

<p align="center">ILLICIT USE OF DRUGS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON YOUTH RESTIVENESS AND CRIMINALITY IN BENIN CITY</p>		<p align="center">Sociology & Anthropology</p> <p>Keywords: Youth, drugs, criminality, restiveness.</p>
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Abstract

Disturbingly high level of illicit drug use has become a major concern to the Nigerian society such that some drugs have thus been recently outlawed by the Nigerian government because of its severe implications. This study therefore sought to examine the link between illicit use of drugs, youth restiveness and criminal behaviour in Benin City. The study was cross-sectional and utilized the quantitative method of data collection. Benin City was stratified along the existing 12 wards from which 360 respondents were sampled. A descriptive analysis of the data gathered was done utilizing inferential statistics. Findings from the investigation revealed that illicit drug use amongst youth propel them into criminal behaviour and restiveness. Based on the findings of the study, there is the need for government, religious bodies, family and the media to assist in the campaign against the illegal use of drugs by youths.

Introduction

The illicit use of drugs remains a serious risk behaviour among youth with grave social and health implications and it is rapidly becoming a global problem (Lakhanpal, Agnihotri, 2007). In fact, most nations around the globe are affected, as drug are being used excessively by their citizens (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes, 2007). The increase in the illicit use of drugs globally, brought about issues like high rate of violence, crimes and a drop in the social structure (Oshodi, Aina and Onajole, 2010). Horrible youthful activities associated with the illicit use of drugs are wide spread. Hence, it is a major cause of concern to the society, government and other stakeholders in Nigeria especially due to the negative effects that it has on the youth in the society. As Giade (2012), Oshodi, Aina and Onajide (2010) rightly noted, the problem of illicit use of drugs by youth in the society poses a great threat to almost every facet of life and nation as a whole. David and Stanley (1990) refers to illicit use of drugs as the taking of drugs, despite knowing that it has side effects like physical and occupational. Illicit use of drugs tends to affect students’ academic performance as well as leading to unnecessary agitations which in the long run, affects the school calendar.

Illicit drug use most unfortunately has become a norm in the Nigerian society as it incidence and prevalence is on the increase. Statistics available in Nigeria show that the North-West has a record of 37.47% of illicit drug users while the South-West is rated second with 17.32%, the South-East comes third with 13.5%, North Central, 11.7% while North-East has 8.54% (Akannam, 2008). The estimated life time consumption of cannabis among the population in Nigeria is 10.8%, followed by psychotropic substances like benzodiazepine and amphetamine-type stimulants 10.6%, heroin 1.6% and codein 1.4% in both urban and rural areas (UNODC, 2007).

Illicit drugs are drugs which individuals not only prescribed for themselves, but obtain and use them. The illicit use of such drugs which can be gotten over the counter or in local joint tends to undermine moral restraints and thus encourages criminality among the youth. These youths commonly abuse or use them, believing that it could help bar their minds from pressure, while others use it to show open rebellion against constituted authority. Unfortunately, it would appear, that the efforts that government has made in past has yielded little or no fruits, as drugs are still illicitly being sold and used by youths. Aware of the damaging effects of the illicit use of drugs, governments have, through legislative framework, made some specific drugs not to be sold without prescription by a qualified medical practitioner or across the counter. The question that still agitates the minds of concerned citizens of Nigeria remains as to whether government and the society in general are basically over blowing the implications of the illicit use of drugs among the Nigerian youth. This study therefore sought to investigate the implications of the illicit use of drugs on youth in Benin City.

Research objectives

This study was designed to investigate the illicit use of drugs and its implications on youth restiveness in Benin City.

Research questions

1. Does illicit drug use lead to youth restiveness and criminality in Benin City?
2. Has illicit use of drugs any negative implications on the health of youth in Benin City?
3. Is poor academic performance of youth in Benin City caused by illicit use of drugs?

Brief review of related literature

Drugs have been variously defined by different scholars and relevant organizations. A drug is a substance which when ingested into the living organism may alter one or more of its functions. The World Health Organization (2006) defined drug as any substance other than those needed for the sustenance of normal health, which when taken into the living organism, could modify one or more of its function (Ghodse, 2003). In medicine, drugs refer to any substance with the potential of preventing or curing diseases. They may be legal or illegal. Illicit use of drugs refers to the non-medical use of drugs. A substance is considered illicitly used, if it is deliberately taken to induce psychological or physiological effects or both, for purposes other than therapeutic ones.

