

Indiscriminate proliferation and Dependence on Drugs and Illicit Substances Among Unemployed Adolescents in Nigeria: The Necessity to Create a New Northern Nigeria

Grace A.T Scent, Ph.D¹ & Chukwu, Christian Chima, PhD^{2*}

¹ Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Nigeria. ORCID: 0000-0001-8846-6881.

E-mail: gatscent@gmail.com

² Havilla University, Nde- Ikom, Nigeria

ORCID: 0000-0002-4290-234X. E-mail: chukwuchidr@gmail.com

DOI: 10.56201/ijhpr.v8.no3.2023.pg22.37

Abstract

The frightening danger of the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence on drugs and illicit psychoactive substances among Nigeria's teeming unemployed adolescent population, particularly in the northern geo-political zone was worrisome. This study was, therefore, an attempt to illuminate the overall consequences of the menace in order to create a new northern Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted, and a sample of 800 respondents was chosen through the simple random sampling technique. In reality, 1008 respondents were drawn in all; each of the six selected states, namely, Borno, Yobe, Jigawa, Niger, Kano, and Kebbi (covered the three zones: North East, North Central, and North West), recruited 168 respondents. The simple linear regression statistical analysis was employed to test the core hypothesis formulated. From findings, the study showed that illicit drug proliferation and addiction to psychoactive substances included cardiovascular disease, cancer, hepatitis, lung disease, and mental disorders, amongst others. In addition, the study also revealed that individuals struggling with drug addiction suffer from central nervous system, distortions, perception, sleeplessness, anxieties, increased chance of experiencing a heart attack, and other hazards. Since government can no longer turn a blind eye to this epidemic, the study concluded that a holistic approach to the drug problem more than ever before is the way out of the menace. From this, the study drew the attention of government, organizations, parents, and many other stakeholders to engage professionals to help individuals struggling with addiction problem through a comprehensive counseling and rehabilitation process that will seriously reduce the problem. Further, the government should convoke a colloquium on education to give a realistic idea of how low the educational standard has dipped and therefore be in a position to realistically formulate policies to salvage these adolescents whom employers of labour see as unemployable.

Keywords: Unemployment; Teeming young population; illicit psychoactive substances; Drugs; Adolescent attitudes; Northern Nigeria

Introduction

Despite Nigerians being acknowledged the world over for their remarkable resilience to triumph over difficult situations, the country's teeming unemployed adolescents' population, particularly in the northern geo-political zone is fast being lost to the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence on illicit psychoactive substances! The peril of drugs and illicit psychoactive substances among adolescents has been a plague to the general well-being of individuals who crave for sustainability in their different developmental strides. According to Okogbenin & Kucharska (2021), adolescents' openness to try out with psychoactive substances has implications not just for the adolescent period, but also for the future adult. Admittedly, the use of drugs and illicit psychoactive substances has increased throughout the world and, from evidence-based research, the predominance is virtually in all colours and amongst all countries whether developed or underdeveloped. In other words, dependence on drugs which is of greater risk has evidently been shown to cut across every strata of human society, but more dominant among adolescents. Since literature mirrors life as it is with a particular milieu, both pleasant and unpleasant experiences, it is surprising to observe that the ever-increasing accessibility of illicit drugs has increased usage over an ever-widening spectrum of adolescents, majorly the idle ones. Nowadays, adolescents' addiction to illicit substances is horrifying because the effects are killing them, tearing apart the region, spawning crime, and spreading diseases in northern geo-political region.

Writing, Chukwu (2021), averred that adolescents are irrefutably the most significant human resource that can boost the socio-economic development of any country. Going by this, it is indisputable that Nigeria's teeming adolescent population is energetic, courageous, and possesses innovative thoughts to make positive changes in all human endeavours. However, despite their importance to the revival of the country's fortunes, they face numerous challenges. Prominent among them is the issue of unemployment that has pushed them to use drugs and illicit psychoactive substances to absorb their frustrations. Currently, the burden of indiscriminate proliferation and dependence on illicit substances amongst unemployed adolescents is on the rise and becoming a public health concern in Nigeria. Going by countries that use drug most in the world, Nigeria has been ranked sixth with 223,804,632 so far this year, while India maintains the lead with 1,428,627,663 (UNODC, 2023). China and United States come second and third respectively with 1,425,671,352 and 339,996,563 drug consumers; Indonesia has 277,534,122 drug users and Pakistan with 240,485,658 placing fourth and fifth respectively (UNODC, 2023).

Being sixth does not require commendation, but expression of grief. Little wonder, Nigeria's adolescents developing addiction to psychoactive substances. Substantiating, this assertion, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in 2012, collected drugs use and abuse data from schools, records of patients admitted at mental health institutions for drug related problems and interview of persons arrested for drug offences (Attah, et al 2016).

