

Drug Trafficking, Substance Abuse and Its Menace on Citizens' Health in Nigeria: A Study of FCT National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, 2010-2021

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Abstract

Arguably, the growing demand for hard drugs like cocaine and heroin both in the USA and other countries of the world have made the drug business one of the fastest growing industries in the Nigeria. The drug deal comprises the production, transit route, whole selling and retailing of all forms of psychoactive substances. Nigeria is one of the easiest routes for drug transit. This could probably be as a result of the endemic nature of poverty ravaging the larger portion of the populace couple with the attendant neglect of the political class to enthrone a national social safety net that will alleviate the suffering of the poor. The objective of the paper is to take a cursory examination of the growing drug industry in the country with a particular interest in the Federal Capital Territory. The study adopted secondary method of data collection as its methodology. In other words, text books, journal papers as well as government publications were heavily relied upon in sourcing data for the study. Finding indicates unhealthy rivalry and absence of effective synergy between the FCT NDLEA and other sister agency like the police, army and other paramilitary outlet as the reason that account for the inability for agency to curb drug business in the city. And that the low level of ICT compliance by the agency could reverse the gains made. The paper concludes that the FCT NDLEA should as a matter of urgency enhance its relationship with other law enforcement agency in order to sustain the gains. Also, incentive should be provided to those who burst drug crime so as to encourage sharing of intelligence. The research recommends amongst others the need for the FCT NDLEA to live over board in discharging its mandate of ridding drug off the Capital City.

Key Words: *Drug Trafficking, Substance Abuse, Menace, Citizens Health.*

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I. Introduction

Concerned with the need to have a healthy world population, the World Health Organization coordinated the political declaration where members of UN General Assembly (UNGASS) agreed to work towards world drug problem (WHO's Mandate). The declaration recommended that the United Nations General Assembly hold a special session to address the world drug problem and that in 2014, the commission should conduct a high-level review of member state's implementation of the declaration.

According to World Drug Report (2015), the illegal drug trade or drug trafficking is a global black market dedicated to the cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of prohibited drugs. Most jurisdictions prohibit trade, except under license, of many types of drugs through the use of drug prohibition laws. The Global Financial Integrity's Transnational Crime and the Developing World (2015) report estimates the size of the global illicit drug market between US\$426 and US\$652 billion in 2014 alone. With a world GDP of US\$78 trillion in the same year, the illegal drug trade may be estimated as nearly 1% of total global trade. Consumption of illegal drugs is widespread globally and it remains very difficult for local authorities to thwart its popularity. Cocaine produced in Colombia and Bolivia increasingly has been shipped via West Africa (especially in Nigeria, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Cameroon, Mali, Benin, Togo, and Ghana).

Proceed made from drug is often laundered in countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Senegal (Transnational Crime and Developing World, 2017).

Nigeria is not immune from the problem of drug problem as traffickers are always on the move to traffic different types of hard drugs from one location to another. The agency recognized by law to tackle drug related matters is the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency. Due to years of negligence on the part of the Nigerian government, drug matters in the Federal Capital Territory have assume a proportionate level where traffickers are hardly seen and arrested due to poor operational materials.

II. Conceptual Review

a. Drug Trafficking

According to UNODC (2019), illicit drug trafficking has assume a preponderant position in Nigeria where it was difficult to have an accurate database of the numbers of drugs abused, sold and ferried to other parts of the world. This means that over time, the Nigerian government has no idea of manufacture, sales and distributions of various substances which could impair or endanger the health of the population. This goes further to suggest that the productions, sales and consumption of illicit drug are a recurrent decimal in the country. This scenario is occasioned by drug baron and unscrupulous element taking advantage of the weak and vulnerable members of the society by conscripting them into the business with the promise of better living condition.

Ugwuoke&Otodo (2016) as cited by Ugwuoke&Bassey (2018) examined the prevalence of drug abuse among Nigerian inmate. Their argument centered around the fact that corrective centers are supposedly places where inmate learn better manners and imbibe excellence moral values that will make their lives meaningful after their respective jail terms. Despite the water tight security in the Nigerian correctional centers, illicit drugs such as caffeine, alcohol, cigarettes, opioid and marijuana or indian hemp finds their way into correctional centers. This is not only inimical to inmates personal or physical safety, it posed threat to the national security. It is important to note that this trend is not only associated to Nigerian correction centers, detainees in the custody of Nigerian Police are also not left out. This implies that officers and men of the Nigerian police and correction officers are complacence because they are the first line of contact with both the detainees and inmates. The need for urgent reform becomes imperative so as to educate and enlightened the officers and men of both agencies (Police & Correction Officers) for urgent intervention (Ugwuoke&Bassey, 2018).

