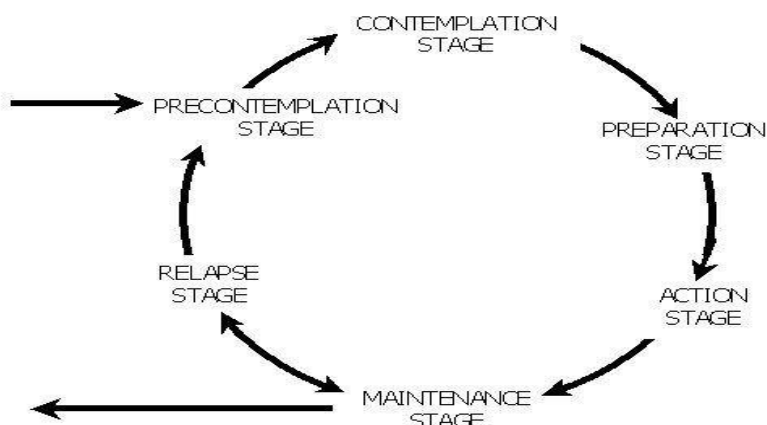


Fig 1: Six Stages of Overcoming Addiction (Hartney. 2011)

**Pre-contemplation stage:** People in the pre-contemplation stage do not consider their behaviour to be a problem because they have not yet experienced any negative consequences of their behaviour. This may be because of denial about the negativity or severity of the consequences they have experienced. At this stage, the addicts usually experience their addictive behaviour as a positive or pleasant experience. This stage is a period of transition from mere awareness of the problem to actual acceptance that action is needed. This is a moment when an addict shifts from denial to a willingness and makes a change

**Contemplation stage:** Contemplation specifically refers to the stage at which the person engaging in the addictive behaviour begins to think about changing, cutting down, moderating, or quitting the addictive behaviour. At this particular moment, the addicts are moving toward gaining potential information and insights into the process of drug addiction recovery. Therefore, people at the contemplation stage are generally more open to receiving information about the possible consequences of their addictive behaviour. They may be open to learning about different strategies for controlling addictive behaviour. The contemplation stage concludes with the decision to change addictive behaviour.

**Preparation stage:** The preparation stage means a person has moved forward to planning and preparing for carrying out changes they contemplated with drug addictions. The kind of change to be made; how to make the change; getting rid of triggers and putting support in place should be taken into consideration at the preparatory stage. Once the necessary preparations have been made, a person is typically ready to move on to the action stage. This third stage is often when some addicts decide to commence an addiction treatment program. Therefore, the recovery efforts begin at this stage with moderation and abstinence

**Action stage:** This is the stage at which change of behaviour – starts occurring. The action stage is typically stressful, but with good preparation, it can also be an exciting time that gives way to new options. Some of the most important steps taken during this stage are developing new coping skills and healthy habits and rebuilding damaged relationships. The action stage starts in a detoxification or treatment center, where there are trained professionals on-site to support the addicts through the early phases of discontinuing an addiction. For many recovering addicts, this

is the difficult stage to overcome because it's the period the addict experience withdrawal symptoms, psychological dependence, physical cravings, and a multitude of triggers.

**Maintenance stage:** The maintenance stage is concerned with continuing to achieve the progress that began in the action stage. For people with addictions, this means upholding the intentions made during the preparation stage and the behaviours introduced in the action stage. Activities in this stage include staying abstinent from alcohol or drugs, keeping to a reduced level of addictive behaviors, and sticking to limits set. Drug addicts at the maintenance stage require supervision and monitoring of the newly trained line of thoughts and behaviours, ongoing practice of coping skills, maintaining a support system, and staying alert to triggers and temptations to use drugs.

**Relapse stage:** The relapse stage is sometimes included in the stages of the change model, in recognition that a person might have some or even many small lapses or even relapses periods when the addictive behaviour is taken up again before maintenance is achieved. Some people can adjust to controlled drinking, drug use, or addictive behaviours without becoming addicted. While others, abstinence is the only way that a person can keep their addiction under control.

### **Implications for Counselling**

The first counselling implication of this study is that in spite of the various efforts by governmental and nongovernmental organizations, such as religious bodies, Social workers, NDLEA, NAFDAC officials and school authorities, as well as Healthcare givers and Medical specialists through series of lectures/enlightenment campaigns on the negative consequences of substance use and abuse, majority of adolescents nowadays still engaged in the poor menace of drug abuse and addiction. These call for counselling intervention.

There is need to provide counselling services for parents, community leaders and elders in both the urban and rural areas through public campaign and guidance program aimed at eliminating substance use disorder (SUD). Enlightenment campaign is needed for the drug addicts. The campaign which could be in form of seminars, workshops or symposium is to be organized by helping professionals such as Counsellors, psychologist, health workers and experts in rehabilitation sciences. Counsellors should also partner with other developmental partners, donor agencies and multinational organizations such as UNODC to assist in providing programs that will address issues that are related to substance use disorder (SUD)

### **Conclusion**

The study discussed major consequences and stages to follow in combating drug addict adolescents from bad acts of drug abuse and addict. If proper care is taken in complying with the stages of overcoming addiction, the adverse consequences of addiction would be reduced. It is obvious that counselling services should be put in place to provide an effective means of enlightenment campaign needed to change perceptions, beliefs and attitudes toward drug abuse as well as to monitor the stages for overcoming addiction.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommended that periodic Guidance and Counselling programs should be organized in worship places such as church and mosques as well as social gatherings to enlighten parents on the negative consequences of substance abused by adolescents on their health and its social vices. Moreover, different counselling techniques and therapies should be adopted in

treating substance use disorder (SUD) among adolescents instead of punitive measures which literature reviewed proved ineffective

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