With the increase in the level of proliferation and dependence on illicit drugs and psychoactive substances used by adolescents, serious misgivings have been raised as to whether they could still be trusted as leaders of tomorrow. This doubt is hinged on the National Institute on Drug Abuse Report cited in Okogbenin and Kucharska (2021) that stated addiction to psychoactive substance use in adolescents lead to significant mental/psychological deficits that interfered with their potential. In an earlier related study from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administrations (SAMHSA, 2012), it was reported that approximately 24 million Americans aged 12 and up were

addicted to drugs or alcohol. This figure was estimated to be 9.2 percent of this same age group. The report outlined drugs such as cannabis, crack, cocaine, heroin, and over-the-counter analgesics (pain killers) as mostly abused drugs. The level of drug abuse among this age category increased yearly, from approximately 6 percent in 2007 to 7 percent in 2012 (Milroy & Parai, 2011). This increase was reflected in the number of adolescents who abused illicit psychoactive substances from approximately 15 to 19 million during this time period (SAMHSA, 2013). Earlier than this report by SAMHSA, opiates accounted for 62 percent of all substance treatment sought in most of Europe and Asia (World Drug, 2005, cited in Attah, et.al, and 2016). According to the report, 3.3 to 4.1 percent of the global adolescent population admitted to consuming drugs and illicit psychoactive substances. However, the most worrisome trend was the rate of addiction in adolescents. A careful analysis at the statistics put forward by Attah and his colleagues showed that adolescents started heroin use at 15–20 years of age in Pakistan doubled to almost 24 percent, and in the Czech Republic, it was 37 percent of youngsters between 15 and 19 years old, while in Egypt, heroin consumption was daily becoming a serious problem and nearly 6 percent of secondary and tertiary school students admitted to having experimented with illicit psychoactive substances.

From evidence-based research, the proliferation and dependence of illicit substances affect the normal functioning of the brain, and a reversal is usually difficult to attain, but in most cases, rehabilitation is a practical approach. In view of this, it is imperative to critically pause for a moment to re-examine the drug report by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2019) and other related reports. According to the UNODC Report (2019), about 35 million people suffer from drug use disorder worldwide. Earlier, in their annual report in 2018, an estimated rate of consumption of illicit drugs in Nigeria is estimated at 14.4 per cent or 14.3 million people aged between 15 and 64 years. Earlier, the use of drugs in 2016 was given as 275 million, which was roughly equivalent to 5.6% of the world population in the age range of 15–64 years. The drug-related deaths in 2015 were estimated to be 450,000 people, with 167,750 people being directly associated with drug use disorders (mainly overdose). The extent of drug use in Nigeria is comparatively high when compared with the 2016 global annual prevalence of any drug use of 5.6 per cent among the adult population (UNODC, World Drug Report 2018). Elucidating further, Enamhe & Achuk (2021) stated drug abusers are liable to mental retardation and disorders, it may be a mild mental disorder (neurosis) or severe mental disorder (psychosis); the frequent intake of drugs may lead to problems like substance use disorders (insomnia, restlessness, auditory and visual hallucinations).

Prompted by the critical analysis of the social structure of Northern Nigeria, Jappah (2013) and Terwase (2014) stated that the region is one of the most conservative in the world because of its ethno-religious composition. Despite the relative resistance to external influences, Ibrahim and colleagues (2018) posited that the abuse of psychoactive substances, mainly; cannabis, tramadol, and other stimulants were previously documented among the populace, but almost exclusively in males. Substantiating, Ibrahim and colleagues (2018) averred that, 70 percent of drug and illicit psychoactive substance users were adolescents and the highest influential factor leading them to the menace was peer group influence. There is no doubt that the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence of illicit drugs and psychoactive substances has negatively affected the entire social structure of Northern Nigeria.

In agreement with this assertion, Salubuy, Makun, Muhammad, Ossamulu & Kure (2022), in their evidence-based study, averred that proliferation and dependence on illicit drugs and psychoactive

substances are prevalent in every state of Northern Nigeria, despite all the hard work done to combat the menace. Concurring to this threat earlier, NDLEA (2018), in a survey conducted on illicit drugs and psychoactive substance abuse in Northern Nigeria, ranked Kano and Jigawa as the states with the highest number of adolescents involved in illicit drugs and psychoactive substances. In the report, over 3 million bottles of codeine syrup were consumed daily in these states. Users of codeine syrup have different reasons for taking it. According to Jummai Salau, who lives in Sabon Gari Kano, codeine improves her sexual prowess. According to her, most of her friends who use codeine do so for the same reason. “Even married women use it to satisfy their husbands so that their husbands would not look for other women. However, there were those who use it to “cool tension.” Officials of NDLEA also corroborated Jummai’s confession. The abuse of codeine syrup and some other tablets such as rohypnol, tramadol, diazepam and lexotan, are mostly abused by northern adolescents including females married adolescents, but these are controlled drugs that are sold only after a doctor’s prescription. It was gathered that these tablets are usually prescribed for extreme pain such as that experienced by people suffering from the sickle cell disease and neurological disorders. Previously, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA, 2015) arrested and detained over 2,205 persons for the crime related to illicit drugs and psychoactive substance abuse in Jigawa and Kano states.

