

THE NIGERIAN FEDERATION AND ILLICIT DRUG BUSINESS AND CONSUMPTION: CASE STUDY OF LAGOS AND IMO STATES, FROM 1989-2015

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Abstract

The present study highlights illicit drug businesses and consumption in Nigeria as a phenomenon that had intensified as far as early 1980s, its consumption and abuses has threatened human welfare and dignity, and this has brought about several negative effects and nightmares to the nation and the entire society. The internal challenges occasioned by drug-related problem revolve mainly around the illicit drug trafficking, production, local sales, distribution, consumption and abuses. This uncomfortable and ugly situation has continued to shape the illicit drug statues of Nigeria ever since. It is based on the recognition of this growing notoriety that the present study is set to analyse the issues concerning the Nigerian federation and illicit drug businesses and its consumption, using Lagos and Imo states as a case study. The study has adopted both the quantitative and qualitative approaches of research methodology. This leads to a discovery that links the various societal predicaments and vices to drug crime. The study however, concludes that the fight to eradicate drug businesses and consumption is not all about making stricter policies for Nigerians, but in introducing measures such as home-grown character-building and good morals that could affect the people's psyche. Finally, the research recommends various ways which drug scourge could be managed

Introduction

The Drug Crime in Nigeria has a long history, the origin of illicit drug activities in Nigeria could be traced back to World War 11 in the 1940s, when demobilised soldiers of Nigerian extraction, who fought in India and Burma (now Myanmar) came back from the war, with some seeds of cannabis sativa, also known as Indian Hemp, which they, in turn, experimented and discovered that the plant could do well in some parts of the country. With time, the cultivation of cannabis sativa began to grow and with its subsequent increase in demand, it graduated to commercial quantities for local consumption, later to export quantity for shipment to Europe and America. Hemp trafficking became prevalent and widespread, thereby prompting many regimes in the past to maintain combative postures with

the culprits, and they enacted laws prescribing stiff penalties for those caught and convicted by the long terms of the law.¹

While, the incidence of hard drug was said to have manifested about the year 1982, its trafficking was known to have been wide spreading among Nigerians even since, with hard drugs like cocaine, heroin, morphine and other synthetic drugs gaining grounds and have been spreading ever since like wild fire. Accordingly, findings have also indicated that over the past few decades, Nigeria has emerged as a major drug trafficking hub, as reported in 2012 by the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), which noted that Nigeria at the time topped the list of the highest trafficking and drug using country in West Africa.² This report also added that in the past decades, West African countries have become the transit hub for cocaine and heroin coming from Latin America and Asia respectively, which were destined for Europe. It added that Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital, was gradually emerging as the most active centre for air trafficking of cocaine among other African countries. The report further noted that close to 50 per cent of Africa's drug couriers arrested in Europe since 2011 were mostly Nigerian citizens. Similarly, the report also added that Nigeria features prominently among the West African countries that produce and export cannabis to countries of Europe.³

However, Nigeria Federation and illicit drug business and consumption: a case of Lagos and Imo States, 1989-2015 is our main point of focus. The choice of 1989 is informed by the fact that it was when an agency (the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency) for the coordination of efforts aimed at tackling drug challenges in Nigeria was established. The inauguration of another section of the NDLEA, the National Drug Control Master Plan (NDCMP), which revolves around a comprehensive approach that addresses a range of drug-related issues like illicit drug supply, drug demand reduction, as well as control of illicit substances based on international drug control convention, informed the choice of 2015 for the termination of the research.

The study adopted Lagos and Imo states as a reference point, because of the strategic importance of the two states, as it relates to drug trafficking and consumption. Even though, Lagos is the location of NDLEA headquarters and a major commercial centre with all the facilities for a major commercial transportation in Nigeria. Its land border through Seme links other West African countries. It is these features that made it a major transit port for traffickers. The choice of Imo is influenced by the activities of peddlers in the state, in relation with criminal activities, which are influenced by drug abuse in the state.

Therefore, to get the in-depth analysis of the situation, the work will be examined under three broad headings. The first is the introduction to the study, followed by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) Records and Observation since 1989, Drug Production, Local Drug Sales and Consumption, Illicit Drug Consumption in Lagos State, Local Drug Consumption and finally, Drug peddling in some areas in Imo State, this will enable the study to portray a clear understanding of the situation under examination.

