

Substance Use and Abuse among prison Inmates in Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Substance use and misuse is a serious problem that has pervaded and succeeded in penetrating almost all social institutions such as the work place, hospitals, schools etc. Its use and spread is commonly associated with availability. No matter how restrictive and secure an institution is, there is always every possibility of permissiveness as far as human factor is concerned. Therefore, this study examined the use and misuse of substances among prison inmates from medium prisons in 13 Benue State. One hundred and twenty eight (128) comprised of males and females participated in the survey. Their age ranged between 20 and 50 years with mean age and standard deviation of 27.5 and 13.17 respectively. A questionnaire measuring the use and abuse of substance was used to collect the data. The result indicated that 82.8% of the inmates use and abuse different kinds of substances for various psycho sociological reasons which include; relieving fatigue, alertness, dejection, depression and health purposes among others. It was recommended that special drug programme should be incorporated into prison activities in order to checkmate the abuse of drugs in prisons and the society at large.

The link between drug abuse and crime is well documented. For instance, substance abuse is implicated in the incarceration of many persons jailed or imprisoned especially as reported in the United States (Flynn, 2011). No one should have any doubt about the extent to which drug taking occurs within prisons. Although accurate figures are not available, as prisoners are understandably reluctant to admit to contravening prison rules. It is commonly assumed that well over half of the prison population regularly consumes some kind of drug, including alcohol, cannabis, amphetamines or heroin (National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, 1998). On the average, the use of drugs among prison inmates begin in prison, with tobacco and alcohol being the most highly consumed (Omigbodun & Babalola, 2004). The prohibition by law

on the use of these drugs in prisons has shown no positive result as the drugs are still being smuggled in. Due to the negative effects on the use of these drugs, the psychosocial well-being of inmates becomes of concern to the establishment.

Oshodi (1972), Obot (1993), and World Drug Report, (2000) reported high prevalence of use and abuse of these psychoactive substances across the globe and even in Nigeria. However, it is not just the extent to which drugs are consumed in prisons that is the problem. Cannabis has replaced tobacco as an informal prison currency and supply and demand is strictly controlled by prisoners who will resort to intimidation and bullying to ensure regular profits. Although many prison officers will admit to turning a blind eye to the smoking of cannabis, because it makes prisoners more relaxed, prisoners' letters to the Prison Reform Trust suggest that prisoners who have accumulated large drug debts risk are being bullied and attacked. This increase and prevalence of substance use and abuse have not left out Nigeria Prison Inmates (Wish & O'neil, 1989, NDLEA 1992, Adesanya, Ohaeri, Ogunlesi, Adamson, Odejide, 1997). The act of substance use and abuse among prison inmates are accorded several reasons. Eze (2005), reports that prison inmates use and misuse substance in order to experience intense pleasure, increased alertness, relaxation and modification of mood. Also, study reveals that substance use among prison inmates is influenced by psychological factors, such as competing (gang-inmates formation, competing gangs along cultural, ethical, racial and geographical line), depression, anxiety, which could as well lead to additional health and emotional hazard, and consequently slows down the pace of reformation and rehabilitation (Robert & Keith 2002). Prison provides the first real opportunity to help people lead drug free-lives, as few prisoners have previously been in touch with drug agencies in the community. Prison offers an opportunity for prisoners to tackle their drug use, and the part which it may have played in their offending. The aim should be to encourage prisoners to identify themselves as having a drug problem so that adequate support can be provided. A wide ranging approach to tackling drugs in prisons, which included security measures to reduce supply and treatment and education programmes to reduce demand, would ease control problems and also reduce the numbers of prisoners who will continue to commit drug related crime after release. So how does the action plan for the Prison Service measure up to the task?

Ebiti & Adamson, (2008) noted that the use and abuse of substance among prison inmates may be a copy strategy, although, it could be a maladaptive one.