In a more recent related study, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) reported that thirty-seven percent of the population in Kano State, an area in northwest Nigeria, is neck-deep in the proliferation and dependence of illicit substances. This is the highest figure nationwide. Kano, Nigeria’s second-largest city also has the highest number of unemployed youths arrested for illicit substance use. Consequent upon this, government has established a drug rehabilitation centre in Kano to cater to those struggling with drug addiction; from some in-depth interviews, majority of the interviewees unanimously agreed that the continued arrest of these unemployed youths and sending them to jail has not yielded any positive impact. They stressed that while in the rehabilitation centre, they got stuck in a cycle as no adequate treatment and counseling are given. They concluded that these youngsters return to harm humanity, especially when released more than ever. For the researchers, it was a case of putting the cart before the horse; one of the main causes of the menace was adolescents’ unemployment and rather than addressing it, rehabilitation centers are being established. Absolutely, rehabilitation centers are required for those already trapped in the menace, but how about creating sustainable employment?

Corroborating the issue of adolescent unemployment, the camp coordinator at the Kano Reformatory Institute in Kiru, Dr. Ekpein Appah, said the city can be like a jungle, and the fight for survival is what is driving young people to illicit substances. In a related development, Olarewaju Ipinmisho, former Director General of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), disclosed that Kano, Kaduna, Borno, and lately, Niger, are among states “with the highest cases of the proliferation and dependence of illicit drugs/psychoactive substances in the country; he further stressed that if one takes an estimate of 10 boys, particularly in Kano, seven will be on drugs”. Concurring, the former Drug Commander, Ipinmisho averred that “Abuja is not an exception because places like Wuse II; especially Banex Junction is a spot FCT Police Command should do something about” because one sees young boys and girls openly sniffing substances like fuel, and over-abusing drugs/psychoactive substances meant for other purposes, like tramadol and codeine, and above all, smoking marijuana in the streets without care or fear of being arrested. While the whole episode surrounding adolescents’ engagement in illicit drugs and psychoactive substance use is increasing by the day, the security arrangements to

curtail this abnormal act are still largely conventional and predictable and therefore offer a limited challenge to the flexibility, speed, and deception that characterize and ignite the illicit phenomenon.

Lamenting over the devastating effects of the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence of illicit drugs and psychoactive substances, the erstwhile governor of Kebbi State, Abubakar Atiku Bagudu said the use of illicit drugs and psychoactive substances has been identified as the major motivation for adolescents engaging in insurgency and other criminal activities like banditry, and kidnapping (Adebayo, 2023). This attestation is in conformity with the result of various epidemiological research in different countries globally, which have established that the capricious use of illicit drugs and psychoactive substances fuels insurgency, as in India, Pakistan, and other countries. Of course, the distasteful activities of Boko Haram, the ultraviolent Islamic militant group, cannot be forgotten in a hurry. From the position of Atiku Bagudu, we could infer that the violent attacks and bombing of churches to a series of senseless killings and wanton destruction of properties non-Muslims in Kano, Borno, Kaduna, Kano, Adamawa, Jos, Yobe, Bauchi, Taraba, and Kogi states were perpetrated under the influence of illicit drugs and psychoactive substances. From the foregoing, it is evident that the impulsive use of illicit drugs and psychoactive substances provided an opportunity to conclude that illicit drugs and psychoactive substances were an effect within the region, and not a cause; a symptom of decades of failed government and elite delinquency in Northern Nigeria (Chukwu, 2013)

In a 2014 report by World Health Organization, Nigeria ranked second for young people's heavy episodic drinking (WHO, 2014). The first large-scale, nationwide survey conducted in Nigeria in 2017 examined the extent and patterns of drug use (other than caffeine, alcohol, and tobacco) and estimated a past year prevalence of any drug use at 14.4% for adolescents. This incidence was comparatively high when compared with the 2016 global annual prevalence of any drug use of 5.6 percent among the adult population (UNODC, 2018). Adolescents view psychoactive substance use as a socially desirable behaviour and peer group pressure has been identified as a strong factor (National Drug Law Enforcement Agency 1992; Graham et al., 2006). In a same report, UNODC stated that drug use was most common among those who were between the ages of 25 and 39 years, and this was lowest among those below 24 years of age.

Basically, the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence on illicit psychoactive substances is a disorder characterized by a destructive pattern of using drugs arbitrarily thereby leading to significant distress. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2012) reported that mental health problems such as depression, developmental lags, apathy, withdrawal, and other psychosocial dysfunctions were recurrently linked to illicit psychoactive substance abuse among adolescents. With the above in mind, this study represents the first effort to analyze the effects of the indiscriminate and proliferation and dependence on drugs and illicit substances a effects of among unemployed adolescents in northern Nigeria.

A review of the current state of knowledge is undertaken to bridge this knowledge gap and delineate the potential impact of drugs and illicit substances on adolescents in the six selected states on adolescents and to make inferences about their vulnerability to illicit psychoactive on adolescents. Policy prescriptions for mitigating the arbitrary use of drug risk and improving the social welfare of adolescents are also explored. Sequel to the foregoing, the objective of this study was to provide an understanding of the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence of illicit psychoactive

substances among unemployed adolescents and the necessity to create a new northern Nigeria. The specific objectives the study was four-pronged: (a) To determine the impact of the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence of illicit psychoactive substances among unemployed adolescents. (b) To assess the prevalence of the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence of illicit psychoactive substances among unemployed adolescents (c) To evaluate the previous interventions employed to cope with the behaviour of unemployed adolescents involved in the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence of illicit psychoactive substances (d) To examine how government can adopt harm reduction perspective through persuasive messages to stop the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence of illicit psychoactive substances among unemployed adolescents.

