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Assessment of the effects of drug abuse on the youths and socio-economic development in Nigeria: a study of national drug law enforcement agency (NDLEA) Enugu State

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ABSTRACT: The study examined drug abuse and its effects on the youths and socio-economic development in Nigeria. A review of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Enugu State. It can be deduced that the economic impact of drug misuse is measured in terms of lost potential workforce, low productivity, and the establishment of an unfavorable investment climate, all of which have an impact on Nigeria's Gross National Income. The heinous crime of illicit drug use and abuse necessitates a social commitment of resources to evidence-based prevention methods and measures, like treatment, rehabilitation, and public education. In Enugu state, NDLEA has done well to stern the tide of fighting the scourge of drug abuse and drug trafficking among the youths. Data for the research were sourced from oral interview (primary sources) and documented works (secondary sources). The study was anchored on availability-proneness theory as propounded by Reginald Smart. The findings of the study revealed that youths constitute the high risk group for drug abuse. It was also found that public enlightenment strategy that involves the use of public lectures, seminars and open symposiums is key in checking the menace of drug abuse. The study recommended among other things; that there should be public enlightenment to expose the dangers drug abuse and government should provide more employment opportunities for the youths and review existing drug laws to include stiffer penalties for offenders.

Keywords: Drug abuse, socio-economic development, NDLEA, youths

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INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse and trafficking among adolescents and young adults have existed for decades. However, over the past 20 years, the percentage has grown alarmingly quickly across all social, economic, political, and geographic divides (Benjamin and Chidi, 2014).

Over 284 million people between the ages of 15 and 64 use illicit drugs annually, according to the World Drug Report (2022). Of this total, 27 million are problem drug users, and millions of people pass away each year as a result of using illegal drugs and alcohol (UNODC, 2011).One measure of how much drug use and trafficking costs economically is the estimation of the global illicit drug market. The Global Financial Index (GFI) estimates that the annual value of the global market for drug trafficking ranges from $426 billion to $652 billion (USD), making it the second-most lucrative illegal market after that for counterfeit and pirated goods. It could earn up to $1.13 trillion annually, according to estimates (GFI, 2017).

There is still an unmet and enormous desire for drug abuse prevention, cure, care, and sustenance, particularly in underdeveloped nations. Drug use has an impact not just on the user, but also on their family, friends, coworkers, and communities.

People from all walks of life, including those from various cultures, socioeconomic and political backgrounds, gender, age, and religions, abuse or use these drugs. Some people do not just see it as a health or social issue; they see it as a threat to human survival. In 1996, 3.6 million Nigerians were estimated to be drug addicts (NDCMP, 1999). A study led by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2018 revealed the vast scope of Nigeria's drug problem (NBS).

Approximately 15% of Nigeria's adult population (or nearly 14.3 million people) reported using psychotropic drugs at a required substantial level in 2017, according to the survey. This statistic raises concerns because it more than doubles the adult unemployment rate, which was 5.6 percent globally in 2016 (Yomi, 2019).

Despite the efforts of law enforcement organizations, it is concerning that minors can access illegal substances with relative ease. This seems to be an unintended result of the use of Nigerian drug trafficking as a conduit for global drug trafficking. In Nigeria's major cities, there are emerging local drug markets (Makanjuola et al., 2007). Drug-using adolescents struggle with social, physical, psychological, and financial issues. The operations of drug traffickers and addiction regularly result in the loss of life. Numerous violent crimes and countless fatal accidents have been associated with the actions of drug addicts. International drug conferences, symposia, and seminars are increasing, which reflects growing concern over the widespread use of drugs worldwide, including in Nigeria (Essien, 2010). All forms of illegal drugs, including those from the Federal Capital Territory, are frequently abused in all the states, according to the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency's (NDLEA) drug data statement. According to a quick situation assessment of the drug problem conducted by NDLEA/United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 22 states of the federation spanning the six geopolitical zones, cannabis is the narcotic most overused by all categories/classes of people in Nigeria (NDLEA, 2017). Most of them were secondary and higher education students, as well as commercial sex workers, artisans, professionals, young people without jobs, journalists, religious leaders, law enforcement officers, and inmates (Erah and Omatseye, 2017).

