

## **Combating Drug Abuse Through Adult Education In Nigeria**

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**ABSTRACT :** *The need for combating drug abuse among youths in Nigeria is very important. This is because many of them who are supposed to contribute to national development cannot do so due to the side effect drug abuse has posed on them. Adult education as an intervention can go a long way to enlighten youths on the dangers of abusing drug, and the need to do away with it. It is against this fact that this paper examines how adult education can be used as a strategy for combating drug abuse among Nigeria youths. The paper examines the prevalence of drug abuse among youths, the importance of drug, types of drug abuse by youths, and the reason youths abuse drug. In addition, the paper addresses the danger of drug, and how drug abuse can be combated via adult education programmes. The paper concludes that Adult Education via mobilization, civic education, remedial education, adult literacy, and vocational education can be used to free our youths from the shackles of drug abuse.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Drug, Abuse, Adult Education, youths*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Drug abuse has become a rapidly growing global problem (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2007). Almost every country in the world is affected from one or more drug being abused by its citizens (UNODC, 2007). The increase in drug abuse globally has resulted in problems such as increase in violence and crimes, increase in Hepatitis B and C virus, increase in HIV/AIDS diseases, collapse of the veins, and collapse in the social structure (Oshodi, Aina, & Onajole, 2010). The United Nation's division of narcotic drugs reported that never before have there been so many young people, even children, flirting with drugs and their associated hazards (Pela & Ebie, 1982). Thus, more young people are getting involved in substance abuse in Nigeria (Oladele & Olufunmilayo, 2013). From the record of drugs abuse in Nigeria, the North-West has a statistics of 37.47 percent of the drug victims in the country, while the South-West has been rated second with 17.32 percent. Also, the south-East has been rated third with 13.5 percent, North-central has 11.71 percent, and the North-east zone has 8.54 percent of the drug users in the country (Akannam, 2008). In Nigeria, the estimated life time consumption of cannabis among the population is 10.8 percent. This was followed by psychotropic substances like benzodiazepines and amphetamine-type stimulants (10.6 percent), heroin (1.6 percent), and cocaine (1.4 percent) in both urban and rural areas. Drugs abuse appears to be common among males with 94.2 percent than females which is 5.8 percent. Hence, the ages of first use is between 10 to 29 years. The percentage use of volatile organic solvents is 0.53 percent, and is widely spread among the street children, in school's youth and women. Multiple drug use happens nationwide with 7.88 percent to varying degree (UNODC, 2007 cited in Mamman, Othman & Lian, 2014). Today, more Nigerian youths are becoming drug dependants, as Nigeria gradually transits from the status of a drug-consuming nation to that of a drug-producing one (Staff, 2012). The danger of this act is so severe that not only the abusers of drugs suffer the consequences. Nevertheless, the larger society also risks the assets of the future because youths are the future of the society.

Naturally, certain drugs, especially those that are manufactured for healthy living are good on their own. This is because they are needed by the body to function properly. These types of drugs are manufactured to help the body in one way or the other. They are therefore manufactured with good intention. But the question one may need to ask is how do they become a problem to users? Thus, they become a problem when taken too often or in large dose. However, the practice of taking drugs without proper medical supervision is termed "drug abuse". Drugs are therefore said to be abused when taken too often or in large dose without proper medical supervision. According to WHO (1993), drug abuse is defined as a maladaptive pattern of substance use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress as manifested by one or more of the following occurring within the period of 12 month. These occurrences includes: recurrent substance use resulting in the failure to fulfil major roles like obligations at work, school or in the home; recurrent substance use in situation in which it is physically hazardous, for example driving automobile when impaired by substances use; and recurrent substance related legal problems and continued substances use despite recurrent social and interpersonal

problems. Furthermore, the problems of drug abuse places a significant threat to the social, health, economic fabrics of the families, society, and the entire nations (Oshodi, Aina & Onajole, 2010). The impact of drug abuse among Nigerian adolescents has been a feature of a morally bankrupt, corrupt and wasted generation, and loss of our societal values and ideals. The most unfortunate part of it is the fact that majority of the youth that abuse drugs are not aware of the dangers. However, most of them do not realise it until it is too late for them to stop. According to Giade (2011), drugs abuse threatens the security of every nation, tears apart our societies, spawns crime, spreads diseases such as aids, and kills our youths and the future of our country. Therefore, this situation requires that all hands should be on deck to combat drug abuse among our youths in order salvage our future. It is on this note that this paper examines how adult education can be used to combat drug abuse among youths in Nigeria.