There have been various approaches put in place to prevent drug trafficking in the country. Agwogie (2021) identified common approaches in substances use and prevention in Nigeria. This includes stiff penalties, sensitization or media campaign, scare tactics and one size fit all approach. Over the years, the existing legal framework for drug trafficking in Nigeria is weak and grossly inadequate as cases of trafficking is on the increase (Agwogie, 2021). The need for evidence-based substance use prevention strategy becomes imperative because it involves the use of scientific basis to arrive at a decision-making process or provision of services that have been shown over time, through available scientific evidence, to consistently improve measurable outcome.

Fighting the drug trafficking scourge has almost defied all measures including the conventional methods. Countries of the world have devised various models but only a handful has succeeded in reducing the menace. Raphael &Salawu (2015) argued that the role of the mainstream media cannot be over stretched in the efforts of fighting drug trafficking and substance abuse. According to them, mass media are powerful communication outlet that can be leveraged to take development messages to mass audience. This happens when the government is ready to partner with the relevantstakeholders. These include the traditional rulers, Faith Based Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, Youth Organizations, media and gender group to make the campaign against illicit drug trafficking far reaching.

There is no gain saying the fact that media is a veritable tool to stem the ugly tide of drug trafficking. However, this must be done in a consistent manner to get the required outcome. This can only be attained when the mainstream media rise to the occasion by performing its traditional role without expecting anything in return from any individual or relevant government agency. What we see today is a situation where media practitioners (Journalist) patronizing politicians and top government functionaries for material benefit to motivate/influence reportage. In another dimension, media outlets only give a significant degree of prominence in reportage when their interest is catered for. This development has made the media to depart from its core value of agenda-setting and serving as a tool in changing behavior/perception of people in the society to bring about the needed socio-cultural changes (Raphael &Salawu, 2015).

According to Emhenya, (2020), that peer-group pressure is rated highest among the predisposing factors that encourage drug trafficking and abuse in Nigeria. This claim is a clear indictment of the family as the first agent of socialization. Because the family as a unit of organization has failed in discharging its responsibility, the peer-group step in and the consequence of this development is overwhelming. Emhenya(2020) further identified two key factors that encourage drug trafficking and abuse. They include indiscipline and frustration. Some of the consequences of abuse of drugs as enumerated includes; criminal

tendencies, unkempt appearance, social nuisance, suicidal attempts and sudden death. Societies that lack discipline can easily lose its value system which is in most cases the basic foundation upon which the behaviors of individuals are modified.

b. Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is assuming an alarming dimension as evidenced by the rate of recidivism as well as the prevalence of drug dependence among people. For instance, substance abuse has become a recurrent problem which poses a risk to public health safety and by extension, national security (Ugwuoke and Otodo, 2016). Apart from posing serious health malady, substance abuse among young population also constitutes security challenges to society.

According to Emhenya (2020), substance abuse by adolescents has become one of the most disturbing health related phenomena in Nigeria and other parts of the world. Several school going adolescents experience mental health problems, either temporarily or for a long period of time. Some become insane, maladjusted to school situations and eventually drop out of school. In the words of Fawa cited in Okoye and Nwaka (2019), substance abuse involves the use of medical prescribed drugs for treatment or prevention of a disease in man and animals for other purposes not in line with their prescriptions. NAFDAC cited in Ugwuoke and Otodo, (2016). Maintained that substance abuse arises from drugs that alter the body functions either positively or otherwise depending on the body composition of the user, the type of substance abuse.

Thus, substance abuse connotes an extreme and importunate administration of harmful liquid or solid materials without regard to the medically or culturally accepted patterns. This 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 (Stephen 2016; UNODC 2019).

Likewise, World Book Encyclopedia (2015) defined substance abuse as the non-medical use of a drug that interferes with a healthy and productive life. As contained in UNODC first comprehensive national drug use survey conducted on Nigeria, with about 14.3 million adults aged 15- 64 (14.4%) used at least one psychoactive substance (excluding alcohol and tobacco) in the previous year (UNODC, 2018).

c. Citizens Health and Well-being

According to World Health Constitution (1946), Citizens health and well-being entails the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health which is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, and political belief, economic or social condition. Citizens' well-being tops the list in critical development discussions worldwide. The World Health Organization (2022) describes citizens' health and well-being as one of the key features of what constitutes a successful, inclusive, and fair society in the 21st century consistent with commitment towards human rights at national, regional and international level.