National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) Records and Observations since 1989

In this section effort will be made to assess some records and observation since 1989. For instance, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) describes the Southwest region of Nigeria as one of the main centres of illicit drug production as made manifest in the cultivation of the product in the country. In the region, in 2008, an estimated amount of 196.5 acres (0.795 km²) of cannabis farmland was discovered and destroyed.⁴ Also, Edo State (in the South region of Nigeria) was pointed as having the highest rate of production, where the seizure of cannabis and subsequent destruction of cannabis farmlands were made frequently in the country by the officials of the NDLEA. In another instance, the NDLEA was reportedly to have confiscated 6.5 tons of marijuana in April 2009, from the home of a man in Ogun State, who claimed to be 114 years old and a further destruction of about 24 hectares of cannabis plantation in a forest reserve in Osun State in September 2009 was made.⁵ This uncomfortable and ugly situation has continued to shape the illicit drug status of Nigeria.

In that same year, 2009, the NDLEA officials reportedly publicly burnt 5,605.45 kilograms of drugs seized from traffickers in the historic town of Badagry, Lagos State. The bonfire included 376.45 kilograms of cocaine, 71.46 kilograms of heroin and 5,157.56 tons of cannabis. This, among other activities, indicated the level of availability of illicit drugs in Nigeria.⁶ However, few other examples shall be drafted in to show the complexity and comparative examples of the various drug related issues in the country. In other words, the research may not cover all the activities in this context, probably, because of the vast nature of the drug trafficking in the country.

Rather, the study focuses more on few examples, in a view to bring about clarity in the study area, which are the Nigerian federation and illicit drug business and consumption. As a follow up to the current narration, the NDLEA report of 2012

revealed that the number of suspects arrested in 1991 rose from 293 persons to close to 6,323 persons in 2006, showing an increase of 2,158 per cent. The study also noted steady increases in the number of suspects arrested for drug-related offences in Nigeria between 1990 and 2011. The study further took cognisance of an increase in female involvement in drug-related offences, with the increase ranging from 61 females in 1994 to 440 in 2006.⁸

The NDLEA on its part disclosed an arrest of a total of 6,308 suspects in 2007 and 7,899 in year 2008, showing an increase of 1,591 cases representing 20.14 per cent.⁹ These and other activities and reports may have been responsible for the U.S. State Department's 2007 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report that claimed that the sale of hard drugs and local consumption of marijuana in Nigeria were on the increase. It linked the rise in the domestic use of the product in Nigeria to the increased quantities seized, the number and size of illicit plots discovered and destroyed, and also the number of arrests made by the NDLEA.¹⁰ Below is a table 1 showing the distribution of drug seizures and arrests between 1990 and 2011

Table 1. The distribution of drug seizures and arrests between 1990 and 2011 in Nigeria

Year	Cannabis	Cocaine	Heroin	Others	Total	Male	Female
1990	170.6	110.6	861.25	NA	1,142.45	NA	NA
1991	1,496.61	545.39	66.82	15.72	2,124.54	NA	NA
1992	2,508.11	415.67	690.84	3.51	3,618.13	NA	NA
1993	7,378.89	1,293.69	283.51	1.87	8,957.96	NA	NA
1994	19,732.66	90.76	91.65	94.3	20,009.37	632	61
1995	15,258.74	15.91	30.27	210.39	15,515.31	732	66
1996	18,604.72	6.16	19.38	1,203.79	19,834.05	1,099	88
1997	15,904.72	31.9	10.49	1,736.01	17,683.12	2,208	164
1998	16,170.51	9.26	3.62	2,609.75	18,793.14	2,610	204
1999	17,691.14	15.64	81.35	322.25	18,110.38	2,380	121
2000	272,260.02	53.42	56.6	234.28	272,604.32	2,253	132

Source: NDLEA Annual Report for 2012

2001	317,950.20	195.82	46.63	308.84	318,501.49	2,693	136
2002	506,846.09	35.35	55.62	791	507,728.06	2,549	108
2003	535,593.75	134.74	87.58	937.41	536,753.48	2,316	174
2004	68,310.07	124.47	90.94	233.83	68,759.31	3,382	318
2005	125,989	395.91	70.42	88.72	126,543.65	3,181	292
2006	192,368.30	14,435.88	33.09	515.57	207,352.84	5,883	440
2007	210,262.90	393,678	120,638	699,735	211,476.00	5,891	417
2008	335,535.34	3,654,904	116,054	5,304,033	336,442.84	7,584	315
2009	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	6,700	342
2010	174,661.59	706.433	202.08	2,550.622	178,120.725	6,296	492
2011	191,847.91	410.805	39.752	2,982.45	195,283.917	8,639	567
TOTAL	3, 027,851.50	19,781.24	2,954.83	16,071.17	3,085,355.15	47,028.00	4,437.00

An analysis of the table above shows that with the exception of a few years, there was a consistent upsurge in the quantity of drugs reportedly interdicted by the NDLEA between 1990 and 2011. For instance, from 1994, it is clear that the figure shifted from that of single digit to double digits, and continued in an upward direction with three digits. The same trend is observed with the number of persons interdicted for various drug dealing offences.