## **II. MEANING OF DRUGS**

There are many definitions for drugs. For instance, it has been defined as any substance used in the composition of medicine. It is also defined as any substance which alters a mood, perception or consciousness, and is used to the apparent detriment of the society (WHO, 1993). Some refers to it as any substance taken into the body which brings about a physiological change or substance which when taken into the body may modify one or more of its physical or mental functions (Farnsworth, 1978). A drug refers to a substance that could bring about a change in the biological function through its chemical actions (Okoye, 2001). It is also considered as a substance that modifies perceptions, cognition, mood, behaviour and the general body functions (Balogun, 2006). This could thus be considered as chemical modifiers of the living tissues that could bring about psychological and behavioural changes (Nnachi, 2007). From these definitions, one can see that drugs include not only tablets but all such substances like alcohol, caffeine, nicotine and minor pain killers such as aspirin and paracetamol.

**Types of Drugs :** Drugs can be classified according to the work they perform in the human body, e.g. stimulants, depressants, and pain killers. They can also be classified according to their legality. In other words, some drugs are legally and socially acceptable, while others are not. There are also prescription drugs which are often prescribed to patients by doctors. However, it can be taken at individual's own wishes or leisure, e.g. aspirin and paracetamol. Some drugs supplies chemicals that the body needs, but cannot make for itself. Others attack harmful microbes that have invaded the body. Nevertheless, others change the speed at which cells and tissues of the body works (Farnsworth, 1978). There are the stimulants drugs. These are drugs that increase the body activity by producing greater alertness. A good example of these types of drugs is caffeine in a coffee or tea. Another type of drugs is the depressants. Unlike stimulants, this type of drugs causes a decrease in body activity by reducing alertness, cause sleep or may produce unconsciousness; example of these types of drugs: Diazepam, Valium, Activate, and Librium (Farnsworth, 1978). Painkillers are another type of drugs. They act on the central nervous system, and they can either be stimulants or depressants. Their work is to kill pain and make a sick person more comfortable. According to Farnsworth (1978),

Pain signal travel along nerves from the part of the body that is hurt to the brain, only when they have reached the brain is pain felt. Painkillers act to alter the signals of pain. Once changed, the signals no longer mean pain to the brain. As a result, the person does not feel that part of his body is hurt.

There are also the substitute drugs whose main work is to take the place of chemicals that the body needs, but cannot make for itself. For example, a healthy body produces hormones, as there are certain situations whereby the body fails to produce the required hormones. It is such drugs that will replace the hormones that the silk body fails to produce. There are certain drugs that are specially meant to correct an unhealthy diet such as the lack of vitamins and minerals. The work of such drugs is to provide such important sources of energy. Thus, energy deficiencies may result into various forms of illness. For example, a shortage of the mineral iron causes the blood disease called anaemia (Farnsworth, 1978).

**Importance of Drugs :** The importance of drugs to human beings are too numerous to mention. They are numerous like food and water. Diseases usually occur in the lives of humans. However, some of these diseases stems from our environments over which we have little or no control over. Diseases can either be water born or air borne. Hence, human control over these phenomena is still not absolute. The only alternative therefore is to evolve measures to cure any disease that may attack us due to our contact with the environment. It was this effort to counter environmental hazards that led to the study of medicine and pharmacy which led to the manufacture of drugs.

All drugs are manufactured with good intention, to help the body recover from certain ailments or sickness. They are not meant to harm anybody. But no matter how helpful they are, drugs can have undesirable effects on

users. This happens when they are taken too often or in large dose. Even the simplest drugs such as aspirin can make a person sick when taken without proper directions from physicians. Patients are therefore advised to adhere exactly to the doctor's prescription.