In advance climate, development indicators are tied to the citizens' well-being that includes access to health care, education, housing and social insurance that guarantee the survival of the weak and vulnerable members of the society. In other words, governments of developed nations are concerned with their citizens' well-being. This has become one of the major foundations of countries in the middle-east like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and United Arab Emirates. Countries that hold their citizens' health and well-being in high esteem are likely to have a high life expectancy rate with minimum cases of maternal and infant mortality rate. Statistics have shown that such countries have less criminal activities that include drug abuse and trafficking. In situations where cases of drug trafficking exist, adequate arrangements are already in place for rehabilitation and subsequent reintegration into the society.

However, citizens' health and well-being suffers a huge setback in developing countries like Nigeria. The outbreak of the Corona Virus (COVID-19) has exposed the rot in Nigeria's public health system because the country never prepared for such emergencies. Rather than making adequate provision for health facilities that will accommodate victims, what we saw was the creation of makeshift camps considered as isolation centers. Governments in developing nations have over the years paid a steep service to the citizens' health and well-being and that perhaps accounts for the inability for government to adequately cater for drug addicts. In fact, the prevailing socio-economic and political conditions in some third world nations account for the high rate of drug abuse and trafficking to make ends meet.

III. Theoretical Framework

A number of theories can be linked to the study of drug trafficking but the Political Economy theory of the Marxist strands is more appropriate for this study. As this would help appreciate key political dynamics of Nigerian drug trafficking (Bridge and Loglo, 2017; Emhenya, 2020; Eligh, 2019; Ediom-Ubong, 2021).

According to Marx (1978) "neither legal relations nor forms of the state could neither be understood by themselves nor explained by the so-called general development of the human mind, but that they are rooted in the material conditions of life. In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite

relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.

At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begin an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure. In studying such transformations, it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic -- in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.

From the Marxist perspective there were two important aspects to the economy of the Nigerian state; internally, the state contained capitalist and non-capitalist modes of production; externally, the state is dependent that is its development was conditioned by the state's position in the world economy. The capitalist mode of production could be said to be derivative. It is derivative in the sense that it developed incidentally as an effect of the western capitalism quest for markets, raw materials and profit. Capitalism then grafted into societies whose level of development of productive forces was still rudimentary. It is also derivative in that much of the capital, technology and entrepreneurial skills came from abroad.

The classical capitalist pattern of exploitation is that of the capitalist appropriating the difference between the value produced by the wage labourer and what he pays for his labour power. Ake (1982) argues that this form of exploitation is found in Africa but it is not necessarily the dominant form of capitalist exploitation but most of the exploitation is not done by individual capitalists but by the state acting as entrepreneur because of its involvement in statist economic practices. Under colonial rule, the achievement and maintenance of economic power was inextricably linked with the politics of power. The colonial period clearly showed how control of the state meant control of the economy.

To link the Marxist political economy perspective within the context of this study thus, we posit that drug trafficking is a manifestation of societal inequalities in society. It is conditioned by prevailing politico-economic influences of the society. As far as drug trafficking is concerned, its fundamental cause is firmly rooted in the contexts and conditions created by institutions and societal practices. Without addressing these contextual issues, drug trafficking would still persist. Therefore, addressing the structural drivers that contribute to drug trafficking would be the most appropriate response to this social problem.

Again, the Marxist political economy point of view, drugs traffickers influence the entire policy and political processes of governments and states in Nigeria, and also institutionalized criminality in the conduct of public affairs which plays itself out in terms of the way in which the elites class and cartels, as a powerful, well-financed and highly organized special interest group, takeover policy-making through their proxies, and sponsor political advocates and protectors whose day-to-day dealings effectively put criminal interests ahead and above all other interests.

The creation of NDLEA and its Mandate of Fighting Drug Trafficking

Prior to the creation of the NDLEA, issue of drug trafficking has received abysmal attention. This is because successive military administrations have attempted at promulgating laws that seeks to address drug matters with varying degrees of successes. As Dike (2021) would argue on the menace of drug trafficking in Nigeria asserting to the evidence expectations of the Nigerian public and international community, the federal government task to formulate a lasting strategy to fight against the trafficking, production and consumption of hard drugs in Nigeria had remained unsuccessful as such, the government deemed it important to expand its awareness of the dangers posed by drug-related issues in the society (Dike, 2021). Conversely, the military regimes of Generals Buhari (1983-85), Babangida (1985-1993) and Abacha (1993-1998) perceived the drug trade through Nigeria as tarnishing the country's and especially the military elite's international reputation (Ayodele, 2011). This the aforementioned military regimes took seriously in the fight against drug trafficking and abuses in Nigeria.

