

EFFECTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF DRUG ABUSE.3
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EFFECTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF DRUG ABUSE

Preambles

Fore and foremost let's give glory and honour to God for the opportunity endowed us to witness another orientation programme for the newly admitted students known as fresher in the University. The action is on and the actual time to discuss the above subject matter cannot be earlier than now therefore, our responsiveness shall be concentrated on effects and consequences of drug abuse in our society. To understand drug abuse, it is necessary will know what drug is. Drug according to Orubuloye (2008) is any substance (other than food) that is used to prevent, diagnose, treat, or relieve symptoms of a disease or abnormal condition. Drugs can also affect how the brain and the rest of the body work and cause changes in mood, awareness, thoughts, feelings, or behavior of a living organism. The history of drug abuse is as old as the history of human race. The use of drugs does not constitute evil. In every society of the world, drugs, properly administered have been a medical blessing. For instance, bark, leaves, roots, and plants have been used to relieve pain and help control diseases. The subject of discourse shall be centered on five (5) major concepts which include; What is drug abuse? What are the available drugs? Why do we abuse drug? How do we abuse drug? The effects and consequences of drug abuse? And how drug abuse can be prevented.

WHAT IS DRUG ABUSE?

There is no universal agreement on the definition of the term "drug abuse". Edward, and Arif (2016) defined it as "the use of a drug which is viewed as posing a problem by the society concerned" It is also assumed as the unspecific use of a drug other than for legitimate purposes. Substance abuse, also known as drug abuse, is the use of a drug in amounts or by methods which are harmful to the individual or others. It is a form of substance-related disorder.

The use of illegal drugs or to use of prescription or over – the – counter drug for purpose of other than those for which they are mean to be used, or in excessive amounts. Drug abuse may lead to social, physical, emotional, and job-related problems. Drug abuse or substance abuse refers to the use of certain chemicals for the purpose of creating pleasurable effects on the brain.

THE AVAILABLE DRUGS ABUSED IN NIGERIA SOCIETY

The most common illegal drugs used among Nigerians is cannabis according to Foster (2004), other illegal drugs used include cocaine, heroin, amphetamine-type stimulants and inhalant and solvents such as glue. Whether you smoke marijuana, drink alcohol, or snort cocaine, there are risks involved with using drugs that can range from addiction to death. Knowing the risks can help you make better decisions that positively affect your health. Understanding the effects of these drugs on your body and the serious threat of addiction they pose is the first step in protecting yourself.

Marijuana. This mild hallucinogen, derived from the *Cannabis sativa* plant, is the most commonly abused illegal drug in Nigeria, according to Oni (2008). When used, usually through smoking, marijuana acts as a central nervous system stimulant. “It speeds up heart rate and raises blood pressure,” (Stacey 2006). “It can stimulate the nervous system enough that some people become paranoid while taking it.” At the same time, marijuana can dull memory, making it harder to concentrate or remember things.

Death from smoking too much marijuana is rare, but as with smoking cigarettes, habitual marijuana use can lead to heart disease and other cardiovascular problems. Smoking Marijuana is a process of introducing a dirty substance into your lungs. And just like tobacco smokers, marijuana smokers are at risk for respiratory problems such as chronic cough and frequent lung infections. Marijuana smoke also contains many carcinogens, though a definitive link between it and cancer remains unclear at this time.

Cocaine. A powerful, addictive stimulant, cocaine gives users a euphoric feeling when ingested, which, depending on the person, may or may not actually feel good. “Some people experience that rush as very pleasurable, but others don’t like it. The euphoric feeling is short-lived, lasting anywhere from 30 to 45 minutes (Stacey 2006). Cocaine is usually snorted as a powder, but it can also be modified into rock form — so-called crack — and smoked. Cocaine tightens blood vessels and speeds up the heart. These cardiovascular effects are the main reason for most cocaine-related deaths. According to Smith (2014), even in small doses, it can kill you, sudden death is not uncommon.

Opiates. These drugs, which include both street drugs like heroin and pharmaceutical painkillers like morphine and /, act on the body’s central nervous system by stimulating the brain’s “reward center,” which controls pleasurable feelings. Opiates mimic the effects of healthy feel-good activities, like having sex or eating. However, in high doses, opiates can cause some of the brain’s critical functions, like breathing, to slow down or stop working. In an overdose “the brain shuts off the ‘thermostat’ that drives respiration. The person goes into a coma and dies. Since heroin is commonly injected, users are also at risk for HIV and hepatitis, which can be transmitted through shared needles (Oni 2008).

Methamphetamine. Usually a white powder that is smoked, snorted, or injected, this powerful stimulant is highly addictive. Like cocaine, methamphetamine, according to Oni (2008) can speed up the heart, as well as cause hyperthermia, an extremely high body temperature. When used over a long period of time, methamphetamine can cause anxiety, insomnia, and even psychotic symptoms, like hallucinations. Severe dental problems can also occur; the drug is acidic and can wear down teeth over time. Users often grind their teeth as well, further damaging them. As with heroin users, people who inject methamphetamine are at risk for HIV and hepatitis.