**When are Drugs Abused? :** The importance or usefulness of drugs cannot be over emphasised. This is because they are among the most useful means doctors have for relieving pain and suffering as well as cure of some diseases. However, they have to be taken correctly in order to obtain its positive effects. This is because the wrong drug, or the wrong amount of even the right one, can make an illness worse, destroy blood cells, damage the body, or even result to death. The practice of taking drugs without proper medical supervision is called drug abuse. Drug abuse has been also defined as the occasional or persistent excessive use of a drug for personal gratification (Alan, 1997). Some drug users become drug dependent which is also part of the abuse. This is a continuous basis in order to experience its psychic effect or to avoid the discomfort produced by its absence (Alan, 1997). NAFDAC (2004) as cited by Haladu (2003) explained the term drug abuse as an excessive and persistent self-administration of a drug without regard to the medically or culturally accepted patterns. It could also be viewed as the use of a drug to the extent that it interferes with the health and social function of an individual.

**Who Abuses what Drugs and Why? :** Majority of drug abusers in the world today are young people who are looking for new sensations, or who hope that drugs will increase their mental functioning or their ability to understand themselves (Farnsworth, 1978). Some of them start taking drugs while in school and colleges, under the influence of friends. Although, some of them stopped after leaving the school, others still continued unabated. Many youths take drugs out of frustration, to escape from their problems. Some do so out of deviant behaviours, because they are told not to. This happens as a result of the psychological feeling of independence among young people. Hence, they do not want to be told what to do. They are ready to disobey both the authorities and their parents just to be rebellious. In poor countries like Nigeria however, youths take drugs as a result of frustration caused by poverty due to unemployment. There are no job opportunities in this country for graduates and school leavers. The education they acquire is also defective, in the sense that it does not provide them with any skill that will enable them be self-reliant. It is equally important to note that most of the youth that abuse drugs are ignorant of the implications of what they do. This is because most of them do so to enable them fit into their peer groups.

**Dangers of Drug Abuse :** The dangers of drug abuse are many and have far reaching negative consequences. First and foremost, it makes one to become abnormal. A person's work, his job, and his usual activities get swallowed up due to drug influence. When a person becomes a drug abuser, he cuts down the choices he has regarding his future life (Farnsworth, 1978). He does not learn to solve problems, but how to avoid them. He is also not interested in anything except what goes on inside him. Drug abuse also causes financial and economic problems. For instance, dependence on alcohol increases extra budgetary spending. When it becomes too excessive, it may lead to loss of job and consequent loss of income. The problem of drug abuse also causes social problems. This is because intoxicated behaviour causes embarrassment and may lead to social isolation from friends and neighbours. It also causes violence in marriage which in turn causes marital breakdown. Drug abuse has also been linked to crimes by security agencies. According to them, many crimes are believed to be committed under the influence of drugs. Police have also found many criminals in possession of various drugs at the scene of crime. In addition, many youth resort to crime in order to source for money to take drugs especially alcohol and marijuana.

Another important danger of drug abuse is on personal health. Many persistent drug abusers end up being psychiatric patients. When an individual depends solely on drugs, he could have both physical and psychological instability. Physical dependence on drugs happens when the drug or one of its metabolites has become necessary for the continued function of the body (Alan, 1997). Although, psychological dependence does not cause unpleasant physical symptoms as in the case of physical dependence, it has its own side effects also. When it becomes extreme, psychological dependence may lead to changes in life style and behaviour. In such circumstances, the individual may live in a subculture of drug users separated by law or behaviour from normal society (Alan, 1997).

**The Role of Adult Education in Combating Drug Abuse :** Adult education is referred to as the entire body of organised educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship. Here,

persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in the twofold perspectives of full personal development and participation in a balanced and independent social, economic, and cultural development (UNESCO, 1977). The concept of Adult Education is an umbrella name for all types of education that are not formal. Under the umbrella are different types of education programmes. Some of these programmes include functional literacy which is the type of education that helps people learn some skills that could make them become self-employed. And also vocational education programme which trains participants on craft and such related skills.

Other important programmes under Adult Education are continuing education which is the type of education given to people to update their skills. Looking critically into the literature (such as UNODC, 2007; Akannam, 2008; Staff, 2012; Oladele & Olufunmilayo, 2013), one can see clearly that majority of people who abuse drugs are young people; and they do so for many reasons. Many of them abuse drugs out of frustration due to poverty caused by unemployment. Some give in to this undesirable habit out of ignorance of the dangers of drugs abuse. Many also abuse drug out of deviant behaviour. Adult education can effectively combat the problem of drug abuse among our youths. Therefore, adult education as an intervention strategy has a lot to do salvaging the status of the Nigeria youths who are drug abusers. Hence, some of the reasons for abusing drug which include unemployment, ignorance and deviant behaviour among others can be combated via Adult Education. The following adult education programmes can go a long way to help in ameliorating the situation.