Mersy (2003) believes that illicit use of drugs is the use of drugs without a doctor's prescription while Fayombo (1998) sees it as the illegal utilization of substance which modifies moods and leads to social malfunctioning in the behaviour of the user. Drugs that are illicitly used include but are not limited to, the ones that doctors prescribe as well as those not prescribed by the doctor. Odejide (1997) sees the issue as the utilization of a substance by an individual who has no knowledge of its effect or without a doctor's prescription. Ajala (2002) posits that the problem of Illicit use of drugs is so serious that, though it was initially conceived as the problem of a "select

few”, it has gone above the normal features of abusers being mature males in cities to now include young females and even rural dwellers.

There are different classifications of drugs. These various classifications are made based on a person’s orientation and background. The study finds the classification made by Adeniyi (2002) very apt and so adopted it. He noted that drugs could be categorized into antibiotics, stimulants, sedatives, narcotics, analgesics, hypnotics, hallucinogens

Why do youths illicitly use drugs?

An often asked question is, why youth deliberately involve themselves in the illicit use of drugs. Acolagbe (2005) asserts that young persons take drugs because they think that is the one sure way they can be identified as being of the jet age. To him, some youth just do drugs just to find out what it feels like. On his part, Oshodin (2003) states that some persons, particularly the youth do drugs because the drugs are accessible and at other times, use them not necessarily in the negative sense.

Edward (2003) states that one other factor that propels youth to do drugs illicitly is boredom with their academic studies and house chores. Undergraduates who lag behind in their studies are not usually the ones lecturers draw close hence; they become disinterested and fed up with school work. In order to always have memorable thoughts, they resort to the use of drugs.

Family background and illicit use of drug: One of the most significant agents of socialization is the family and as Muthigani (1995) observes, the individual learns first from his parents and adults within the environment. To her, once a child starts to have doubts, in terms of parents’ teaching and practice are at variance, this flows into adolescence and gives rise to unlawful behaviour in which the use of illicit drugs is one. Eggert (2001) strongly believes that parents’ attitude and behaviour plays a significant role in the illicit use of drugs by their children. Constantly nagging and abusing a young person, he observes, leads him or her to substance abuse. Stressing this point further, Ndetei (2004) noted that a youth whose father or mother abuse drugs is most likely going to emulate such abuse of drugs as the example has been set.

This is further collaborated by Kikivi (2009) when he noted that teenagers whose parents abuse drugs are more likely to exhibit deviant tendencies including drug taking. Imbosa (2002) puts it lucidly when he stated that most young people whose home environment are abusive, not warm and drug infested are most likely to seek support from another source, even if it involves taking of hard substance.

Peer pressure and illicit use of drug: Both the United Nations (1992) and Muthigani (1995) have found that there is a correlation between the influence of friends and the use of drugs. Their studies show that once a young person is relating with a drug user from whom he sees acceptance and approval, he is most likely to do drugs. According to Mwenesi (1996), a youth who is affiliated to drug abusing peers exposes the individual to other drugs. Without doubt, the

youth seeking approval from a drug abusing friend is most likely not to know the source of how to get the drugs. Hawkins and Calatano (1992) are of the opinion that peer groups tend to expose youths to the use of drugs and criminality and they went further to note that in an environment devoid of drug abusing youths, there would be strong anti-drug norms. King'ala (2000) identified two functions played by peer groups in relation to drug abuse and these are: making the drugs available to the newly initiated youth or showing him where to purchase the drugs as well as teaching members when, where and how to use the drugs.

Availability and cost of drugs and illicit use of drug: Kaguthi (2004) noted that the availability of hard substance tends to contribute to their abuse. For instance medicines (drugs) are purchased from chemists even without a physician's prescription. Kithi (2007) supports this by stating that addicts are reported to visit chemists to get Roche- a drug that should strictly be sold on prescription.