In 2008, however, the case was no different, as the subsequent report by the United Nations Office on Drug Crime (UNODC) published a threat assessment of trans-nationally organised crime in West Africa. According to the report, Nigerian trafficking group based in Brazil, and elsewhere in South America, remained quite active in cocaine trafficking through containerised consignment and maritime shipping, air couriership and postal shipment.¹¹

In the course of the above analyses, the report also indicated another source of growing concern, which revealed that methamphetamines production had found its way into Nigeria and some West African countries. The report further discovered that the main market for Nigerian and West African methamphetamines was East Africa and to a lesser extent South Africa. The thrust of that report gave verdicts that Nigerian citizens had been over-represented in the number of West Africans arrested either in West Africa or in Europe for

smuggling heroin, cocaine and other psychotropic substances.¹² The possible consequence of these negative notoriety was the constant humiliation of innocent Nigerian citizens, who became the victims of the bad image created by the few criminals, whenever they travel to foreign countries.

Apart from the UNODC publication, the NDLEA Annual Report for 2013 identified that drug trafficking remained a thriving business and a serious issue in the society. It then proposed that a strong concerted effort was needed to control the trade. The report noted that NDLEA in 2013 arrested 8,843 suspected drug offenders. The total quantity of drugs seized at the time stood at 339,968 kilograms.¹³ Like in the previous years; cannabis was said to have topped the list of drugs seized with a total of 205,373 kilograms. Psychotropic drugs followed with 133,920 kilograms. Then methamphetamine with 340.8 kilograms, cocaine 290.2 kilograms, heroin 24.53 kilograms, Amphetamine 19.297 kilograms and ephedrine 0.287kilograms, as compared to the 2012. There was as a result a 10 per cent increase in the number of arrests made as year's progressed.¹⁴

Having seen the range of activities and the drug crime situation in Nigeria, arising from the aforementioned instances, one would likely observe that the trafficking epidemic appears to be raging far ahead of the consumption habit .¹⁵ For obvious reasons, Nigerians joined the drug business more for the profit motive than for the pleasure of consumption.¹⁶ A close examination of the psychological make-up of the society reveals these obvious materialistic tendencies. The average Nigerian in the business has the astute marketeering qualities; he is versatile, adventurous and is known to be particularly quick-witted in the area of striking bargains.¹⁷

The foregoing attributes have been readily adapted in turning the unscrupulous Nigerian into a trafficker with unbelievable skills earning him the admiration of the drug lords whose ware he ferries across the globe. This is how Nigeria came to be known as a transit country for a drug it neither cultivates nor produces in large quantities.¹⁸ Even though accurate statistics of the involvement of Nigerians in the drug crime may not be available, and cannot be, and if the number of Nigerian traffickers arrested within and outside the country is anything to go by, then it can be asserted that there is a steady increase in the number of Nigerians in the drug business from year to year, beginning from 1982, when the first arrest and seizures were made, to when the NDLEA was established in 1989.¹⁹

The aforementioned instances have clearly shown the gradual proliferation of the drug trafficking business in Nigeria as the years rolled by; bringing the figure to a disturbing level from 1989.²⁰ It may be necessary to further examine other factors that may be responsible for this trend. First, the account of the turnout of the civil

war in Nigerian, which started in 1967, and lasted till January 1970, the account suggest that the local participation in the drug trade may have been a respond to the perceived alienation of particular groups from official roles of the state after Nigerian/ Biafra civil war of the late 1960s.²¹ This however, coincided with the economic situation of 1980s, and was followed up with implementation of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) which ushered in a period of sustained under investment in key social and economic sectors.²²

Secondly, Nigeria is said to have been involved in the luxury of materialism and the extravagant living habits occasioned by the numerous opportunities that came with the oil boom of the 1970s to the dawn of the 1980s.²³ The collapse of the oil economy was said to have brought into the system a lot of untold hardships to the citizens. As a result, people were retrenched, and so many contractors were not paid. Hence, the introduction of a re-adjustment measure to comb with the issue.²⁴ However, before it had a chance to show its positive results, impatient Nigerians had looked beyond the frontiers of their country for a quick money-spinning business, no matter how derogatory the business might be. The answer was the drug trade. Accordingly; Nigerians mustered all their business talents and became the favourite courier of the drug barons.²⁵

On the other hand, the demand for drugs in Nigeria could be said to be fallout of the trafficking business. As exportation became more difficult due to intensified law enforcement (both in Nigeria and abroad) there was a build-up of un-exported drugs which began to find local markets for internal consumption. The drug distributor, in search of patronage, usually begins by offering the substances on a complimentary basis for experimentation purpose. By so doing, the gullible youth, who succumb to peer group pressure for the rest of their lives, are enslaved to the drug supplies, who then sell to these addicts on their own terms. Regrettably, the drug culture or habit among the youth in the society is now gradually sweeping through the younger generation in institutions of learning, drinking bars, and different kinds of joints, nightclubs, and so on. They have gradually entered into the streets and these have increased the activities of drug peddlers in the streets.²⁶

