

Evaluating the relationship between drug abuse and unemployment in Abakaliki Metropolis of Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The paper evaluates the relationship between drug abuse and unemployment in Abakaliki metropolis of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design and the data collection process was aided with the use of structured questionnaire. Using cluster and simple random techniques, a sample size of 400 respondents was sampled, comprising 204 males and 196 females. The study made use of social learning theory for its theoretical underpinning. The findings of the study reveals that association with peer groups that is not prosocial in executing its doings, involvement in antisocial groups like cultism and others are factors that contributes to the menace of drug abuse. There is a relationship between drug abuse and unemployment as majority of the youths are intoxicated by substance abuse while offending. At the end of the study, the researcher recommends that government should make and uphold a strict law that will guide against engaging in drugs abuse with adequate campaign on the dangers of consuming such drugs.

Keywords: Drug, Drug Abuse, Relationship, Unemployment, Youth

INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse is the use of an illicit drug such as heroin, or a licit substance, such as barbiturates, outside of medical supervision[1]. The substance is taken to modify or maintain a mood and may be potentially harmful to the person or society. Drug abuse is the recurrent use of illegal drugs, or the misuse of prescription or over-the-counter drugs with negative consequences. These consequences may involve problems at work, school, home or in interpersonal relationships. It involves also problems with the law and physical risks that come with using drugs in dangerous situations[2]. Between 1980 and 1994, the number of state and

local arrests for drug offenses rose from 581,000 to 1,350,000. During this time period, the composition of arrests shifted from mostly marijuana to mostly cocaine and heroin, and arrests for drug distribution accounted for a greater share of total drug arrests (from 18 percent to 27 percent of the total)[3]. According to Kalungi et al.[4], sedatives are reported to be the most abused drugs in Uganda followed by cannabis and volatile solvents. Opioids, khat, synthetic narcotic analgesics and hallucinogens are also abused. Although many studies about drugs have been done in Kampala but focus was not on crime. The Uganda demographic and health

survey[5] revealed that 22% and 4% of Uganda males and women respectively between 15 and 49 years were using tobacco which forced them to engage in different illegal activities to get money to purchase drug products. Abbo *et al.*[6] described drug abuse as a problem especially among marginal groups who are unemployed. Cannabis is mainly used by street and school youths, cocaine abuse is prevalent among high income Somali refugees. The researchers agree with Abbo *et al.* because the youth on street and the youth who are always idle and unemployed therefore engage in drug abuse to take time. According to Beckerlegs[7], Uganda khat chewers are part of growing number of hedonists who had adopted a form of recreation which defies main stream values. Khat is not a socially accepted leisure pursuit but has become Uganda's leisure activity. A khat session takes up to six hours when young men and women are unproductive and many chewers work in the informal sector. The social menace of drug abuse is not exceptional in Nigeria, drug abuse seems to be a major problem that affects human creativity, mental capability and productive human potentials. Drug abuse defines a state, emotional and sometimes physical, characterized by a compulsion to take drugs on a constant basis in order to experience its mental effects[8]. Drug abuse among youths is the frequent use of alcohol or other drugs during their youthful age or the use of alcohol or other drugs in a manner that is associated with problems and dysfunctions. Research has shown that drug related cases have increased since 1985[2]. In a related study, Geleta *et al.*[9] found that about 60 percent of substance abusers are young persons. The research observed the worrisome

The effects of drug abuse in Nigeria

Drug abuse and unemployment constitute a major threat to the survival and effective functioning of human societies, lives are lost daily through drug addiction and unemployment among our youths. A significant number of deaths from accidents and violent crimes have been traced to the activities of persons under influence of drugs[12]. In affirming this findings, Jatau *et al.*[13] argue that lives of promising youths in his own town, Afikpo has been lost as many of them are involved in drug abuse leading to involvement of heinous crimes like killing and destruction of properties (arson). When interviewed by some of these auspicious Nigerians, they attributed it to unemployment and needed something to live on. These are youths that fall within the productive age. Treatment facilities

preponderance of young persons in hospitals for alcohol and drug problems. The effects of drug abuse on an individual therefore form the basis for its cumulative effects on the society. This is the major danger of drug abuse. In spite of general decreases in the prevalence of the nonmedical use of most legal and illegal drugs in recent years, the abuse of alcohol and other drugs during adolescence and early adulthood remains a serious public health problem. Though drug abuse is a global health and social problem[10]. Drug is an effective substance in the life of any living thing to cure sickness and to make life healthy. It is true that drugs are used for beneficent therapeutic purposes, effective substance for good health, but they are being abused by people especially youths. Over the years, investigation has shown that there is a link between unemployment and drug usage by the youth in Nigeria. Unemployment is a risk factor for drug use and is more prevalent among the unemployed. Findings has shown that drug abuse/use decreases an individual's capacity and availability when he/she is trying to enter the labour market[11]. Most persons are likely to be involved in drug abuse if not being employed during an economic recession. This is why we keep recording a higher level of youth with negative effect of drug consumption on individual's employability during period of economic recession. The prevalent and rapid rise of cases of drug abuse in the State necessitated the present study that evaluates the relationship between unemployment and drug abuse in Abakaliki metropolis of Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