Statement of the problem

Nigeria is both a consumer country and an international transit point for illicit trade heading to Europe and America. Local markets for the sale and consumption of cocaine and heroin have been established in Nigeria as a result of the effects of this illegal trade. The consumption of various combinations of chemicals that produce psychotropic vapors that are frequently abused is a growing trend in the northern part of the country. These substances include, but are not limited to, aerosols, gasoline, glue, nail polish removers, and pesticides. According to NDLEA annual reports, societal factors like gender, age, ethnicity, and social status have contributed to an increase in drug addiction, illicit cannabis cultivation, and trafficking over time (NDLEA, 2017).

According to research, the South-East, South-South, and Southwest account for the majority of those detained for transnational illicit drug trafficking, leading to arrests in other regions of the nation. The South-South, North-Central, North-East, and South-West are next in line in terms of drug use, while the North-West and southeast are ranked first and second, respectively (NDLEA, 2017).The same data shows that 8,826 alleged drug offenders, including 8,332 men and 494 women, were apprehended in 2019. The drugs that were taken were 166,677.18 kg in total weight. Cannabis, as anticipated, accounted for the majority of the drugs seized, accounting for 158,852.20 kg, followed by psychotropics (7,407 kg), cocaine (222.04 kg), heroin (56. 449 kg), methamphetamine (119.2 kg), and ephedrine (35.8 kg). It is unfortunate that the country has acquired the reputation of a drug-producing nation as a result of the discovery of over ten clandestine illicit drug labs in Anambra and other regions of the country in just the years 2015 and 2016 (Mitchel, 2016).

In Nigeria, drug use is a problem that affects both men and women equally. A total of 48,728 men and 3,226 women were detained between 2000 and 2010 (NDLEA seizure report, 2017). The workforce and human capital will be severely harmed by this. Productivity suffers when traffickers are incarcerated because they are unable to participate in the labor market. The social and economic effects of drug abuse are significant in Nigeria. Only a few examples include increased demand for medical and other treatment services, financial losses and distress suffered by victims of drug-related crime, and increased responsibility for addicts' support. Additionally, there is a greater loss of the potential workforce, which results in weak economic performance and a volatile investment environment, all of which lower the GDP of the nation.

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has done well in Enugu state in halting the tide of the drug abuse and trafficking scourge. In the state's Udi Local Government Area, the agency found "a secret laboratory where 20kg of amphetamine were produced." The substance was referred to by the agency as "the most expensive and dangerous illicit drug in the world" (Anthony, 2018). In addition to other locations, Umuokorouba in Ozalla, Nkanu West Local Government Area of the state is where illicit drugs are manufactured, according to Anthony (2018). He emphasized that the agency had already "seized one ton, or 1000 kg, of illicit drugs" in the first half of 2018.It is against this backdrop, that this study poses the following research questions; How has drug abuse affected loss of potential manpower, low productivity and human capital development among

the youths in Enugu State?, How has National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) faired in curbing the menace of drug abuse, distresses suffered by drug-related crime victims and increased burden for the support of the addicts in Enugu state? How can societal dedication of resources to evidence-based prevention strategies, treatment, rehabilitation, and public enlightenment program address the effect of drug abuse in Enugu state

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this paper are; (i) to find out how drug abuse affected loss of potential manpower, low productivity and human capital development among the youths in Enugu State.(ii) to find out how National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has fared in curbing the menace of drug abuse, distresses suffered by drug-related crime victims and increased burden for the support of the addicts in Enugu state and (iii) to determine how societal dedication of resources to evidence-based prevention strategies, treatment, rehabilitation, and public enlightenment program can address the effect of drug abuse in Enugu state**.**

Literature review

The concept of drug abuse

Most definitions of substance abuse available in the literature are not usually expressed in economic terms but in public health, medical, and criminal justice context. For example, The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) puts the meaning of drug addiction as a prolonged, lapsing malady characterized by habitual drug search and consumption even with opposing implication (NIDA, 2018). A definition expressed in the epidemiological term is that drug abuse is considered to happen when a relevant etiological division is larger than zero, that is, when drug abuse harmfully affects the health of the consumer (Eric et.al, 2000).