Drug Production

The higher demand for illicit drug in Nigeria has by far increased the activities of drug production in the country. Before the coming of other hard drugs in Nigeria, it was obvious that Indian hemp and *Ogogoro* (a name for Nigerian locally manufactured gin) had remained the only drugs with clear evidence of local cultivation and manufacturing in the country.²⁷ The cultivation of Indian hemp hitherto was a phenomenon believed to be more prevalent in the southern states

of Nigeria. In the opinion of M.S Dagmar Thomas, the Country Representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Nigeria is acknowledged as one of the largest cannabis growers in Africa, with over eight per cent of the population abusing cannabis.²⁸ He mentioned the annual cannabis seizures to have increased from 126 metric tons in 2005 to 210 metric tons in 2007.²⁹

In line with this seizure, the NDLEA, on its part, described the Southwest Region of Nigeria as one of the main centres of illicit drug production in the country, where about 196.5 acres (0.795 km²) of cannabis farmland was discovered and destroyed in the region in 2008.³⁰ In September, 2009, as pointed out elsewhere in the study, the NDLEA reported the destruction of about 24 hectares of the cannabis plantation in a forest reserve in Osun State.³¹ However, other activities, have shown the extent to which the production of cannabis has continued to spread to almost all other parts of the country. Apparently, Nigeria's own challenges of drug, according to experts, present a pathetic case, for it is neither a hard drug producer nor primary consumer country.

However, with the recent development, record has shown that Nigeria enjoys the same level of notoriety as producing and primary consumer countries – a development that presents a case for national concern.³² The present observation has also revealed that, apart from Indian hemp cultivation in the country, another type of illicit drug production, which appears to be steadily creeping into the Nigerian society, is the high rising number of factories where methamphetamine and other synthetic drugs are produced. The methamphetamine drug is a white, odorless and bitter drug, which dissolves easily in water or alcohol. It has been discovered that this drug can be taken orally, intravenously or by smoking and snorting. In street parlance, the drug is known as 'paya' or 'meth'.

It became popular among Nigerian drug users for its capacity to enhance sexual performance and for its medical property as a pain killer.³³ For some time, meth was imported into the country by drug barons perpetually on the lookout for quick profits. The barons began to distribute the drug in capsules known as D10 and addicts found it easy to purchase it over the counter. Meth is commonly used by wrestlers and touts locally to improve performance. Along the line, drug addicts found other substitutes for meth, and these included Ephedrine, Procaine Powder and Tramadol, among others. In 2010, for instance, meth was said to have become central to the Federal Government's campaign to rid the country of narcotics after the NDLEA had observed an outward flow of the drug from Nigeria to the Western and Asian countries.

This was the warning bell that foretold the possibility of illegal meth factories flourishing within the country.³⁴ Similarly, in the earlier 2005, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime had raised the alarm over illegal meth factories in Nigeria and other West African countries. According to a report published by the agency in 2011, there was an increase in the demand for this drug in Asia. Some countries in Southeast Asia were also said to have reported a 250 per cent increase in the meth-related arrests between 2004 and 2009.³⁵ The Japanese authorities had also observed an increase in the number of people trafficking in the narcotic from Africa to Japan. Nigeria was listed as a source country in West Africa alongside Benin Republic, Cameroun and Senegal.³⁶

Clearly; drug trafficking syndicates are known to have expanded their network to include the production of meth. A 2012 UNODC report listed an increase in the smuggling of meth to Asian countries such as Japan and Korea. The NDLEA reports for 2010 on meth seizures at the Murtala Mohammed International Airport, in Lagos, Nigeria, indicated that from the 83 arrests made 62 of the suspects were heading for various Asian countries. While 38 were travelling to Malaysia, seven were heading for India and Japan. Four of the suspects were heading toward Thailand and two others were travelling to Bangladesh.³⁷

Indeed, more worrisome was the fact that foreigners had infiltrated the drug scene in Nigeria. Within a two-year period, a total of 284.583kilogram of meth was seized by the NDLEA, the largest seizure being 50 kilogram of Ephedrine that was destined for Mozambique. The former Chairman and Chief Executive of the NDLEA, Ahmadu Giade, explained the trend in the following words:

All over the world, the war on narcotics is tightening and drug barons are on the lookout for cheaper and easier alternatives that can provide the same euphoric effect as cocaine and heroin. Meth quickly became this alternative as it can be produced in laboratories; now it is in high demand in Europe.³⁸