Alcohol. Moderate consumption of alcohol is safe for most people, but too much consumption can lead to problems. Many do consume more than their capacity, and this brings out the abnormality in such person. It doubles the consumer's mind. Those who are unable to confront certain challenges do engage in high consumption of alcohol. It is a liquid content that gradually affect the operation of the brain. Alcohol also has short-term health effects. Since alcohol is a depressant, it can slow motor skills and impair the user's ability to make clear judgments

WHY DO PEOPLE ABUSE DRUGS?

The reason why someone begins to use drugs obviously varies for many people. More often than not, a person is trying to fix an issue within their life and they see drugs as the solution. Maybe someone was peer pressured into trying drugs during a mate birthday or ceremony and continued use from there. Maybe someone was forced to take drugs by a parent or ex significant other. Often times, addiction develops from these beginning points as continued use occurs and the individual continues to seek stronger highs - causing them to try harder drugs and spiraling into addiction.

When a loved one is struggling with drug abuse and addiction, it is perfectly normal to question what got them here and wonder why they continue to use. In this paper, we're going to outline some of the reasons why people abuse drugs, in no particular order.

Genetics

If you have a family history of drug addiction, you may have a genetic predisposition to develop an addiction to drugs or alcohol. It is stated that about 30% – 70% of a person's risk for addiction is linked to the genes they are born with along with other social factors. (Ebigbola, 2000).

Self-Medicating

Self-medicating is the top reason people abuse drugs and alcohol. People often self-medicate with mind-altering substances to cope with what they are feeling or what they do not want to feel. This can include stress, anxiety, depression, mental health disorders, pain and more. Alcohol or other substances can alleviate symptoms and

seem like a short-term solution. However, people should look for manageable, long-term solutions under medical supervision to combat these issues.

Peer Pressure

This is most common reason for drug use amongst young adults and teenagers. They typically start to use drugs because they want to fit in. Being rebellious as a teenager or young adult is very common. In a lot of cases, young adults and teenagers don't fully understand the severity of drug use and addiction. The pressure of being around others who are abusing drugs or alcohol can push someone to follow suit.

Experimenting

It is not uncommon for addiction to stem from a person being curious and experimenting with drugs or alcohol. It is a scenario that often starts with a young person using alcohol or marijuana out of curiosity. Mind-altering substances, like cocaine and alcohol, promise to heighten experiences and many people feel this experience is worth exploring. Unfortunately, there are drugs like Heroin, marijuana, and cocaine that are so addictive that the person will begin a pattern of abuse sometimes even after a single use, which can eventually lead to an addiction. While use of the more "minor" drugs seems harmless, adolescents that experiment with drugs and alcohol are more likely to develop substance use disorder (Orubuloye, 2008).

Mental Illness

Somewhat along the same lines as self-medicating, depression, and anxiety can put individuals at higher risk of developing an addiction. Using substances to cope with difficult feelings may seem like an easier path for some. It might surprise you to learn that mental health issues and substance abuse often occur together. Occasionally, substance abuse can lead to a mental health problem. However, this is usually a common situation. On this, Adeboye (2002), implored the parents to handle their wards in the way of God so they could desist from drug abuse, as more youths were turning mad as a result of drug abuse/addiction.

Also, Ebigbola (2001) explored some reasons why teens and young adults get involved with drugs, and unfortunately, there are many instances in which the root of substance use goes much deeper than "experimentation." These include;

- **In attempt to fit in:** Making friends and establishing oneself at school can be difficult for adolescents. The teenage years often come with many insecurities, low self-esteem, and fear of not being accepted. In order to fit in, to feel "cool," or

join an older, more seductive social circle, many teens will start buying and using drugs.