A more and all-inclusive definition within the realms of economics and sociology, which cuts across non-medical costs such as accidents and policing, is that abuse exists when drug use, most often illicit drugs, and involves a net social cost in addition to the resource cost of the provision of that drug. That is, substance abuse arises if the society incurs net cost as a result of drug use. Specifically, substances are abused by individuals when they are consumed in a different way from medically recommended or socially acceptable forms within the society. Simply put, the drug is said to be abused when its use is not medically necessary, or it is used for non-medical purposes; its use is legally prohibited, or it is excessively used as in the case of a socially acceptable drug like alcohol. 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 (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2012). Differing definitions of drug abuse are used in public health, medical and criminal justice contexts. In some cases, criminal or anti-social behaviour occurs when the person is under the influence of a drug, and long-term personality changes in individuals may also occur (World Drug Report, 2014). In addition to possible physical, social, and psychological harm, the use of some drugs may also lead to criminal penalties, although these vary widely depending on the local jurisdiction (Ksir and Ray, 2002).

Commonly abused drugs

The most frequently implicated drugs, consistently reported by the majority of the studies were; cannabis, codeine, amphetamine/dexamphetamine, heroin, cocaine, diazepam and cough syrup, Reactivan (fencamfamine), Mandrax and tramadol (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). Some drugs were frequently reported by studies published in the early 80s, Proplus (caffeine 50 mg) was reported by three papers published in 1982 (Nevadomsky, 1982) and Madrax (Methadone and diphenhydramine) in studies published between 1981 and 2011 (Akpala and Bolaji, 1991). The absence of these drugs in recent studies may be related to the decline in their availability in Nigeria. Cannabis was the most abused drug reported across the different study populations. The prevalence of cannabis abuse among members of the general public was 10.8% and 22.7% among adolescents of 25 years and younger (Namadi, 2016). The frequency of abuse among secondary school students was between 0.6 and 34%, with a pooled prevalence of 12.5% (Erah and Omatseye, 2017). The abuse of cannabis among undergraduate students was also common, with a prevalence of 8–11% (Essien, 2010). The frequency of cocaine abuse ranges from 1.6 to 4.8% among secondary school students, 0.6–10% among undergraduate students (Ihezue, 1988) and 0.1–0.6% among members of the general public (Namadi, 2016). The widespread use of cocaine in Nigeria may be related to easy access due to increased trafficking of drugs despite the existing legal control measures (Edafiadhe, 2005).

Reasons for drug abuse in Nigeria

Determination of the reasons why people indulge in drug abuse may guide the development and implementation of targeted interventions for reducing the burden of drug abuse in Nigeria. The eleven studies that reported the reasons for drug abuse gave several reasons. The commonly reported reasons included the following: to increase physical performance (Yunusa et al., 2017) to

drive pleasure, desire to relax/sleep, experiment/curiosity, to keep awake, to relieve stress, to relieve anxiety, unemployment, frustration, and easy access (Nevadomsky, 1982).

Curiosity and desire to find out the effectiveness of a particular drug

Curiosity to experiment the unknown facts about drugs thus motivates youth into drug use. The first experience drug abuse produces a state of arousal such as happiness and pleasure which in turn motivates them to continue.

Influence of peer group

Peer pressure plays a major role in influencing many youths into drug use and abuse.

Environmental conditions

Many young people live in communities or slums which suffer from multiple deprivations, with high unemployment, low quality housing, lack of water sanitation and hygiene, increased violence and crime rate, and where the surrounding infra-structure of local services is splintered and poorly resourced. In such communities drug supply and use often thrive as an alternative source of quick money often controlled by powerful criminal groups.

Promotion and availability

Alcohol and pain relief drugs are regularly advertised on television especially at peak hours. The advertising of tobacco products is now banned, but research from Strathclyde University (published by the Cancer Research institute) concluded that advertising did encourage young people to start smoking and reinforced the habit among existing smokers. Despite legislation, children and adolescents have no problems obtaining alcohol and tobacco from any number of retail outlets. A variety of products are openly hawked in kiosks, at parks and on the roadside. It is not uncommon to see people openly advertising sexual enhancing drugs to pedestrians all over major cities in the country.