nationwide are now over burden with drug-related problems and cases[14]. The need to prevent drug abuse and provide employment among the teeming youths which are the growing generation of Nigeria thus becomes pertinent. Drug abuse seriously affect the individual's health and social function. Moreso, it hurt the user's family, friends and colleagues and society as large. According to Idowu *et al.*[15], stated that drug abuse plays a significant role in everyday interpersonal affairs, although there is no data shown, but many youths in Nigeria are also user of drugs, however, there are other users of such drug that is beyond moderate level to them. Drug abuse and unemployment constitute a very solving phenomenon and this situation appear to be based on an underlined psychological abnormality.

Theoretical framework

The study adopted the social learning propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977 to describe learning as a cognitive process that takes place in a social context and can occur purely through observation or direct instruction, even in the absence of motor reproduction or direct reinforcement[16]. The theory integrated behavioural and cognitive theories of learning in order to provide a comprehensive model that could account for the wide range of learning experiences that occur in the real world. Observational learning could not occur unless cognitive processes were at work. Take for instance, children observe the people (Model) around them behaving in various ways. These models could be

parents within the family, characters on TV, friends within their peer group, teachers at school et cetera. These provide examples of behaviour to observe and imitate. These models could be actual persons demonstrating the desired behaviour, individual describing the desired behaviour through verbal instruction or modelling through media platforms. In linkage of this theory to the subject matter, it implies that some of the people who engages in drug abuse does learn it either personal or impersonal mean like through television, watching their friends, family or any other character as thus leads to involvement in criminal act, perhaps as a result of inability to accommodate the after effect.

METHOD

Study Design, Study Frame and Sample Size

The study adopted the use of descriptive survey research. Descriptive survey research seeks to portray in detail the characteristics of individual, groups, areas and situation while defining a frequency of a certain phenomenon under study. It aimed to identify the relationship between studied variables. Ponto[17] describes survey research as research that involves the collection of data from a sample that has been chosen to represent a population to which the findings of the data analysis can be generalised. The reason of using descriptive

survey design is to identify frequencies, trends, correlations and characteristics of the population. The study area was is in Abakaliki metropolis of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. It is the capital of Ebonyi state. It is one of the 13 local governments in Ebonyi state and one of the 774 local government councils in Nigeria. The researcher's choice of Abakaliki metropolis was due to high level of drug abuse in the metropolis. Abakaliki is the capital city of Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

RESULTS

Table 1: Respondents responses on the relationship between drug abuse and unemployment in Abakaliki Metropolis

1	ITEMS	S A	A	D	S D	Mean	Remark
S/N							
1	Do you think that there is a relationship between drug abuse and unemployment	232	91	44	33	3.30	Accepted
2	Lack of job creates an atmosphere or safe haven for abuse of drugs	217	111	38	34	3.28	Accepted
3	The non-availability of job promotes the prevalence of drug abuse	213	142	33	12	3.39	Accepted
4	People who are employed may not indulge in drug abuse	132	219	31	18	3.16	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 shows that a majority 232 (3.30%) is of the opinion that there is a strong link between drug abuse and unemployment while 132 (3.16%) of the respondents opined that creation of job employment discourages drug abuse. The findings agreed with

the data from the in-depth interview. One of the respondent said:

Unemployment and drug abuse are linked together which paves way for it occurrence since idleness breeds evil. *The number of unemployed persons can deliberately influence*

the involvement of drug abuse. It is so alarming and disturbing. (Male, 54 years, civil servant, Abakaliki).

Another respondent who was moved with tears said:
In her affirmation, our government isn't trying. They should create more industries and make the

youth ministry more functional to absorb more youth. There is a more imminent danger ahead in the country. (Female civil servant, 44 years, Abakaliki).