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) was established by the promulgation of decree No.48 1989 and other military government decrees such as decree No.33 1990; No.15, 1992; No. 31995; and decree No.62 1999 respectively. This was in response to protecting the country from the dangers of hard drugs. In line with the decrees, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency is to enforce laws against the cultivation, processing, sale, trafficking and use of hard drugs and to empower the Agency to investigate persons suspected to have dealings in drugs and other related matter (NDLEA, 2015).

Functions of the NDLEA

- a. The enforcement and the due administration of the provisions of this Act;
- b. The coordination of all drug laws and enforcement functions conferred on any person or authority, including Ministers in the Government of the Federation, by any such law;
- c. Adoption of measures to identify, trace, freeze, confiscate or seize proceeds derived from drug-related offences or property whose value corresponds to such proceeds;
- d. Adoption of measures to eradicate illicit cultivation of narcotic plants and to eliminate illicit demand for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances with a view to reducing human suffering and eliminating financial incentives for illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.
- e. Taking such measures which might require the taking of reasonable precautions to prevent the use of ordinary means of transport for illicit traffic in narcotic drugs including making special arrangements with transport owners;
- f. Adoption of measures which shall include coordinated preventive and repressive action. Introduction and maintenance of investigative and control techniques.
- g. Adoption of measures to increase the effectiveness of eradication efforts.
- h. The facilitation of rapid exchange of scientific and technical information and the conduct of research geared towards eradication of illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.
- i. Taking measures for the early destruction or disposal of the narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances which have been seized, confiscated or forfeited
- j. Facilitation or encouragement of the presence or availability of persons, including persons in custody who consent to assist in investigations or participate in proceedings relating to narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances;
- k. Enhancing the effectiveness of law enforcement to suppress illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.
- l. Establishing, maintaining and securing communication to facilitate the rapid exchange of information concerning offices and improving international co-operation in the suppression of illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substance by road, sea and air (NDLEA, 2011).

The FCT/Airport Office

The act that established the NDLEA as a single centralized authority for the coordination of effort aimed at fighting drug trafficking across Nigeria equally mandates its state commands and that of FCT Abuja to curb drug trafficking, production and consumption within the territory (Dike, 2021).

The Abuja command of the NDLEA has the Headquarters backing with the legal instrumentation to operate, effective policing of drugs. Particularly, the FCT command of the agency is saddled with the responsibilities of controlling, interdicting and intercepting the trafficking, peddling and usage of hard drugs in and out of territory. With serious concern around the entry points into Abuja from other cities across the country, as well as the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport Abuja, Nigeria. The FCT NDLEA command is to educate FCT residence on the effects of hard drugs on the city and on the people. It is also the responsibility of the FCT command to arrest both trafficker and help to rehabilitate addicts (National Drug Control Master Plan 2015). The FCT Command office is headed by a commandant and supported officers of the command agency. Structure of the FCT NDLEA Command:

1. Commandant
2. Head of Intelligence
3. Head of Media & Advocacy
4. Head of Asset and Financial Investigation
5. Head of Prosecution and Legal Services
6. Head of Drug Demand Reduction
7. Head of Operation and General Investigation
8. Head of Training and Manpower Development (National Drug Control Master Plan 2015).

The FCT Command was all out to reduce the incidence of drug trafficking records associated with the country at large. Especially, because of the link with the international community became necessary. According to Alabi (2005) cited in Udama, (2013), contends that Nigeria had acquired the status of a transit country. Acknowledging that in the drug world, a transit country ultimately helps in the consumption chain and is as guilty as the consumer country (Alabi, 2005 cited in Udama, (2013)). The success of the FCT NDLEA command are numerous. This is because the command have carried out a number of arrest particularly within the period under review. The diagram below shows the numbers of arrest in FCT;

YEAR	MALE	FEMALE	TOAL
2010	80	16	96
2011	75	19	94
2012	65	10	75
2013	75	16	91
2014	72	14	86
2015	105	8	113
2016	90	10	100
2017	100	12	112
2018	98	10	108
2019	108	15	123
2020	100	10	110
2021	135	17	152
TOTAL	1268	157	1425

Sources: NDLEA Annual Report, 2021.

The Menace of Drug on the Health of the Citizens

The menace of drug on citizen's health and well-being cannot be quantified in Nigeria. Reasons been it has led to the loss of life, livelihood and others. With continuous use of psychoactive substances among adolescents and youths has become a public concern a huge national problem.