Effects of drug abuse on the youths

Drug abuse is a very risky adventure and it is therefore accompanied with multiple harmful effects on the individual, family and the society. In line with the above statement, Fox, Oliver and Ellis (2013) observed that the consequences of drug abuse can be thought of in three parts that together determine the overall harm of unregulated drug taking. The first is the direct physical harm of the substance to the individual drug user; the second is the tendency of the drug to induce dependence; and thirdly the effect of abuse of the drug on families, communities and society.

At the individual level, for instance, drug abuse leads to psychological, physiological complications, such as insomnia, lack of concentration, negligence of one's responsibility, poor academic performance, loss of job and social status. Hussein, Mukhtar and Umar (2017) have even observed that there is a strong nexus between drug abuse and various forms of criminal activities among youths in Nigerian, such as such as murder, rape, assault, robbery, burglary, auto theft, larceny and arson. In line with this, Ibrahim and Mukhtar (2016) established that prostitution also has positive relationship with drug addiction. In addition, Dukku (2010) linked vandalism, thuggery, and gang warfare with drug abuse. The family is affected by drug abuse among members through domestic violence, divorce and tarnishing the image of the family.

The Socio-economic effects of drug abuse in Nigeria

From this work, it can be drawn that the effects of drug abuse can really be divided into two which are; social and economic. The economic effect looks at the loss of potential manpower, low productivity, and creation of an unfavourable environment for investors which of course will affects the Gross National Income (GNI) of Nigeria. The Social effect looks at issues dealing with increasing criminal activities associated with drug abuse like robbery, burglary, rape, vandalization of public properties, increasing rate of HIV/AIDS, the congestion of penitentiaries where the government spends more in the maintenance of prisoners, and of course the growing numbers of destitute which our social welfare administration system cannot carter for thereby depleting government's budget (Paul, 2017).

The theoretical construct

The study is anchored on Smart (1980) availability-Proneness theory. The basic assumption of the availability-proneness theory is that substance abuse takes place when a prone individual is exposed to a high level of drug's or substance's availability (Smart, as cited in Dukku, 2012). The concept of availability depicts a set of physical, social, and economic circumstances surrounding the ease or difficulty of obtaining drugs, especially with reference to their costs and the amount of physical effort required to obtain them (Dukku, 2012). Availability-proneness theory is dealing with not only deviant and criminal behaviors, but also set a specific focus on the substance abuse (Jiloha, 2009).

Application of the theory to the study

The theoretical stance of availability proneness gives credence to and corroborates the ongoing national war on drug abuse in Nigeria. The theory is of the view that availability and accessibility to drugs are important factors in initiation and maintenance of substance abuse among youths. Adolescents who have an easy access to illegal drugs or alcohol because their parents or elder siblings are using or they can afford it are more likely to use the drugs than those whose parents are not using it and those who cannot afford to buy the drugs. The availability is sometimes a product of neighbourhood drug-dealing activities. Thus, drug distribution organizations have resulted in a greater availability of drugs to youth and other individuals living in the communities in Enugu state. This is because the availability of drugs accompanied by the lack of economic opportunity is one of the main factors responsible for the increasing use of drugs and the drug-dealing activities of minority youth in ghetto areas of a city.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The researchers adopted descriptive research design for this study. Mixed method (Primary and Secondary) were used in gathering the data that was analyzed to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses.

Population of the study

This study has a population of one thousand one hundred (1,100). This is consisting of all the officials and staff of NDLEA, Enugu.

Sample size

The sample size was 293 which were determined using Yamane (1967) proportional sampling technique formula. This sample was drawn randomly from the selected staff of the command, especially from the categories of staff that supplied the necessary information as regards to the subject matter.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Drug abuse affected loss of potential manpower, low productivity and human capital development among the youths in Enugu State

Drug addiction is a social problem pervading all aspects of life in Nigeria. The use of psychoactive drugs like cannabis, cracks, heroin etc has torn many families apart, destroyed lives, corrupted the social values and prevented many youth from fulfilling their hopes and aspirations, (NDLEA, 2018). Recent findings reveal that youths from Enugu State especially school going children are neck deep into consumption of illicit drugs. For instance twenty five (25) students from Achara Layout Secondary school and ten (10) students from Government Technical Collage Enugu State were expelled in 2012 owing to their involvement in drug (Achema, 2013). Furthermore, the NDLEA, 2013 survey among secondary school in Enugu state revealed that out of 48 drugs related patients in neuro psychiatric hospital New Haven Enugu, state 26 of them were students who have developed mental problems arising from the use of cannabis.