Socio-economic background and illicit use of drug: Nigeria today is presently witnessing a downturn in its economic life such that unemployment and poverty rate has greatly increased. The youth are the most affected by this unfortunate situation, many people now live in slums and abject poverty. It is worse for the family whose bread winner has not only been retrenched, but his children are unemployed and are still in search of jobs. With nothing doing, the youth from a poor socio-economic background are more likely to try out new things like drug use to keep themselves busy. Conversely, Njagi (2013) believes that some youth from affluent families lacking and not in want, sometimes for the fun and pleasure of it, do drugs.

Age and illicit use of drug: According to Gillis (1996), youth have one basic characteristic; they like to try things out, are curious and inquisitive. This is what makes them also try out substance in order to find out its effect. Ordinarily, youth, during this process of development, tend to know more about their physical and emotional persons. It is at this stage that they develop their own self-identity, through meaningful conflict with their parents and elders in society. Most times at this stage, they question instructions, values and norms of society and this is what often lands them into substance abuse.

Implications of the illicit use of drugs on youth

Substance generally affects or better still destroys the cells in the body, although this is dependent on its use. Orija (2008) contends that all drugs are potential poison. Consequently, any person who indulges in drug use slowly destroys himself and the community he lives in. Apart from the general effect it has on the health of its users, illicit use of drugs also leads to psychiatric issues, deformation of unborn babies and in extreme cases, death. He noted further that drug dependent youth are easily known by their irritability, moodiness, absent-mindedness, poor academic performance and indecent dressing, constant complaints of aches and pain and excessive financial demands.

Ogunsakin (2007) has argued that some substance could impair mental actions as well as reducing the testosterone of males while also interfering with a woman's menstrual cycle. Rebury (2006) has identified some of the effects of drug use to be: loss of appetite, which slowly leads into loss of weights and room for diseases amongst others. He further believes that illicit drug users are not only aggressive but have a false sense of being powerful and are easily talkative and excited. At other times, they are nervous and have difficulties sleeping at night

On his part, Ajala (2002) reveals that illicit drug use affects the central nervous system and leads to distortion of perfection and accident and this has a way of leading to accidents. He noted further that illicit use of substance is one of the motivating factors for criminal behaviour and increase in offending which in contemporary Nigeria, is becoming a cause for concern. Haggins (2001) observed that when a male or female smokes 20 sticks of cigarettes a day for 25 years, there will be reduction of 21.5% of his/her life span. He adds that the risk of lung cancer is between 8 and 15 times higher in cigarette smokers than non-smokers.

Youth who constantly use drugs illicitly have been observed to have poor performance in their academic work, fall ill from time to time, are not good at maintaining cordial relationships and involve themselves in breaching of the law. Poor grades, truancy from school and academic activities are common amongst illicit users of drugs. Hawkins and Calatano (1992) study shows that low level of commitment to academic work and absenteeism level appear to be related to drug use among youths. Again illicit use of drugs affect the brain, this result in major decline in the functions carried out by the brain (Abot, 2005).

Drugs affect youth who are still in school as their concentration span is drastically reduced and boredom sets in much faster than for non-drug and substance abusers. They lose interest in school work including extra curriculum activities. Most of the psychoactive drugs affect the decision making process of the students, creative thinking and the development of the necessary life and social skills are stunted. They also interfere with the awareness of an individual's unique potential and interest thus affecting their career development (Kikuvi, 2009).

Theoretical explanation

The sociological theory of drug abuse was adopted to explain the topic under investigation. This perspective emphasizes the importance of certain aspect of the social environment. Currie (1994) has observed that the use of some kinds of drugs by urban residents reflects the impact of poverty and racial inequality. That some drugs use are concentrated among some groups and not others. The theory further contends that youth with weak bond to their families and school are more likely to use drugs illicitly. The weaker bond leads them to less likely to accept conventional norms and more likely to use drugs and engage in other delinquent behaviour.

Sociologists stress that peer influence greatly affect the likelihood of using alcohol, tobacco and a host of other drugs (Harison, Venturelli and Fleckenstein, 2012). This plays out particularly among Nigerian youth who indulge in illicit drug use in order to fit in with the crowd.

Besides, some Nigerian societies generally have a culture that favour alcohol use, particularly during special occasions and so many youths on such occasions are ‘licensed’ to drink and so it is not surprising to see them later illicitly abusing alcohol not minding that it has severe implications on them.