However, the snag is that there are very few persons globally who have the expertise to produce meth. That is why Nigerian drug syndicates are seen to be sourcing the expertise of foreigners to help establish meth laboratories. If Nigerians should master the art of producing meth locally, the health and environment implications would be disastrous. Studies have shown that the preferred destination for meth traffickers in Nigeria is Asia and the reason has been that the penalty for drug trafficking in most Asian countries is death. This penalty has influenced in maximizing profits of hard drugs trafficking to Asia countries, because of the risk involved in trafficking. As a matter of fact, it becomes

more profitable for drug traffickers to ply their trade in Asia than in other Western nations.³⁹

The consequence of this is the increase in production factories of meth in the country to satisfy the rising demand in the Far East countries. For instance, the NDLEA report of 29th March 2016 was said to have uncovered another super methamphetamine laboratory that dislodged a major drug trafficking organisations in the country. These were discovered by the officials of the Special Enforcement Team (SET) of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), who made a significant breakthrough with the discovery of a super laboratory for the illicit production of methamphetamine, located at Asaba, Delta State. This super methamphetamine laboratory was estimated to be similar to the ones found in Mexico and was the first to be discovered in the country. The report mentioned the involvement of four Nigerians and four Mexicans the brains behind the setting off the production centre in Asaba.⁴⁰

Similarly, the NDLEA found other illicit drug laboratories, with three clandestine laboratories, used for illegal mass production of methamphetamine. This was made known by the former Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the NDLEA, Amadu Giade, during one of his tenures. He was quoted to have disclosed how the agency discovered the illegal drug factories in Akubuezem, Nnewi, Anambra State, which was reportedly owned by a suspected drug kingpin, Chukwunwendu Sylvester Ikejiakwu.⁴¹ The disclosure was made in Lagos, according to the NDLEA report, when he was briefing journalists on the successes of the agency. Mr. Giade reiterated that Ikejiakwu was also the leader of an international drug trafficking syndicate that recruits and sponsors drug couriers to China, Malaysia, Turkey and Italy, among other countries. He also disclosed that the 37-year-old suspect was found to be deeply involved in unlawful exportation of illicit drugs and unlawful assembling, as well as running of methamphetamine production laboratories in the eastern part of Nigeria.⁴²

Local Drug Sales and Consumption

We have mentioned elsewhere in this study that Nigeria is a transit country and a country gradually shifting into a narcotic consuming one. Now it becomes imperative to understand that apart from cannabis, which is indigenous and constantly an item of abuse in great proportion, there are other illicit drugs like cocaine, heroin, and morphine, which were brought into the country through the existence of the country's porous borders, but which could not find their way out

of the country as a result of the NDLEA activities, and have risen as an alternative market for the traffickers, who looked back for internal market to dispose of them. The probable implication of the situation was the creation of a lot of local drug sales and consumption centres in the immediate society. The development did further create a loophole for a possible proliferation of the activities of street peddlers within the local environment. These peddlers, in turn, also created a network within the nooks and crannies of the city, where none hitherto existed for possible increases in the distribution channel of local drug sales and consumption.

Illicit Drug Consumption in Lagos State

In 1992, for instance, the NDLEA report, revealed that illicit sales and use of substances were on the rise among the Nigerian urban youth.⁴³ Using Lagos as a case study, the report revealed the existence of constant uses and abuses of substances such as alcoholic beverages, tramadol, codeine, cigarettes, cannabis, amphetamines, heroin, cocaine, other stimulants and synthetic depressants by young Nigerians in the urban secondary schools. This report further revealed the activities of Nigerian youths, adults and the consumption of hard drug in some major corners of Lagos metropolis.

It indicated how a psychiatric hospital was getting overfilled; how careers were crashing, promising lives were falling apart; how, many Nigerian youths, were treading the path of mental destruction, and the report cautioned, that the way things were going, by the next 20 years, if not checked, the country would ruin with the negative effect of consumption of narcotics drugs and other psychotropic substance. However, among all the challenges mentioned about trafficking, local sales and consumption of drugs, the most worrisome was the consumption among children, adolescent and youth, whose addiction to these drugs had gain ground in the society.⁴⁴

A brief investigation of Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Yaba and Oshodi, Lagos State justifies this assertion. In an oral interview with Dr. Oluwayemi Cecelia Ogun, the Medical Director of the Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Yaba, Lagos State on 16th September 2018 in her office,⁴⁵ she had decried the impact of hard drugs on the society. Citing few examples from the statistical record of a research available to her, she noted that 40.1 per cent in Ilorin, Kwara State (were addicted with the use of kola nut, alcohol, glue as an alternative drugs), 46.6 per cent in Edo State institution, 43.9 per cent among some university students (uses coffee, alcohol, glue, kola nut, tobacco, cannabis, while 22.1 per cent in some

private secondary schools and 15.3 per cent in public schools in Jos, Plateau State, use drugs.⁴⁶ In her further explanation, she categorised the abused drugs and substances in four distinctive categories:

- (a) illicit/Illegal drugs and substance of abuse;
- (b) licit/ /legal drugs and substance of abuse;
- (c) medical drugs of abuse; and
- (d) the utility chemicals around the household.⁴⁷

In the first category, she outlined illicit drug and substances of abuse such as heroin, cocaine, morphine, Indian hemp, ecstasy, LSD, flakka, concoction of illicit drugs, cocktails, and so on. In addition, she mentioned those that fell within the second categories of licit/legal as those which comprise the regular day-to-day drugs that can be purchased behind the counter as “drugs and beverages” like, cigarettes (nicotine), coffee (caffeine), alcohol, energy drinks mixed with alcohol, among others, while, medical drugs of abuse are codeine (cough syrup), tramadol, valium, calamine, pentazocine, fentanyl, amphetamine (Itaalim, palm pills, sleeping pills, (valium, diazepam, nitazepan), Loatidine, rohypnol and others. Finally, she mentioned the fourth categories as the one that fell within the utility chemicals around the household that which are abused. They are petrol, bleach, chemical, and so on.⁴⁸

Among all the drugs mentioned, Dr, A. I. Bello, of the Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital of Oshodi, Lagos, (Annex) in a similar interview on 21st September 2018, made an additional contribution to Dr. Ogun’s explanation. On his part, Bello outlined the various commonly abused substances by children, adolescent, and youth in the society to conclude the following ⁴⁹;

- a. coffee used commonly at home and in school as beverages;
- b. tramadol for energy/power, sleep (users claims);
- c. cannabis (Indian hemp/weed), cheap and widely offered by others (users claims);
- d. codeine sometimes mixed in different bottles of soft drinks – users claim it’s for relaxation;
- e. slimming pills/teas – amphetamine, mostly used by females;
- f. nicotine(cigarettes) usually offered (users claim);
- g. glue – easily accessible, available, users claim;
- h. pentazocine (a pain killer, injection used especially among sickles children);
- i. steroids’ – to develop muscles packs, win at sporting events (users claim);
- j. heron (prohibitively costly for most young uses;

- k. cocaine (prohibitively costly for most young users;
- l. crack (prohibitively costly for most young users;
- m. morphine (prohibitively costly for most young users; and
- n. alcohol – young users claim it is bitter and expensive.

In another interview held on 22nd September, 2018 with Destiny a 20-year-old male inmate at Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Centre Oshodi, Lagos, (Annex) ⁵⁰ (the first name is used only because the respondent declined to supply his surname) he shared his experience and how his addictive lifestyle started-a habit which he said, almost destroyed his life and future. He narrated how the security man in their residence (called Mallam Garba) who was also a peddler, disguised as a gateman and dealer in mini-provision shop at their gate, introduced him to the use of drugs- a habit which he nurtured and later introduced to some of his friends in the school. He narrated how he was introduced into the use of drugs from tramadol and later to other hard drugs, until he became addicted to the use of the substances. He reiterated how his problem started and the subsequent illness associated with his addiction that manifested with the addiction. These included constant headache, convulsion, feeling of rejection, depression, temporary madness, memory loss, hallucination, among others. These illnesses and signs were what caught the attention of his parents when they manifested. Accordingly, he was subsequently brought to a rehabilitation centre for treatment.⁵¹

Apart from the oral interview with Destiny, another disturbing situation was an eye witness account and an interview with a 35-year-old drug addict called Uche Obiekwe, ⁵² who was said to have been living with his mother, before he was admitted at Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital, Yaba, Lagos State, for rehabilitation. In Uche's own case, he was said to be an exceptionally intelligent student, before he became more dependent on hard drugs – a development that led to his lost of interest in attending classes and ultimate drop- out of school. When he dropped out, according to his testimony, he latter fetched a job with a construction company. While staying with his mother, he added, his addiction became severe, to an extent that he was not capable of holding down a full-time job in the company.⁵³

It is against the above, that Seye Afolabi, a Child Mental Psychologist with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Centre, Oshodi (Annex), in an interview on 22nd September, 2018, outlined certain issues responsible for child, adolescent, youth involvement in drug abuse. The issues include the following⁵⁴

- a. ignorance of the danger of drug use – the children and adolescents simply do not know the consequence of the use of drugs;
- b. involvements in cultism, social clubs, like palm wire clubs in higher institutions;
- c. lack of parental supervision of time and money in the hands of their children;
- d. family hostilities, for instance, some children have been excluded from family life and decision;
- e. child labour – especially, kids who do menial jobs outdoors;
- f. depression becoming more common among children;
- g. home exposure to substance uses especially with the new home fashion of having family drink;
- h. academic issues, if protracted, unresolved and associated with criticisms from loved ones and tutors;
- i. media projection that substance use is “cool”;
- j. disciplinary failure by stakeholder;
- k. lost trust in all authority figures;
- l. desire for beauty and body weight;
- m. quest for excitement, fun and independence; and
- n. excessive shyness (low self esteem)