As a response to the above development, Enugu State Government has directed the establishment of Drug-Free Club in all secondary schools in the state. The Special Assistant to the Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi on Drugs and Narcotics, Mr. Chidi Egbuogu, made this known in a statement to mark the 2022 International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. Mr. Egbuogu, in the statement, explained that the establishment of the Drug-Free club is part of the Drug Abuse Prevention Education Programme and strategies that would help safeguard the students and school environment from illicit drug activities. The statement pointed out that the government directive is an outcome of the maiden Town Hall Meeting held across the three Senatorial districts of the state (Victor, 2022).

According to the statement, Enugu State Government is focused more on preventive than curative efforts against drug abuse.“Against this foregoing, the Enugu State Government through maiden programme (Town Hall meeting) held between February and April 2021 across the three Senatorial Zones of Enugu State, through the office of the Special Assistant to the Governor on Drug and Narcotics, which becomes imperative to begin the implementation of action plans based on the general consensus of the stakeholder.

In line with the findings of the National Household Survey (2018), the drug use prevalence rate in Enugu State is 16.3% (370,000 persons).This figure shows that Imo State is the zone with the highest drug use prevalence rate of 18.1% (500,000 persons) closely followed by Enugu State. These findings are striking and call for urgent intervention to mitigate the negative consequences on the health, socio-economic and security of Enugu State,” the statement indicated. The statement links the use of hard drugs and substance abuse to the rising wave of crimes, health challenges and anti-social behaviours in the Nigerian State, including rape, violence, mental disorder and job loss.

The statement further proved that Enugu State Government will collaborate with the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), the International Society for Substance Use Prevention professionals (ISSUP) and

the Post Primary School Management Board (PPSMB), in the preventive measures against drug use and Trafficking in the state. Most recently the Enugu State Government donated to NDLEA Enugu State Command with four Sienna Buses to aid them in their operational activities and knowing fully that abuse of psychoactive drugs is responsible for crimes, terrorism, insurgency, rape, kidnapping, mental disorder, untimely death, assassinations, family disintegration and numerous problems in families and society as a whole. With the assistance, the State Government is given to the NDLEA who has the officers and men with adequate professional skill to reduce the problems to the barest minimum by the grace of God, the situation can still be redeemed and we shall win the war," the statement said. In the words of Dennis (2021), the Commander of Nigeria Drug Law Enforcement Agency, NDLEA, in Enugu state, Mr. Bassey Aniete stated that the drug addicts in the society were neither the enemies of the agency nor that of the society. He said it was rather the drug barons and peddlers who in their avarice for wealth lure the addicts to patronize their illicit drugs that are the real dangers of the society. He further revealed that the command within January and June 2021 arrested 46 suspects made up of 38 males and eight females with seizure of 717.578 kilograms of cannabis sativa, 132.39 grammes of cocaine, 34.90 grammes of methamphetamine and 81.810 kilograms of psychotropic substance. Drawing inference from the analysis of the interview conducted at the office of NDLEA Enugu state command, Directorate of Media and Advocacy revealed that 40 per cent of Nigerian youth between 18 and 35 years are deeply involved in the abuse of drugs. She opined that the statistic was worrisome and showed that the problem had reached an epidemic level in the country. She added that the rate at which youths were becoming addicted to illicit drugs had reached an alarming state. She rhetorically asked, "What will the country be like if 40 per cent of our underage youths are already into drug abuse and drug trafficking". She further stressed that the prevalence of drug abuse in Nigeria and the negative impact on public health and safety necessitate that all hands must be on deck to curtail the challenge in our country. There is no better time than now for all relevant stakeholders to rise up and join the crusade the NDLEA is leading to make our country a better and safer nation, especially for the youths who are the leaders of tomorrow. The official said the agency was presently undertaking sensitization on drug abuse and its consequences in tertiary institutions.