**Mass Mobilization :** Mobilisation is a public awareness programme aimed at breaking ignorance and culture of apathy, liberating the mind and the body as well as enlightening people on their rights, responsibilities and obligations (Idris, 2011). The Youth should be involved in social mobilization processes aimed at increasing their level of awareness or cognition of drug abuse and other vices. This would enable them to apply their energies more constructively and participate actively in nation building. By this, the youth become a vanguard for progressive changes as opposed to common instances of apathy and social indifference typical of the generality of Nigerians nowadays.

**Remedial Education :** This is a form of adult and non-formal education which is essentially designed to remedy an educational deficiency. Remedial Education therefore is designed to offer a second chance or opportunity to youth to complete their level of education. Remedial school Education could be at any level of education, be it at primary, secondary, tertiary, literacy, professional or vocational level, depending on the need or interest of the client. At the literacy level, it involves adults and youth who had taken part in literacy education or those who went through the formal school system, but dropped out at the early stages of education. This was before they could acquire sufficient skills to enable them excel in the society. It can also be for people who have dropped out of school in order to make them self-reliant and ensure a good standard of living (Imhabekhai, 1998). Therefore, youth who dropped out of primary or secondary schools may go into remedial education programmes. This would assist them to up-date their knowledge and skills and shun away from drug abuse which makes them unproductive

**Adult Literacy :** Adult literacy if effectively organised and managed will help our youths out of the problems that forced them to abuse drugs. Unemployment, which causes poverty among youths and eventually frustration and drug abuse for instance, can be tackled through functional literacy training. Functional literacy is more than just mere reading, writing, and numeracy. It includes information concerning main economic activities. This programme do not only impart knowledge for three (3) years, but they enable learners participate fully in economic, civic, and social life.

**Civic Education :** This is an important component of education that cultivates the citizen's useful participation in public life. This would give them satisfaction of their rights and their due discharge of social obligations with the necessary know-how. Civic Education is a form of adult and non-formal education directed towards the improvement of the socio-cultural and political lives of people. These include community development, cultural education, liberal education, and political education programmes. The political education programme would involve creating political awareness for the people to enable them perform their political rights, rather than merely being used as political thugs. Civic Education will therefore provide the required awareness-creation to cure the endemic political apathy, ignorance and fear among the Nigerian Youths. Through civic education, youths can be implored to be patriotic by having the feeling of their nation at heart. Thus, the best way to express patriotism is by avoiding any act that could tarnish the image of one's country. Through this type of education and appeal to the sense of patriotism of our youth, they would definitely see reason and shun the dirty habit of drug abuse.

**Vocational Education :** This is a form of adult education that is geared towards satisfying the occupational needs of learners. It is of immediate value to the large majority of the people in their effort to solve their problems and to work themselves out of ignorance, poverty, and misery (Iyunade, 2008). Vocational education trains selected occupational groups with a view of enabling them improve their working efficiency and increase their competency and productivity. The central focus of vocational education is training in skill acquisition for effective utilisation in a particular trade or craft.

### III. CONCLUSION

Drug abuse is a worldwide issue, and it is causing serious concern both to governments and individuals. The problem is more prevalent among young people who in most cases, are not aware of the implications of what they do. Many of such youths abuse drugs out of frustration due to poverty, which results from unemployment. Others abuse drugs out of ignorance of its dangers, while some do so out of deviant behaviour. Hence, they just want to be disobedient to authorities and to their parents. All the above named problems that causes drug abuse can be resolved effectively through literacy training, Mass Education or Public Awareness campaign, as well as religious and Civil Education. In view of the dangers of drug abuse to individuals and society, it is important for designers of Adult Education Curriculum to integrate drug education into the general Adult Education Curriculum. Adult Education practitioners should also consider it a duty to educate adults on the dangers of drug abuse. By so doing, the educated adults could in turn educate their wards on the implications of drug abuse. Adult educators at all levels should promote enlightenment campaign through writing and community work, in order to create awareness on the dangers of drug abuse to the future of our youths.

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