Table 2: Respondents' responses on the effect of drug abuse on Nigeria youths

S/N	ITEMS	S A	A	D	S D	Mean	Remark
1	Drug abuse and unemployment has led to the loss of many lives	201	112	53	34	3.20	Accepted
2	It also affects the health of individual, psychological, mentally, physically etc	186	96	89	29	3.09	Accepted
3	It also affect the use's family, friends, colleagues and the society at large	110	196	48	46	2.92	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 shows that a majority 201 (3.20%) of the respondents are of the opinion that it has led to the loss of lives while 110 (2.92%) of the respondents opined that family members, friends, colleagues and the society are also negatively affected. The findings corroborates with the data from the in-depth interview guide. One of the respondents stated thus:

Looking at the scenario presented, you may agree with me that lives of promising youths has

been wasted leaving their dependents dejected, hopeless and depressed,

Another respondent who look despaired had this to say:

We're finished! Our source of livelihood and hope is gone. Where do we start from? Can we come out of this mess, God! Na your hand we de to start up life again.

Table 3: Respondents' responses on the possible measures/way forward to reduce unemployment and drug abuse

S/N	ITEMS	S A	A	D	S D	Mean	Remark
1	Do you agree that when there is unemployment opportunities, there will be a reduction of drug abuse.	220	127	21	32	3.34	Accepted
2	When there is effective law enforcement on job regulation, it will reduce the level of indulgence.	123	199	46	32	3.03	Rejected
3	The creation of industries in different sectors of the economy will enhance job opportunities and stop drug abusers	212	134	34	20	3.35	Accepted
4	The issue of favoritism and nepotism could also be a solution to unemployment and drug abuse	95	238	36	31	2.99	Accepted

Table 3 shows that a majority 220 (3.34%) of the respondents opined that employment opportunities will reduce drug abuse while 212 (3.35%) of the respondent said that creation of industries will stop drug abuse. One of the respondents said:

I have remained unemployed for years without no capital to start up a small business. The question I'm always been asked during interviews is either whose senator/rep. member gave me a letter. So, no letter no job in this our country.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings have shown that unemployment in Nigeria is related to youth involvement in drug abuse. Abdullahi, Abidemi and Ntozini[18] argue that most of the youths who are not gainfully employed have taken to drug as a result of frustration. Olanrewaju *et al.*[19] revealed that unemployment in Nigeria increased from 21.1% in 2020 to 23.9% in 2021 with youth unemployment at over 50% from 2021 to 2023. There is an increase of 16% unemployment growth rate in Nigeria leading to youth overdose of drugs. In quarter of 2020, roughly 21.8% million people in Nigeria were unemployed, which equaled to 27% of the labour force[13]. Ebonyi state reported the highest underemployment rate for the eastern zone at 19.7% while the unemployment rate for the reference period was 21.1% (18.9). This represent a 2.20 percentage point increase in the unemployment rate and a 2.42% in underemployment in the state[20]. In the third quarter of 2018, Ebonyi state recorded the third highest unemployment rate (21.1%) and recorded the lowest population in the labour force (1,528,582) in the zone. The study equally revealed the need for the government to initiate policies and create labour market that cater for the youth unemployment and

drug abuse. More efforts should be geared investing more on education to enable the youth become self-reliance instead of job seekers through skills development and training. This attest to the clarion call by ASUU unions that the educational institutions should be properly funded. Lucas *et al.*[21] found that unemployed people generally feel worse off in terms of their life satisfaction than is likely to be explained by their own income. In turn, we cannot expect them to feel better off if they became unemployed. Similarly, high and rising unemployment tends to foster drug abuse attitudes as many youths are idle/left with nothing to fall back to[22]. At this point that unemployment is widespread in the country plus poverty, the economy should be diversified by exploiting other areas of the economy like the tourism and culture sectors, education sectors, rebuilding of our social infrastructures, trade and commerce, science and technology, corporate governance, financial system, Small and Medium scale industries, Sports development etc. Our huge population must be use as an advantage simply by looking more outside the box and identifies innovative ideas on how certain things can be done.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the years, investigation has shown that there is a link between unemployment and drug usage by the youth in Nigeria. Unemployment is a risk factor for drug use and is more prevalent among the unemployed. Findings has shown that drug abuse/use decreases an individual's capacity and availability when he/she is trying to enter the labour market. Most persons are likely to be involved in drug abuse if not being employed during an economic recession. This is why we keep recording a higher level of youth with negative effect of drug consumption on individual's employability during period of economic recession. It is on this note that

the study calls for the federal government through the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Social Development in collaboration with Nigeria Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), to initiate and implement a working policy to address this social malady. More so, efforts should be made in creating more assistance to self-reliance and empowerment, improvement to education training provided with a greater focus on vocational skills. Finally, some social investment programmes such as the N-POWER scheme programme should be allowed to retain those engaged permanently in their different fields instead of phasing them off.

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