- **To feel good:** Many adolescents abuse drugs or alcohol to get high. They are looking for a thrill, an intensified feeling that they cannot obtain through simple pleasures like food or exercise. This is where the addiction cycle starts to kick in. Drugs interact with the way our brain produces, and the way our body experiences, pleasure. When drugs are used, the brain creates up to ten times the normal amount of dopamine and euphoria a person should experience. It is unnatural chemistry that takes place, but our brain remembers it. It craves it.
- **To feel better:** There is the desire to feel good and there is the need to feel better. These are two very distinct entities when evaluating teen drug use. Teens looking to “feel better” are in truth, self-medicating. They are battling something deeper than peer pressure or a failed homework assignment. Some adolescents are suffering from deep-seated conditions like depression, social anxiety, and stress-related disorders. They use drugs to forget or replace their negative feelings with substance-induced pleasure.
- **Experimentation:** The brain does not finish developing until the age of 25. The last part of the brain to develop is the one that controls rational decision making, self-control, and judgment, making adolescents more prone to trying risky and daring activities. Drugs and alcohol are often easy, accessible outlets for experimentation that can severely impact the developing teenage brain.
- **Competition:** The need to perform, to impress, and to make proud is a great pressure for adolescents and young adults. Whether in school or on the field, young people consistently want to prove they are the best to their peers and parents. The competition to be outstanding, however, can be intense. In academics, for example, teens and young adults often rely on the misuse of prescription stimulants as “smart drugs” or study aids to improve academic performance.
- **Attention:** Teens often experience a lack of purpose or talent. They feel like they are not good enough to shine or are lacking something to make them special. These feelings may drive them toward substance abuse. Some youth do not know how to become the best, so they choose to become the worst in hopes of getting their parents’ and teachers’ undivided attention.
- **Lack of education:** Some adolescents and young adults grow up thinking drug and alcohol use is normal. Their favorite musicians are singing about it, the movies are glamorizing it, the TV ads are selling it. Whether you are sad, can’t sleep, or have a headache, there is a drug for you. Our culture has adopted the “pill cures all” mentality, leading our youth to feel the same about drugs. Many do not understand the consequences of drug use. Many teens do not know how it

can harm their minds, bodies, and relationships. They need proper education. They need someone to tell them the truth about drugs and alcohol.

- **Addiction:** Some teens and young adults are stuck amongst the cycle. At such a young age, they are more vulnerable to developing dependence and addiction. They get in over their heads at an early age and do not know how to get out.

HOW DO WE ABUSE DRUG?

According to Smith (2014), some children are already abusing drugs at age 12 or 13, which likely means that some begin even earlier. Early abuse often includes such substances as tobacco, alcohol, inhalants, marijuana, and prescription drugs such as sleeping pills and anti-anxiety medicines. If drug abuse persists into later adolescence, abusers typically become more heavily involved with marijuana and then advance to other drugs, while continuing their abuse of tobacco and alcohol. Ebigbola (2001), maintained that abuse of drugs in late childhood and early adolescence is associated with greater drug involvement. It is important to note that most youth, however, do not progress to abusing other drugs.

Oni (1996) gave various explanations of why some individuals become involved with drugs and then escalate to abuse. One explanation points to a biological cause, such as having a family history of drug or alcohol abuse. Another explanation is that abusing drugs can lead to affiliation with drug-abusing peers, which, in turn, exposes the individual to other drugs.

Orubuloye (2008) have found that youth who rapidly increase their substance abuse have high levels of risk factors with low levels of protective factors. Gender, race, and geographic location can also play a role in how and when children begin abusing drugs.

THE EFFECTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF DRUG ABUSE

According to Oni (1996), the effects and consequences of drug abuse includes the followings;

Nausea and abdominal pain, which can also lead to changes in appetite and weight loss. Increased strain on the liver, which puts the person at risk of significant liver damage or liver failure. Seizures, stroke, mental confusion and brain damage. Lung disease.

Substance-abusing youth are at higher risk than nonusers for mental health problems, including depression, conduct problems, personality disorders, suicidal thoughts, attempted suicide, and suicide.

Drug abuse is often accompanied by a devastating social impact upon community life.

The adverse effect and consequences of drug abuse on industry, education and training and the family, as well as on its contribution to violence, crime, financial problems, housing problems, homelessness and vagrancy.

Also, poor academic performance, school drop-outs, early marriages, aggressive and violent behaviour are the major effects of drug use/abuse by adolescents in schools. The short- and long-term physical effects related to teenage drug use will vary from teen to teen. Teenage drug abuse can cause dangerous health issues such as stroke, lung disease, cancer, infections (e.g., hepatitis, HIV, AIDS, etc.), and heart disease.

Another unpalatable outcome of drug abuse includes seizures, stroke, mental confusion and brain damage. Problems with memory, attention and decision-making, which make daily living more difficult. Global effects of drugs on the body, such as breast development in men and increases in body temperature, which can lead to other health calamities. These problems affect nearly every organ in the body and can include but are not limited to a weakened immune system, heart disease and problems, abdominal pain, strain on the liver, lung disease, mental conditions, and impaired memory, attention, and decision making. Substance abuse also results in behavioral changes.

HOW DO WE PREVENT DRUG ABUSE?

Preventive interventions can provide skills and support to high-risk youth to enhance levels of protective factors and prevent escalation to drug abuse.

Parents can use information on risk and protection to help them develop positive preventive actions (e.g., talking about family rules) before problems occur.

Educators can strengthen learning and bonding to school by addressing aggressive behaviors and poor concentration—risks associated with later onset of drug abuse and related problems.

Community leaders can assess community risk and protective factors associated with drug problems to best target prevention services.

Consider other strategies to prevent drug abuse:

1. Know your ward activities.
2. Pay attention to your ward on regular basis
3. Establish rules and consequences. ...
4. Know your wards friends. ...

5. Keep track of prescription drugs. ...
6. Provide support. ...
7. Set a good example.

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