The UNODC, (2015) and UNODC (2017) identified the following as the consequence of drug on Nigerians. The global body acknowledge the that illicit drug use include increased mortality from overdose and from other directly or indirectly associated harms such as;

1. Increased risk of infection with blood-borne viruses (HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C);
2. High levels of depression and anxiety disorders: Psychiatric comorbidity is common in drug misuse populations, with anxiety and depression generally common and antisocial and other personality disorders in opioids-using populations. Drug misuse disorders complicated by other comorbid mental disorders have been recognized as having a poorer prognosis and being more difficult to treat than those without comorbid disorders; comorbid disorders are more likely to be chronic and disabling, and result in greater service utilization.
3. Social problems such as disrupted parenting, employment and accommodation: Lost productivity and unemployment increase with the severity and duration of drug misuse, and personal relationships are placed under considerable strain by dependent drug use. Problems with accommodation are also common in such groups. For example, in the National Treatment Outcomes Research Study (NTORS), 7% of the study groups were homeless and living on the street, 5% were living in squats and 8% were living in temporary hostel accommodation.
4. Increased participation in income-generating crime.

IV. Conclusion and Way Forward

The fight against drug trafficking in the Federal Capital Territory Nigeria has been a tortuous one that requires the adoption of various strategies and plans so as to unearth drug cartels and their cohorts in order to redeem the image of the country internationally and restore the degenerating state of mental health of the citizenry, particularly the youth. The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) should as a matter of urgency double its efforts and commitments in creating awareness and begin adopting modern strategies like laying emphasis on counseling rather than coercion in the treatment of drug offenders. The agency should ensure the training and retraining of its officers and men on up-to-date ICT techniques of how to identify websites/cookies used to trade drugs. This can only be attained when government increase their funding.

It is noteworthy at this juncture to state that most youth that took to drugs were led by the prevailing socio-economic conditions they find themselves and because successive administration in Nigeria have failed in living up to their responsibilities of providing the basic need to the citizenry, the youth particularly had to redirect their energies and time towards drug trafficking which surreptitiously assures a greater returns (Raphael & Salawu, 2015). Also, the level of drug prosecution has drop significantly because drug law breakers cut across both the upper, middle and the lower classes in the society. Today, you hardly see people from the elite/upper class arrested or detained on drug related matter. Until recently when the former head of the IGP Response squad DCP Abba Kyari was arrested and remanded on matters bordering on drug.

Recent studies have all alluded to the fact that the geopolitical zone in Nigeria that has the highest propensity of Cannabis production is located in the south west (Idanre Forest, Ondo State). Since the source is known, this make it easy for government and other critical stakeholders to ensure that all hands are on deck to halt the continued production and trafficking of this psychoactive substance so as to restore confidence of Nigerians on the ability for the NDLEA to curb the drug menace in the country. Internationally, Nigerians in Diaspora High Commission should be brought into the gesture by providing drug testing facilities that will test

prospective traveler before boarding. This will not only stem the tides of increased Nigerians involvement on drug related matters in Diaspora, it will discourage the youth from been lured to ferry drugs to various parts of the world.

The drug menace requires a multi-dimensional approach with a view of curbing it in our society. The National Agency for Food Drug Administration Control (NAFDAC) should intensify efforts to rid pharmaceutical shops within the FCT controlled drugs such as Tramadol, and Amitriptyline tablets to ensure that these drugs are only sold/administered on medical ground.

V. Recommendations

Arising from the above, the paper recommend as follows;

1. The National Drug Law Agency should see the urgency to renew its relationship with other security outlets so as to deepen confidence building, intelligence sharing and synergy to curtail drug trafficking in the Federal Capital Territory. Doing this will not only boost the agency's success records but will as well safe the lives of the younger generation from the negative consequences associated to drug use.
2. Incentive can be instituted to encourage sister agencies to burse drug related transaction to motivate anybody that arrest or provide relevant information that lead to arrest of drug kingpin.
3. The FCT command of the agency should endeavor to train and retrain its staffs especially in the areas of Information Telecommunication Technology (ICT) with a view to enhance productivity and track online drug site and monitor drug related transactions.
4. The government should increase funding to NDLEA and ensure that corrupt elements in the service are purged out. This will not only reposition the agency for maximum output, it will enhance citizen's confidence in the organization.
5. Drug offenders be brought to book irrespective of their social status. This will send a signal that whoever that violates any aspect of the drug law will be made to face the full wrath of the law.

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