In this same development, Mrs. Grace Fatai Kadiri,⁵⁵ a secondary school teacher, believed that the current crises concerning drug related challenges was occasioned by the societal laxity to confronting illicit drug offences. She blamed the general public for not contributing immensely on the eradication of hard drug in the society. According to her, Nigeria is one country where substance and drug screening is not commonly done. In other climes, as she explained, some people on essential services are regularly screened before they assume duty. For examples, the long-distance truck drives, the pilot, commercial vehicle drivers, the train or school bus drivers, and so on.

He advised, that owners of schools and institutions of learning should brace up to current drug abuse challenges by purposing that all their students and school teachers with known addiction problems would be screened for drugs periodically.

Local Drug Consumption and Drug peddling in some areas in Imo State

Like other areas in the country, local drug consumption and peddling has been a serious issue of concern in Imo state. An interview with the Imo state NDLEA commander, Mr. Nse Jack, testifies the ugly incidence as that which has caused disaffection among people of the state. He narrated the successes recorded in the

seizure of 248,58 kilogrammes of hard drugs and the arrest of 67 suspected traffickers last year alone. He therefore, cried over the discovery of a clandestine laboratory manufacturing methamphetamine by the agency in Obinigwu village in Orlu Local Government with suspects currently undergoing trials at the federal high court in Lagos.⁵⁶

Similarly, at the present year, 2019, about 130, 17 kilogrammes of hard drugs has been seized from traffickers and peddlers, 30 drug abusers counseled, three drug-dependent persons undergoing rehabilitation, while 53 suspects were said to have been arrested and currently being persecuted. Jack advised that public enlightenment campaigns on the dangers of drug abuse are needed by all sector, example of such campaign as he emphasized, is the current partnership with MTN in schools and tertiary institutions across the state. He concluded that the dangers of drug abuse to human includes the damaging of vital organs of the body, such as kidney, liver, and lungs as well as its implication on socio-political and economic well being of the people and the future generation.⁵⁷

In view of the outcry by the NDLEA boss in Imo state, the higher demand for illicit drug in the state has been far discovered by the present study to be on increase, various interview conducted recently by the researcher has attested beyond reasonable doubt the proliferation of the activities of drug peddlers in the state. Apparently, the choice of the interview of the local dealers (Peddlers) is rooted from the findings to ascertain why people engaged in local drug sales and consumption. In these findings, however, the research discovered that it's not usually an easy task to identify the black market were peddlers carry out their sales and trading, even though they are located in every nook and crannies of the city. It was noted that the areas where drugs are sold cannot be discovered or noticed without having the cooperation and the aid of drug consumers or those leaving nearby.

These findings according to an eye witness, Mr. Chibuzor Okafor, who deals on drugs, informed the researcher, the difficulty involve in locating where drugs are sold, because of the secrecy involve in the trade. In his words, it requires languages and codified words which only those involve in these activities use and can only be understood and interpreted by peddlers and consumers alike to penetrate the arena where drugs are sold. Some of these signs can come in form of facial expression, coded names or 'local parlance' used to call the substance and so on.⁵⁸

Another interview with Mr. Okechukwu Ogunna, who lives within the researcher's neighbourhood, is an addict in marijuana (India hemp). In our

interaction, he mentioned peer group pressure, unemployment and frustration as the major reason which made him indulged in his habit. According to him, he started doing drugs after he was laid off by his master, whom he served for seven years in Onitsha main market. On returning home, he discovered that his mate has gone far ahead of him in both academic and business progress. This prompted him into drug consumption in order to easy off frustration.⁵⁹

Ogunna aided the researcher on 7th July 2019 to the area near a primary School, where sales and buying of marijuana takes place on daily basis. There and then, the researcher met a peddler, Mr. Chijioke Maduabuchukwu, who sales drug to them. In further inquiry, Mr. Maduabuchukwu, mentioned drug dealings as the only trade he knows and trained to do. In absent of drug dealing according him, "hunger will kill me" he reiterated, how NDLEA activities forced him out of international drug trafficking. He narrated many countries, like USA, Germany as area where he had served prison sentences and was deported after serving. When he came back finally to Nigeria, he had no other plan, than to continue in local sales of India hemp in his village Orji in Owerri North Local Government.⁶⁰