From the foregoing, the study raised four research questions, but formulated only one hypothesis. In a way, the four research questions were collapsed into one hypothesis. The reason for this was hinged on efforts was directed at creating a new northern Nigeria through government playing a dominant role in the use of persuasive messages and employment creation to change the ugly narrative of the explosion of drugs and illicit psychoactive substances among adolescents in northern Nigeria. Rather than formulated four hypotheses as would have been the ideal situation, it was considered time wasting in tackling the menace.

Research questions

- (1) What is the impact of the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence on illicit drugs and psychoactive substances among unemployed adolescents in some selected Northern States?
- (2) What is the prevalence of the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence on illicit drugs and psychoactive substances among unemployed adolescents?
- (3) What are the previous interventions employed to curtail the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence on illicit drugs and psychoactive substances among unemployed adolescents?
- (4) How can government adopt a harm reduction perspective through persuasive messages to curtail the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence on illicit drug and psychoactive substances among unemployed adolescents?

Research Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between government persuasive messages/ employment creation and the reduction of the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence on illicit drugs and psychoactive substances.

Since the essence of study was geared at creating new northern Nigeria adolescents free from drugs and psychoactive substances, the above lone hypothesis was accordingly formulated and tested using a simple linear regression model.

As a blue print, this study would be of immense significance to government and other critical stakeholders in curbing the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence on drugs and illicit psychoactive substances, particularly in the six selected states in northern Nigeria. In addition, the study would be appropriate to guide other scholars who would want to widen the scope. Also, the study

would be meaningful to the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and other relevant bodies in combating the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence on drugs and illicit psychoactive substances among unemployed adolescents nationwide.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Social Learning Theory

The subject matter of social learning theory as enunciated by Bandura (1971) is that behaviour is learnt. An individual's psychological and social adjustment can be examined in relation to the accumulated impact of a series of learning experiences. Explaining further, Bandura asserts that learning principles like the observation principle of learning can adequately explicate such social-psychological adjustment of individuals. The most basic philosophy of social learning is the reinforcement principles, through which a lot of behaviour is learned. In strengthening this declaration, Bandura created an imaginary scenario where an individual observed how the actions of his models were always applauded, rather than punished, even when there was a deficit in societal expectation. Under this situation, the observer individual modified his behaviour to suit that of his models being highly praised. In essence, individuals seem to adopt those standards of self-reinforcement that correspond with the standard of the models to which they have been exposed, particularly in the case of the arbitrary use of drugs and illicit psychoactive substances. The advocates of social learning theorists believe that crime, in this case, the arbitrary use of illicit drugs and psychoactive substances, is a product of learning. From the foregoing, it is clear that most human behaviour is acquired through learning, either by modeling or watching others. In essence, the most influential factor predisposing to the arbitrary use of drugs and illicit psychoactive substances is the model's influence. Positive reinforcement in the form of being celebrated in a given prevailing community over the immoderation in illicit drugs and psychoactive substances by models is learned by the mentees; thus, it develops the tendency in the followers of the models to repeat such odd behaviour in order to be applauded in future. The social learning theory unambiguously accounts for why the indiscriminate proliferation of illicit drugs and psychoactive substances is daily on the increase despite efforts made to curtail it.

Methods

The study was conducted in the northern region of Nigeria, particularly in six selected states generally reported to have a high intake of drugs and illicit psychoactive substances (Salubuyi, Makun, Mohammad, Ossamulu, Mohammad & Kure (2022)). The five states included Kano, Jigawa, Borno, Yobe, Niger, and Zamfara (covered the three zones: North East, North Central, and North West) where the rate of indiscriminate proliferation and dependence on illicit substances is common among adolescents. A survey design was adopted for the study; it was considered the most suitable design because respondents' opinions were the main source of primary data collection and also because it has the ability to collect large samples from the population, as well as describing and interpreting the relationships that existed between the variables under study. The simple random sampling technique was employed, and after a very painstaking approach, research assistants administered structured questionnaires in the five selected states and conducted brief interviews. 168 respondents were drawn from each of the six states, thereby bringing the total number of respondents to 1008 respondents to find answers in line with the objective, research question, and hypothesis formulated. For this commitment, the researchers remained very grateful to the five Research assistants. However, only 800 questionnaires were properly filled and returned. This represented 80% return rate. Thereafter, to test the core hypothesis formulated, a simple linear regression was employed..



Source: Sahara Reporters, New York: An image of a Northern Nigerian unemployed Adolescent consuming an illicit psychoactive substance

Data Analysis

From the fieldwork, the data presentation, analysis, and interpretation were done in line with the study objectives, research questions and hypothesis formulated. As earlier stated in the methodology, a total of eight hundred (800) copies of questionnaires were administered to respondents in the six selected Northern States, namely, Borno, Yobe, Jigawa, Niger, Kano, and Kebbi (covered the three zones: North East, North Central, and North West) were properly filled and returned. Thus, the data presentation, analysis, and interpretation would be based on the returned questionnaires.

Research Question One: What are the different rates of the indiscriminate proliferation of drugs and illicit psychoactive substances in selected Northern States?