Methods and materials

This is a cross-sectional survey of illicit use of drugs among youth in Benin City. The data for this study was collected from both primary and secondary source. Secondary data were collected from the library and the internet while the primary data were collected with the aid of a self-designed questionnaire which had two parts. The study was executed in Benin City, the capital of Edo State while the sample was derived from the existing 12 wards that makes up Benin City. 30 questionnaires were randomly administered on the respondents in each of the wards. Out of the three hundred and sixty (360) questionnaires that were administered, three hundred and fifty-two (352) were retrieved and used for the study’s analysis. The completed questionnaires were continuously checked for consistency after which a coding instruction was written for the coding of the information and eventual entry into a personal computer. Based on a written programme, the information was processed to obtain the frequency distribution table. In other words, the data gathered through quantitative technique was analysed through the aid of simple percentage and frequency distribution tables.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Sex		
Male	280	80
Female	72	20
Total	352	100
Age		
16-20	140	40
21-25	180	51
26-30	20	6
Above 30	12	3
Total	352	100
Religion		
Christianity	340	97
Islam	12	3
Others	-	-
Total	352	100
Educational level		
Primary	10	3
Secondary	111	31
Tertiary	231	66
Total	352	100

Marital status		
Married	32	9
Single	320	91
Total	352	100

Source: field survey, 2018

Table 1 shows the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. It reveals that among the 352 respondents who participated in the study, 80% of them were male while 20% were female. 40% were in the 16-20 years age range, 51% were between 21-25 years while 20% were between 26-30 years and 3% were above 30 years. On religion, 97% of the respondents were Christians, 3% were Muslims and none practiced other religions. As for educational status, 3% of the respondents had primary school certificate, 31% had secondary school certificate while 66% had university degrees. On marital status, 9% of the respondents were married while 91% were not married.

Table 2: Illicit use of drugs, youth restiveness and criminal behaviour

Does illicit use of drugs lead to restiveness and criminality?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	347	98
No	7	2
Total	352	100

Source: field survey, 2018

Table 2 shows that 98% of the surveyed population affirmed that illicit use of drugs leads to criminality while 2% were in the negative. This finding is further given credence to by the work of Oshodi, Aina and Onajole (2010) who found drug use by adolescents to encourage criminal acts and violence in the society.

Table 3: Illicit use of drugs and health implications

Does illicit use of drugs negatively affect the health of youths?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	332	94
No	20	6
Total	352	100

Source: field survey, 2018

Table 3 shows that 94% of the surveyed population affirmed that illicit use of drugs negatively affect the health of youths while 6% held that illicit use of drugs does not affect the health of youths negatively. This study’s result collaborates the views of Orija (2008) when he asserted illicit drug use damages a person and often leads to mental ill health, deformed babies and ultimately death.

Table 4: Illicit use of drugs and youth restiveness and poor performance in school

Does illicit use of drugs negatively affect the academic performance of youths?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	315	89
No	37	11
Total	352	100

Source: field survey, 2018

Table 4 shows that 89% of the respondents affirmed that illicit use of drugs negatively affect the academic performance of youths while 11% held that illicit use of drugs does not affect the academic performance of youths. This result validates the previous studies of Hawkins, Calatano and Miller (1992), Abbot (2005) and Kikuvi (2009) where they contended that drug abuse leads to decline in academic performance.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The paper investigated the social consequences of the illicit use of drugs on youth restiveness and criminality in Benin City. Statistical records reveal that the illicit use of drugs amongst youth in Nigeria is on the increase and more worrisome is the devastating implications that its uses have on the victims' academic, health and life as a law abiding citizen of the country. The study notes that the increasing wave of criminal activities like kidnapping, armed robbery, violent demonstration, thuggery are all associated with the ease of obtaining and using drugs illicitly. Based on these findings, the study suggest that government, religious bodies, non-governmental organizations and the media should either collectively or separately embark on a campaign against the illicit use of drugs. Such enlightenment campaigns should include an awareness of the effect of the abuse of drugs. The study further suggests that any educative programmes aimed at addressing the illicit use of drugs among youth, particularly undergraduates in tertiary institutions should be done in full and must take care of the risk and protective issues where likely buffers like family ties, good significant others, institutional commitment and emphasis on the ability of one. It is also to be noted that parenting requires a lot of information especially in this internet age so as to be able to inculcate the right values in their offspring.

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