National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has fared well in curbing menace of drug abuse, treatment of drug-related victims and increased burden for the support of the addicts in Enugu state

Enugu state has witnessed dynamics in the trend and pattern of drug abuse and trafficking. The rampant use of pharmaceutical products such as cough syrups benelyne with codeine, Totoline, expectorant etc and controlled drugs such as Tramadol, Rohypnol or Roch, Butazol, Pemoline Amphetamines, benzodiazepines, valium, D5, Lexotan, etc led to their abuse without proportion. These led to various forms of drug related crimes in the state. In 2010, the NDLEA made a single seizure of 8 million tablets of pemoline a stimulant drug at Akanu Ibiam International Airport (NDCMP, 2012). Enugu state has the record of the highest number of drug related crimes in Southeast after Imo state (NDLEA Annual Drug Report, 2014). The large number of youth gangs in the state has been involved in many drug related crimes ranging from drug trafficking, theft, armed robbery, rape, to other forms of social unrest and violence. There are several cases of inter-gang violence resulting to criminal acts of stabbings, maiming and killing of members of rival groups which have given rise to societal concerns.

According to a police report 2014 confrontations between drug dealers with law enforcement leading to their death was recorded in the state. Although cannabis, cough syrups and other controlled drugs are in every nook and cranny of the city, cocaine and heroin and alcohol are exclusively sold in Enugu–Ezike Igbo-Eze North LGA, in Nsukka LGA, some places like Odenigwe, Hilltop and Amaeze. In Aninri LGA, communities like Odume, Nenwe, Ndeabo, Mpu and Okpanku are the areas the hard drugs can be found. In all these areas, large quantities of drugs, particularly cannabis from Abia, Imo and Ebonyi States are smuggled into Enugu State. The statistics of youth involvement in drug related crimes indicates that in 2013, 57 youths were arrested, in 2014, 43 were arrested while in 2015, 75 youths were arrested for drug related offences by the NDLEA in Enugu state command of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (Hamza, 2015).

The Commander, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in Enugu State, Mr Abdul Abdullahi says the command arrested 116 drug dealers and users between January 2020 and February 2021. Abdullahi said this on Tuesday in Enugu during a sensitization programme and town hall meeting on 'Preventing Drug Challenges in Enugu State: The Need to Mobilise Stakeholders for Collective Action'. The commander said that the suspects were made up of 112 males and four females. He mentioned the substances that were seized from the suspects to include 2.5 tons of cannabis sativa, 76.5 grammes of cocaine and 3.44 grammes of heroine. Others are 119.45 grammes of methamphetamine and 30 kilogrammes of psychotropic substances.

He said that the command also secured 29 convictions within the period while 14 persons were undergoing rehabilitation. Abdullahi said that it was sad that in spite of the anti drug crusade of the agency, "incidences of drug abuse and trafficking appear to be making inroads in

the society. This is threatening the foundation of the society and the most disturbing is the active participation of youths in this business. He reiterated that the deadly effects of drug abuse needed to be a wakeup call to parents, brothers, sisters, schools, government, traditional rulers and others. He further stressed that most persons who use drugs now will later regret it. Some remain unemployed, unemployable, mentally damaged and die early in some cases.

In June 2023, the Apapa Special Area Command of the NDLEA disclosed that it had recorded numerous seizures of illicit drugs worth N6 billion in one week in Apapa area of the state (Evlyn, 2022). The seizure which included 1,518kgs of Tafrodol brand of Tramadol (120grms) and Tramadol (225mg and 250mg) weighing 3,553 kilograms according to the Area Commander, Mr Ameh Inalegwu, was a demonstration of the resolve of the command to bring down non-cooperating entity within the maritime space within the command's jurisdiction. An additional seizure of 14, 0800 kilograms of Cough Syrup with Codeine was made in January 2022 (Evlyn, 2022).