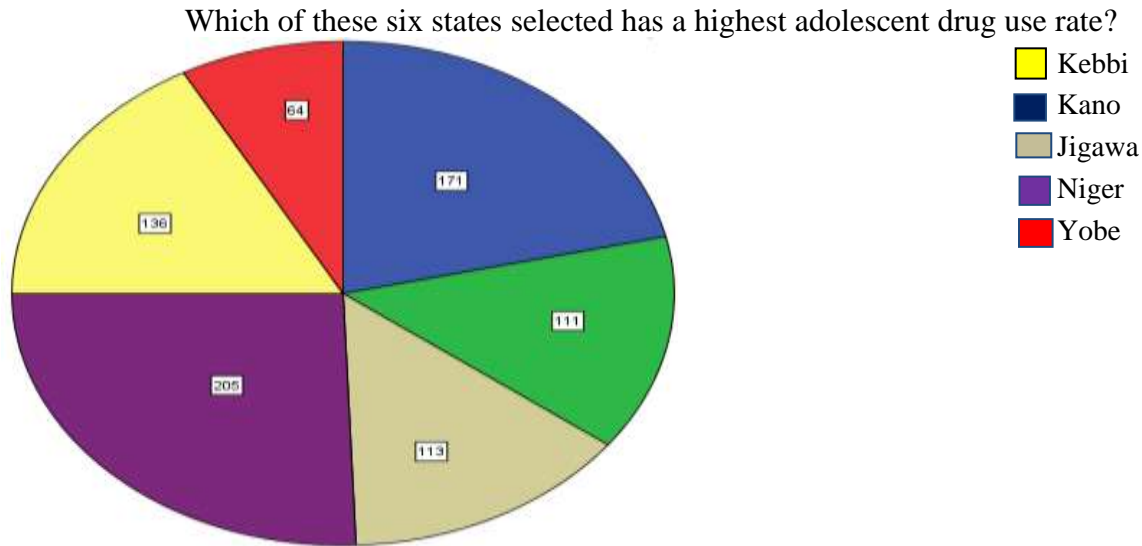
Table 1.1

Variable	Frequency (n= 800)	Percentage (%=100)
States:		
Kano	171	21.4
Borno	111	13.9
Jigawa	113	14.1
Niger	205	25.6
Kebbi	136	17.0
Yobe	64	8.0

Source: Field Work

Table 1.1 above showed the different rates of the indiscriminate proliferation of drugs and illicit psychoactive substances in the selected six Northern States. According to findings, 171 respondents representing 21.4% are of Kano, Borno indicated 111(13.9%) of respondents Jigawa indicated 113

respondents (14.1%) of the study population Niger showed 205 respondents (25.6%), Kebbi revealed 136 respondent representing 17.0%, and Yobe 64 respondents (8.0%) of respondents. In summary, analysis showed that Niger has 205 respondents (25.6%) as highest while Yobe has the least, 64 respondents (8.0%) of the study population.



Research Question Two: What is the prevalence of adolescent substance use in Northern States?

Table 1.2

Variable	Yes	No		
Unemployed adolescents' substance use behavior	658(82.25)	142(17.75)		
What is the level of use ($\bar{x} = 3.05$).	Very High	High	Low	Very Low
	325(40.6)	280(35.0)	110(13.8)	85(10.6)
Which of these substances are commonly used				
Tramadol/Codeine	350	43.8		
Heroin/Morphine	253	31.6		
Methamphetamine/Fentanyl	76	9.5		
Cannabis/Glue	58	7.2		
Alcohol, Ephedrine, Madras	28	3.5		
Earth of toilet effluent/Cow dung, Lizard dung/others	35	4.4		
On the average, how often do unemployed adolescents use substance ($\bar{x} = 2.99$).				
Sometimes	191	23.9		
Always	450	56.3		
Rarely	124	15.5		
Not at all	35	4.4		

Source: Field Work

Table 1.2 above showed the prevalence of the proliferation and dependence of illicit substances by unemployed adolescents in northern Nigeria. According to data gathered during field work, the study (majority) revealed that unemployed adolescents have challenges with the proliferation and dependence of illicit substances (658=82.25%). On the contrary, minority (142=17.75) of respondents disagreed that unemployed adolescents was not serious, but ironically accepted that they were into the proliferation and dependence of illicit substances. Also, the study showed that the level of the proliferation and dependence of illicit substances by unemployed adolescents in northern Nigeria was very high (325=40.6%). Analysis further revealed that, tramadol/codeine (350=43.8), followed by Heroin/ Morphine (253=31.6) were the most abused substance in geo-political zone.

Similarly, a mean score of 3.05 confirmed this finding. According to findings, majority (450=56.3%) of respondents reported that adolescents always use drugs and illicit psychoactive substances, followed by those that indicated that adolescent sometimes use substance (191=23.9%). Also, a mean score of 2.99 corroborate this result.

Research Question Three: What are the previous interventions employed to cope with substance use behaviour?