Against this background, this study aimed at assessing the prevalence of substance use and abuse among prisons inmates in Benne State, Nigeria. The objective of the study include: assessing the major classes of drugs that are

frequently used; to find out the substance used more frequently among male and female inmates; and to find out the conditions that may lead an inmate into substance use.

Method

Participants

The study sample consisted of 128 participants, comprising 110 (86%) males and 18 (14%) females randomly selected from Makurdi Security Prison (96 inmates) and Otukpo Prison (32 inmates) respectively. The participants were of different sentences ranging from six months (short term imprisonment-civil offense) to fifteen years and above (long term imprisonment-criminal offense) imprisonment. Their age ranged from 20-50 years with mean age of 27.5 and standard deviation of 13.17. In terms of education and vocational/occupational background, 20% of the participants had no formal education at all; 30 are school drop-outs, 10% attempted primary school, 15% had secondary school education, while 25% had tertiary ("University" Polytechnics, and "NCE") education.

Instruments

Data were collected using a semi structured administered questionnaire which consists of three sections. Section "A" sought information on socio-demographic variables, section "B" measures Substance Use Inventory and Middle Belt Questionnaire developed by Obot (1993). The questionnaire has two parts. The first part measures the substance use, and the type of substance the respondent takes. While the second part gives information on respondent's self description of drug use, using descriptive terms ranging from 'desire/ influence' and impairments of behavioral and social functioning. The author reported Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.75.

Procedure

An official permission was sought and obtained from the Benue State Comptroller of Prisons. Permission was granted on the grounds that the study purpose was purely for academics and social research. The purpose of the research was explained to the participants and they were fully assured that all information given would be treated with utmost confidentiality. The instructions of the questionnaire were read and explanation was provided in areas of words usage, which aided their understanding. However, in the case of participants with little education but needed clarification, the researcher asked questions on items in the questionnaire and filled in their responses.

Results

Table 1: Type of drug used, number of users and percentage distribution

Types of Drugs used by the Inmates	No. of Users	%
Alcohol	70	54.7%
Cocaine	4	3.1%
Marijuana	20	6.4%
Cigarette	121	94.5%
Coffee	21	16.4%
LSD/Mescaline	-	-
Amphetamine	6	4.7%
Pain killer	61	47.7%
Heroin	6	4.7%
PCP	-	-
Sniff/Gases Fumes	4	3.1%
Kola nut	92	71.9%

The table above shows that cigarettes, kola nuts, and alcohol are the most frequently used substance with 121 users (94.5%), 92 users (71.9%) and 70 users (54.7%) respectively, followed by pain killers, 61 users (47.7%), coffee 21 users (16.4%). Then Marijuana, 20 users, (6.4%), Amphetamine, 6 users (4.7%), Cocaine, 4 users, (3.1%), Heroin, 6 user (4.7%), and Gases/fumes (3.1%).

Table 2: Determinants that may influence drug use/abuse among inmates.

Determinants of Drug Usage	Self description	Desired to take drug	Not desired to take drug
Social determinant	Social responsibility and social neglect.	44(41.5%)	8 (36.4%)
Drug user and crime history	Past and present behavior. Living condition.	32(30.2%)	6(27.3%)
Personality characteristics	Individual differences/ personality traits	16(15.1%)	5(22.7%)
Social and cultural factors	Social influence acceptability	14(13.2%)	3(13.6%)

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This table shows that various self descriptive determinants that individual inmate considers to be a reason(s) / desires for taking drugs as shown in the different percentages.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that drug problem in prisons resulted from expansion of drug trafficking and transit routes and increasing drug cultivation especially cannabis in the society. As a result, there is an increase in drug use and abuse in the prison system. However, drug dependence is not of the same magnitude in Nigeria as it is in some countries, though there is some evidence that it will increase with increasing affluence, disintegration of the family, and other cultural systems, which have had a supportive and restraining influence on the individual. This research finding has supported Adelekan, Abidun, Imoukhhome-obayan, Oni & Ogunremi (1993), that there is gradual increase in drug dependence in Nigeria, and personality variables in alcohol and drug use. Result of the study indicated that males were more frequent in the sample of drug users' studies. In Nigeria society, as well as in some other countries, there are a lot of expectations from male child by his people. Therefore, he channels his ways of achieving some of these salient aims expected from the society. The struggle for material needs normally result in frustration and depression if the person is not measuring up to his or people's expectations. Because of these situations and circumstances associated with survival in our society, males are therefore, more frequent in criminal activities and in anti-social behaviors like drug use, escapism from social reality.