From the interview conducted at the office of the Directorate of Planning, Research and Statistics of NDLEA Enugu state command, the informant revealed the only remedy to curb the menace of drug abuse is that government should provide more employment opportunities for the youths and review existing drug laws to include stiffer penalties for offenders. The respondent further stressed that allocation of funds to drug-related agencies should be increased to strengthen the fight against the abuse of drugs. The enforcement activities according to the informant should be more effective through strengthening the activities of taskforce at Federal and State governments' levels.

Another interviewee of the agency opined that Nigerian borders should be well protected with surveillance activities by responsible agencies. Community-based education awareness in the form of mass campaigns through media houses both print and electronic, adverts, flyers, banners, radio jingles, lectures and other programmes in religious places and public functions should be created and sustained. The respondent stated that secondary school-based programmes aimed at encouraging healthy practices and lifestyle among adolescents would help to prevent substance use. There is also a need for periodic review of the curriculum in schools to introduce topics centred on dangers of drug abuse. Parents need to educate their children early enough on the risks associated with drug abuse. They should monitor the children closely and know the kinds of friends they are keeping.

Also, another respondent who pleaded under the condition of anonymity suggested that as a preventive measure and to protect the society from drugs, National Assembly should pass a law or an amendment to the NDLEA Act to make it mandatory for public officials, including elective office seekers from top to bottom, to be tested for drugs by the NDLEA as condition to participate in elections or to be appointed into public offices. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that NDLEA has done a tremendous work to curb the incidence of drug abuse among our youths. This is in support of the hypothesis that says "National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has fared in curbing menace of drug abuse, treatment of drug-related victims and increased burden for the support of the addicts in Enugu state.

Societal dedication of resources to evidence-based prevention strategies, rehabilitation, and public enlightenment program can address the effect of drug abuse in Enugu state

Drug prevention strategies have been seen as a solution-oriented process and are structured, to persuade individuals (adolescents) who are using drugs to seek help in overcoming their addiction or continual use (Obiechina and Isiguzo, 2016). A successful intervention strategy presents an opportunity for an addicted person to accept help in taking the first step toward recovery. In curbing drug use, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) (Oluremi, 2012) highlighted some principles that are evidence-based. Among these principles are to improve effectiveness, prevention programmes should be tailored to address risks that are specific to population characteristics such as ethnicity, gender and age; family-based prevention programmes which should enhance family bonding, parenting skills and relationships amongst other things; and finally, principles which addresses prevention at the community level.

Furthermore, intervention strategies should involve peer education, schools, non-governmental organizations (NGO) and family (Obiechina and Isiguzo, 2016). Strategies, as mentioned by Mamman et.al (2014) and Oluremi (2012) are public awareness campaign, liaison between research and non-governmental organization, designing curricula on drug education, establishing counseling centres for drug control and National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) should also intensify their campaigns on anti-drug. There have been contextual studies/success stories that have been documented such as a clinical trial study by Wagenaar et al (2000) on Communities mobilizing for change on alcohol. This study was a group-randomized trial that implemented and evaluated the organizing efforts of a community to change its policies and practices to reduce access to alcohol for youths. The results from the study suggested that a community-organizing approach to limit the access of alcohol to youths may be effective for some sub-groups.

In order to ensure that the prevention strategies and interventions put in place for curbing drug use among

adolescents, witnesses a high success rate, public perception needs to be ascertained. The public's mindset towards the subject matter needs to be put into prevention and intervention plans for curbing drug use. To reduce the rate of illicit drug use, the public has an important role to play, how they perceive illicit drug use among youths must be ascertained. Moreover, how the public perceives an issue may reveal the level of attention it gets and the best strategies of addressing it.

Perception is shaped by things such as experience, cultural expectations, motivations, moods, needs and attitudes (Sadaf, 2011). Ignoring public perception on issues that require modifying public policy or public behaviour, might result in the failure of technically good innovations (Granger-Morgan, 1997).