Table 1.3

Which of these strategies was relevant in solving adolescent substance use in the past				
Neglecting them	36		4.5	
Use of herbal drugs	116		14.5	
Refer them to Rehabilitation centers	135		16.9	
Flogging/beating them to stop use	380		47.5	
Others	133		16.6	
Government uses more of arrest to stop adolescent substance use ($\bar{x} = 2.86$).	SA	A	D	SD
	F	F	F	F
	307(38.4)	177(22.1)	217(27.1)	99(12.4)
Mentorship programme(providing job opportunities)was an important strategy to influence adolescent substance use positively for future responsibility($\bar{x} = 3.20$).	382(47.8)	247(30.9)	120(15.0)	51(6.4)
Most previous intervention through arrest did not bring reduction in substance use in adolescents ($\bar{x} = 3.36$).	450(56.3)	223(27.9)	97(12.1)	30(3.8)

Source: Field Work

Table 1.3 above showed previous interventions to cope with substance use behaviour. According to finding, 36(4.5%) of respondents were neglected; 116(14.5) used herbal drugs, 135(16.9%) of respondents referred them to rehabilitation centers, 380(47.5%) beat and flogged them to stop usage, while 133(16.6) employed other unconventional strategies to free unemployed adolescents from the proliferation and dependence of illicit substances.



Source: Punch Newspaper(22/01/23). A helpless youth hooked on colorado, meth, ‘gutter juice’ being flogged; this practice of persons suffering from substance use disorder (SUD) is counterproductive; it is wicked and unacceptable.

In summary, the study showed that majority (380=47.5%) of respondents stated they these unemployed adolescents into the proliferation and dependence of illicit substances were beaten and flogged to stop usage, while minority (36=4.5%) of respondents of the study population said the unemployed adolescents into drugs were neglected. Attempt was further made to know if governments used more of arrest to stop adolescent substance use, analysis revealed an affirmative mean score of 2.86. A breakdown of this result showed that, 307(38.4%) of respondents and 177(22.1%) of respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that government use more of arrest to stop adolescent substance use, while 217(27.1%) and 99(12.4%) of respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. Further probe showed mentorship programme (amongst them, providing job opportunities) with an affirmative mean score of 3.20 as being an important and positive strategy to stop unemployed adolescents involvement in the proliferation and dependence of illicit substances for future responsibility. A breakdown of this analysis revealed that, 382(47.8%) and 247(30.9%) of respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that mentorship programme was an important strategy to halt unemployed adolescent substance use. On the other hand, 247(30.9%) and 120(15.0%) of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed. Finally, majority 450(56.3%) of respondents indicated that most previous intervention through arrest did not bring reduction in the proliferation and dependence of illicit substances use among unemployed adolescents, while 223(27.9%) and 97(12.1%) of respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. In all, an affirmative mean score of 3.36 confirmed the findings.

Research Question Four: How can government adopt harm reduction perspective through persuasive messages to stop substance use behaviour among unemployed adolescents?

Table 1.4

Government support of harm reduction strategy towards unemployed adolescent substance use will influence reduction of use ($\bar{x} = 3.15$).	SA F	A F	D F	SD F
	356(44.5)	245(30.6)	166(20.8)	33(4.1)
When government use persuasive messages on these unemployed adolescents, they may likely be influence positively ($\bar{x} = 3.31$).	431(53.9)	228(28.5)	104(13.0)	37(4.6)
Adolescent from the age of 18-20 years can change from substance in the long with positive persuasive messages from government, families and other critical stakeholders ($\bar{x} = 3.30$).	457(57.1)	170(21.3)	132(16.5)	41(5.1)

Source: Field work

Table 1.4 above showed the mean result for how government could adopt harm reduction perspective through persuasive messages to change unemployed adolescent substance use behaviour. The mean score of 3.15 showed how government support for the harm reduction strategy influenced unemployed adolescents' involvement in the proliferation and dependence of illicit substances. This construct was acceptable since the mean is above 2.5. A breakdown of this result indicated that 356(44.5%) of respondents strongly agreed, 245(30.6%) of respondents agreed, 104(13.0%) of respondents disagreed while 33(4.1%) of respondents strongly disagreed. Also, the mean score for when governments used persuasive messages in jingles and other radio and television advertorials to positively change the mindsets of unemployed adolescents was 3.31. This was accepted as it was also above the mean threshold of 2.5. However, a breakdown of this analysis showed that, 431(53.9%) and 228(28.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that governments use of persuasive messages in jingles and other radio and television advertorials could positively change the mindsets of unemployed adolescents. 104(13.0%) of respondents disagreed, while 37(4.6%) of respondents strongly disagreed with this construct. Finally, further analysis revealed an affirmative mean score of 3.30 that adolescent from the age of 21-25 years could change from the proliferation and dependence of illicit substances in the long with positive persuasive messages. Further breakdown of this result showed that, 457(57.1%) of respondents strongly agreed, 170(21.3%) of respondents agreed, 132(16.5%) of respondents disagreed while 41(5.1%) of respondents strongly disagreed that unemployed adolescents from the age of 21-25 years can change from substance in the long with positive persuasive messages from families.

Test of study Hypothesis using the simple Linear Regression Analysis

Hypothesis:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between government persuasive messages/ employment creation and the reduction of the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence on illicit drugs and psychoactive substances.