It was found (Table 2) that other factors could also cause drug use like social determinant which may lead to poly drug use. When there is a paucity of alternatives to a meaningful life as in urban ghettos or when there is an emotional sterility and lack of meaningful relationships as in solitude, individuals may resort to drugs to relieve the slightest discomfort with a "relevant drug".

There are also personality characteristics, a consensus in the literature that most addict, or users experience a feeling of insignificance, dependence, lack of love for self or other, isolation, powerlessness, alienation and hopelessness. They feel more like an insignificant part of all powerful and overpowering machinery. People use a drug that is related to their personality traits. This study revealed clear distinction between those who did misuse drugs and those who did not. It is purported that drug use was related to elevated level of anxiety, and psychotics.

This study also shows that social-cultural factors like acceptance in traditional and ceremonial occasions can expose people to venture or try substance for the first time, therefore, putting them within reach of temptation which lay them open to the risk of illicit drug use which was supported by Obot (1993).

Conclusion and Recommendation

The ills associated with substance use and abuse continues to have both social and medical implications. Thievery, prostitution and loss of aspiration are the most common consequences of not having useful employment. Larger percentage of substance abusers are in treatment at any given time in psychiatric hospitals, while many are rolling away in various prisons as a result of this menace. Some centers advocate drug programme than for any other modality, but this should not prevent the advocacy or any other type of programme. Like the popular saying, "prevention is better than cure". Therefore, prevention and rehabilitation should mostly direct our focus when tackling drug problems visa viz the following recommendations:

It is evident that the continuous and uprising involvement of youths in drug practices, could make us assume that much has not been achieved by our society in the enlightenment campaign of drugs. Just as in intervention on AIDS in Nigeria, information services are too lackadaisical in providing and promoting social and public education in social intricate issues. Public enlightenment as a venture requires money which no individual, organizations, schools can afford in this time of economic hardship, and therefore, government should take the lead in sponsoring and promoting seminars on drugs. Government should therefore sponsor and promote adverts in disfavor of pro-adverts sponsored by the Tobacco and Alcohol companies on media to counter the effects of adverts of these adverts.

More tax should be placed on Tobacco and Beer brewery companies in Nigeria. If we could discourage the intake of these substances, then the use of other drugs will maximally reduced, because these drugs serve as gate way drugs to more illicit drugs. With increased taxation, there will be increase in price, which can discourage people from forming this expensive habit. It is observed that the main beneficiaries of drug manufacture and sale are the drug companies and their salesmen. Walking into many chemists shop and markets in many parts of Nigeria, one will discover there are many dangerous drugs that are currently on sale and can be purchased without a doctor's or physician's prescription, and majority of sellers do not have patent medicine license for selling such drugs. In the light of these comments, it is suggested that the Federal Government should

consider measures that will curb the current wave of fake drug markets and their vendors in the country.

Counselling unit should be established in various prisons in order to offer help to affected inmates. This unit should employ Psychologists, Psychiatrist, Sociologists and Social workers. This will have two major advantages for the society. a). It will provide employment for these professionals and b), it will enhance therapy when required and discourage chemotherapy and detoxification which also has side-effect as commonly found in methadone treatment for heroin addicts. On the other hand, rehabilitative measures should be supported by Government by providing grants to already functioning rehabilitation centers like Drug Abuse Treatment, Education and Research Centre (DATER) at Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Abeokuta, Ogun State and Our Lady's of Apostle Drug Rehabilitation in Dogon-Kana-Jos, while rehabilitation centers should be built alongside the hospitals.

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