A casual observation of the communities in Enugu State as the study area will quickly reveal different drug related problems. In these communities, it is not uncommon to find many youths and adults alike roaming the urban and rural streets aimlessly. The number of mentally challenged who parade the streets in these communities has also continued to increase. Drinking bars and joints for cannabis have also become highly lucrative business in these communities. Crime and other social vices are also increasing in these rural areas. Drug abuse directly and indirectly produces many physical, mental, social health problems among the abusers (WHO, 2012). Several factors capable of intensifying the risks for initiating and continuing drug abuse such as poor socio-economic status, poor quality of parenting, peer group influence, and biological predispositions towards drug addiction (Solis, Shadur, Burns and Hussong, 2012) abound in the area of study. Preventing drug abuse requires concerted efforts by all. It requires the community to prevent drug and alcohol use among young people. Effectively addressing substance abuse requires awareness and understanding of current drugs of abuse and related concerns (Radin et al., 2015). Communities' perception of drug abuse determines the community norm and their level of concern for preventing drug abuse.

Public enlightenment strategy involves the use of public lectures, seminars, open symposiums, display of posters and the involvement of the print and electronic media in checking the menace of drug abuse. Public enlightenment is a primary prevention strategy adopted to prevent the use of illicit drugs. Under this programme strategy of NDLEA, the use mass media such as radio, television, newspapers, internet pamphlets, handbooks, posters and magazines are used to disseminate information on the dangers of drug abuse to the public. As reflected in its Annual report, NDLEA noted that one of the responsibilities of its drug demand reduction unit (DDRU) is to effectively sensitize the public on the dangers inherent in drug abuse.

The NDLEA noted that for the period of 2010-2015, an average of 1000 schools were covered each year nationwide for preventive education activities. Similarly, activities were carried out for other target groups such as market women, road transport workers and artisans. The DDRU also noted that more than 100 schools have functioning drug free clubs in Enugu State. Further preventive drug education has been infused in schools' curricula in relevant subjects of basic education for secondary schools, in the general studies of tertiary institutions (universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education) and in the curricula of adult and non-formal education.

Highlight of this study

The following are the main findings of the study.

From the analysis of the views and opinions of the authors above, the following findings were made:

1. The study revealed that cannabis, cough syrups and other controlled drugs are in every nook and cranny of the Enugu state, such as; Enugu–Ezike Igbo-Eze North LGA, in Nsukka LGA, some places like Odenigwe, Hilltop and Amaeze. In Aninri LGA, communities like Odume, Nenwe, Ndeabo, Mpu and Okpanku are the areas the hard drugs can be found.
2. The study also found that NDLEA, 2018 survey among secondary school in Enugu state revealed that out of 48 drugs related patients in neuro psychiatric hospital New Haven Enugu, state 26 of them were students who have developed mental problems arising from the use of cannabis.
3. The findings of the study further revealed that public enlightenment strategy that involves the use of public lectures, seminars, open symposiums and display of posters is key in checking the menace of drug abuse.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, we have been able to establish evidence that the economic impact of drug misuse is measured in terms of lost potential workforce, low productivity, and the establishment of an unfavorable investment climate, all of which have an impact on Nigeria's Gross National Income. Alcohol, cigarette and cannabis were the most commonly used and abused substances in Enugu state. The heinous crime of illicit drug use and abuse necessitates a social commitment of resources to evidence-based prevention methods and measures, like treatment, rehabilitation, and public education and enlightenment. Drug abuse has been a cause of many debilitating conditions such as schizophrenia and psychosis, leading to psychiatric admissions. Therefore, stringent measures and sustainable interventions are urgently needed to curb the increasing burden of drug abuse in Enugu state in

particular and Nigeria in general.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends that:

1. Effort must be doubled by the community leaders and the government of Enugu state to address the issue of heavy consumption and abuse of drugs in the areas like cannabis; Enugu–Ezike Igbo-Eze North LGA, in Nsukka LGA, some places like Odenigwe, Hilltop and Amaeze. In Aninri LGA, communities like Odume, Nenwe, Ndeabo, Mpu and Okpanku are the areas the hard drugs can be found.
2. There should be public enlightenment as a primary prevention strategy to prevent the use of illicit drugs. Such as the use of mass media such as radio, television, newspapers, internet pamphlets, hand books, posters and magazines to disseminate information on the dangers of drug abuse to the public.
3. The NDLEA should intensify the effort in stemming the tide against the menace of drug abuse in Nigeria. Through launching of interventions to muzzle drug traffickers, with pre-emptive strikes and arrests, so as to salvage, reverse and control the environment and make the illicit trade unattractive.

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