Table 1.5: Simple Linear Regression Result

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.246 ^a	.061	.058	.86497	.061	25.722	2	797	.000

a. Predictors: Persuasive messages

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error				Beta	Lower Bound
1	(Constant)	3.626	.145		25.048	.000	3.342	3.910
	Persuasive message (a)	.247	.035	.255	7.123	.000	.314	.179
	Persuasive message (b)	.104	.037	.101	2.819	.005	.031	.176

a. Dependent Variable: Reduction in adolescent substance use

Source: Field Work

The table (1.5) above summarized regression results as shown. The results indicated that there was a positive correlation between persuasive messages and reduction in substance use. In the regression statistics $R=0.246$, while $R^2=0.061$. It meant that the independent variables (persuasive messages) explained 6.1% variation from the expected and actual results of the dependent variable (reduction in adolescent substance use). This indicated a good fit of the regression equation. Thus, there was an accurate reflection that reduction in adolescent substance use was influenced by persuasive messages. The more persuasive messages, the more the reduction in adolescent substance uses. Also, the test of significance results, as presented showed that $t=7.123$, with $df=797$ and p -value ($0.000 < 0.05$). Going by this, the result indicated that at 5% level of significance, there was enough evidence that the regression equation specified a significant relationship between persuasive messages and reduction in unemployed adolescents' substance use. Based on the findings, the null hypothesis was rejected and concluded that persuasive messages had a significant influence on reduction in the proliferation and dependence of illicit substances by unemployed adolescents in northern Nigeria. Thus, we are 95% confident that the slope of the actual regression line was somewhere between 0.031 and 0.176. In other words, the analysis was 95% sure that persuasive messages would influence reduction in unemployed adolescent substance use between 0.031 and 0.176.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has demonstrated that it is possible to reduce the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence on illicit drug and psychoactive substances among unemployed adolescents, particularly in northern Nigeria.

Despite the statistics of unemployed adolescents struggling with addiction was frightening; five in every seven cases had led to addiction; many adolescents struggling with addiction have become homeless, wanderers, derelicts, rapists, thugs, armed robbers and so on. A lot of lives and property have been wasted in accident and other risky forms of behaviours. But if the indiscriminate and proliferation of drugs and illicit psychoactive substances leading to substance addiction (or drug addiction), a neuropsychiatric disorder characterized by a recurring desire to continue taking the drug despite harmful consequences which this study has x-rayed is ignored, the increasing rate of drug and substance dependence would put northern Nigeria at a risk of losing generations as well as underdevelopment owing to the diversion of resources that would have been employed to address among others; basic needs, particularly the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the vision 2030.

Based on this, the following recommendations were made by the researchers to create a new Northern Nigeria

1. Government should set up guidance and counseling offices facilitated by professionals to counsel unemployed adolescents who indulge in the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence of illicit substances. Most importantly, job opportunities should be created to forestall the state of idleness that usually pushed them into taking solace in the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence of illicit substances
2. The National Agency for Food, Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) should arrest the culprits marketing and encouraging the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence of illicit substances among unemployed adolescents. They should be prosecuted and punishments meted out should commensurate with the offence committed. Put clearly, the judicial system should be restructured to carry out its mandates without partiality and considerations especially in terms of prosecuting offenders of these illicit substances. This will serve as deterrent to others from risking to venture into the trade
3. Drug proliferation and its increasing havocs are the outcome of unawareness among the masses. In this regard, the awareness workshops, seminars and gatherings may bring intimation among the masses about substance's abuse its havocs. In this instance, it is widely acknowledged that religion plays a significant role in bringing social order and social control in society. The religious leaders should understand and play their due role to manifest the religious interpretations in terms of drug use, production, and selling.
4. Since the indiscriminate proliferation and dependence of illicit substances is a social problem created by society, all hands must be on deck to change the narrative and awareness should be created to equip them when gainfully employed with information on hazards associated with uninformed consumption of substances and how destructive their careers could be. This requires a total commitment and cooperation from all concerned. Parents, guardians, and the society at large must cooperate together in exchange of information, communication and other logistic areas in tackling the proliferation of illicit substance patronage. Cooperation is highly solicited in ensuring these adolescents were saved from self destruction.

Conflict of interest

The Authors do not have any conflict of interest as far this study is concerned.

REFERENCES

- Attah A. P; Baba E. & Audu J. S(2016). The effects of drug abuse and addiction on academic performance of students in federal polytechnic Idah, Kogi State Nigeria. *International Journal of Democratic and Development Studies (IJDDS)*, 2(2), March,
- Bureau of Justice Statistics (2012). *Drugs, Crime, and the Justice System*. Washington, DC:U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics (December).
- Chukwu, C.C & Anyaoha, O (2018). Terrorism, Fulani herdsmen and the forced migration of Christians and Igbo Indigenes from Northern Nigeria: The revalidation of Biafra? *Revista Brasileira de Gestão Ambiental e Sustentabilidade* (2018): 5(10): 429-450. <https://doi.org/10.21438/rbgas.051001>
- Chukwu, C.C(2013). An assessment of Religious threats to Security and survival of democracy in Nigeria: A case study of the incessant killings of Igbos in some selected northern states; *Studies of changing societies: Comparative and interdisciplinary focus*; 4(10), pp23-51
- Crowe AH, Bilchik S(2017). Consequences of youth substance abuse in Drug Identification and Testing Summary November] Available from: <http://www.ojjdp.gov/PUBS/drugid/contents.html>
- Dumbili, E.W., Ebuonyi, I.D., Ugoeze, K.C. (2021) New Psychoactive Substances in Nigeria: A call for more research in Africa. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Drugs, Addictions, and Health* 1:100008 13.
- Dankani, J.M. (2013). Abuse of cough syrups: a new trend in drug abuse in North-Western Nigerian states of Kano, Sokoto, Katsina, Zamfara, and Kebbi. *International Journal of Physical and Social Sciences*, 2(1), 199-213.
- Enamhe, D. C&, Achuke, M(2021). Nigeria Drug Abuse and the Nigerian Youth. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosiologi Dialektika Kontemporer* 8(1), pp, 1-17 January
- Graham M.L., Ward B., Munro G., Snow P. and Ellis J(2006). Rural parents, teenagers and alcohol: What are parents thinking? *The International Electronic Journal of Rural and Remote Health*,
- Gureje O, Olley D. (1992). Alcohol and drug abuse in Nigeria: a review of the literature. *Contemp Drug Probs.* 19, 491. [[Google Scholar](#)]
- Hanafi, Afeez(Punch Newspaper, 2022). A helpless youth hooked on colorado, meth, ‘gutter juice’ being flogged;
- Ibrahim, A.W., Yerima, M.M., Pindar, S.K. Onyencho, V.C. Ahmed, H.K., Machina, B.K., et al. (2017). Tramadol abuse among patients attending an addiction clinic in North-Eastern Nigeria: outcome of a four-year retrospective survey. *Advances in Psychology and Neuroscience*, 2(1-2), 31-37.
- Iqra Fatima(2017). Drug Abuse among Youth: Causes, Effects and Control. *J. Integ. Comm. Health*; 6(1)
- Jappah, J.V. (2013). The convergence of American and Nigerian religious conservatism in a biopolitical shaping of Nigeria’s HIV/AIDS prevention programmes. *Global Public Health*, 8(3), 312-325.
- Mamman, H., Othman, T.A., Lian, H.L. (2014). Adolescent’s and Drugs Abuse in Nigeria. *Journal of Biology, Agriculture and Healthcare* 4(1)
- National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse(2011). Columbia University, Adolescent Substance Use: America’s #1 Public Health Problem Report, <https://www.centeronaddiction.org/addiction-research/reports/adolescent-substance-use-america%E2%80%99s-1-public-health-problem>
- National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). Principle of drug addiction treatment: A research-based guide. NIH Publication No. 99-4180. Rockville, MD: NIDA National Institutes of Health.
- National Institute on Drug Abuse (2014). Principles of Adolescent Substance Use Disorder Treatment: A Research-Based Guide: NIH Publication; Number 14-7953 Pg. 1.

- National Survey on Drug Use and Health (10th graders,2011). Promoted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Eur Child Adolescent Psychiatry; 20:351–359 355
<http://oas.samhsa.gov/>
- Ohuabunwa SI. (2019). Tackling the menace of drug abuse: a disruptive innovative approach. Available at:<https://psnnational.org/index.php/2019/08/01/association-of-community-pharmacists-of-nigeria-acpn-bational-conference-holding-in-kano-state-june-1-4-2019/>.
- Okogbenin O. &Kucharska, J(2021). Psychoactive substance use among adolescents in Nigeria: A systematicreview; International Journal of Science Academic Research,2(6), pp.1652-1661, June, Available online at <http://www.scienceijsar.com>
- Onyema, C & Chukwu, C C(2019).Substance proliferation and addiction in Nigerian Universities: A challenge for the rescue of the wasted generation; GSJ: 7(8), pp,860-873 August,www.globalscientificjournal.com
- Sahu, K, M1& Sahu, Soma(2016). Substance abuse causes and consequences. Bangabasi Academic Journal (9),Pp, 52-59Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and centre for behavioural statistics andquality (2014). The TEDS report: gender differences in primary substance of abuse across age groups.
- Susan B. Salubuyi, SB, Makun. H.A; Mohammad, HI;Ossamulu, FI; Mohammad, H.K L & Kure, JT(2022). A Survey on Substance Abuse in Northern Nigeria. Research Square. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-1887008/v1>, pp1-13
- Terwase, I.T. (2014). Religion and the Nigerian State: situating the de facto and de jure frontiers of state – religion relations and its implications for national security. *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion*, 3(2), 311-339
- United Nations (2013). *World Drug Report*. New York: Oxford University Press
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2019). World drug report 2019. Available at: <https://wdr.unodc.org/wdr2019/en/exsum.html>.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2017). The drug problem and organized crime, illicit financial flows, corruption and terrorism. Vienna, Austria: United Nations. [[Google Scholar](#)]
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018). Drug use in Nigeria. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/Drugs/Drug_Use_Survey_Nigeria_2019_BOOK.pdf
- WHO Global (2014).StatusReport on alcohol and health. Geneva: WHO
https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/Drugs/Drug_Use_Survey_Nigeria_2019_BOOK.pdf