Similarly, in a street called Oguamanam by Douglas road in Owerri Urban Local Government, is another area where different types of hard drugs are sold and distributed secretly by peddlers. According to Mr. A E. Anozie, who lives within the area, spoke on the activities in Oguamanam Street. According to him, "the drug activity at the area is suspected to have been of a great influence to the increasing criminal activities in the area around Douglas road. For instance, drug users around the neighbourhood engage in criminal activity, such as burglary, snatching of people's properties and prostitution, to raise the money to buy illicit drugs.⁶¹ Douglas road is notorious area in Owerri due to the above influence, especially during the evening period. It is an area where so many vices are perpetrated by drug addict who engages in crime to raise money to buy drugs. Another witness to this account, Mr. Godwin Nwoke, who claimed to be a repented peddler, confirmed Anozie's pronouncement, while narrating the criminating activities in Douglas. In his words, the majority of crimes within Douglas road are committed under the influence of hard drugs by drug addict leaving within the area. He also mentioned "Timaya" (a brothel by Onitsha road) as major source of concern, due to the criminal activities, prostitution and peddling of drugs that has been on increase in the area. In his narration, he sees the place as another major area for criminal activities and prostitution before 2017 in Imo State, until the former Governor of Imo state, Rochas Okorocha, busted the place in 2017 to flush out the criminals living within the area. He later renamed it "Jacob Zuma Avenue". He concluded.⁶²

Another interview on Monday 15th July, with Nicholas Amobi,⁶³ a Drug peddler, who started his discussion by condemning the consumption of hard drugs. According to him, “it is almost impossible to stop abusing hard drugs once you begin unless you choose to attend a professional rehabilitation program and learn the skills you will need to end the use of hard drugs”. He mentioned the various places and ways, tricks used by peddlers to reach out to their various customers. He mentioned places like:

- a. Car wash area.
- b. Motor parks.
- c. Stadium.
- d. University hostels.
- e. Mammy market (Army Barracks)
- f. Imo State University (IMSU) junction
- g. Drinking places (beer parlours), to mention but a few.

In most of this area the consumer identified the peddlers through signs, codified languages, like “Ole way”, how far (a greeting in pidgin language) or facial expression like touching their nose. By so doing, according to Amobi, communication will be perfected, leading to the sales of the substance. Often times, peddlers have different names for each of their product. For instance, white, (cocaine), brown (heroin), weed, gambo, S’K, miracles leaf, Jumbo, we-wee (India hemp), to mention but a few. These names can only be understood by a person who is into drug consumption alone.⁶⁴

To support Amobi’s account, Mr. Julian Nwogu, (A.K.A Frontman) a friend to Amobi who is also a peddler, mentioned youths and young women as the highest petronisers of their trade. He mentioned lack of opportunities as the reason why they entered into the drug sales and distribution. In his words, “my parents died when I was 12 years, and were left alone to cater for my younger ones, no uncle, no aunty, only me and my siblings” this according to him made him enter into drug trade, in other to make it fast. He talked about his awareness about the danger posed by drug addiction, and advised the authorities to create jobs for them to be able to live a better life in the society.⁶⁵

Three other peddlers from Nwangale Local Government of Imo state, Mr. John Nwafor,⁶⁶ Mr. Andrew Onyewuche,⁶⁷ Jonathan Uzoma,⁶⁸ all spoke about the deceptive and disguising nature of drug distribution business and the creation of network by drug peddlers throughout the nook and crannies of the environment. This according to them makes it impossible to fully arrest the proliferation of drug peddlers in Nigeria. According to them, sometimes

peddlers act as shoe menders, rat killer sellers, scrap pickers, mad people, beggars, and even use the disabled persons in order to beat security network to reach out to their customers.

In addition to this, is the challenge posed by state security syndicates who aids and collaborate with peddlers to carry out their business successfully. According to one repented peddler Johnbosco, who preferred to be called by his nickname “Jagaban” who operate from works layout, Owerri made a very surprising and shocking revelation, that even state security agents, like the military, are actively involved in the distribution of hard drugs. In his words, “when I was in the business of drug peddling, some corrupt military personnel normally supply me India hemp in quantity with their vehicle, which I will eventually sale in bit and pay them back in their next supply.” He also mentions that some ‘presumed’ responsible men and women in the society patronise their trade, some of them, he said, preferred a home delivery of the substance.⁶⁹

There are also incidences where young girls are lured into drug addiction by their male partners. An interview with a young lady, Miss. Vivian Ekeoma,⁷⁰ who claimed to be a third-year student of Abia State University, narrated her ordeal to the researcher on 26 July 2019, when she came to buy illicit drug at Oguamanam Street. Before the commencement of her story, she asked the researcher for two favours:

1. that the researcher should pay for the bill arising from the cost of her purchase;
2. and her story should be protected;

At first instance, she narrated how she started using drugs. According to her, her involvement with drug use and other psychotropic substances started when she gained admission into her present school (Abia State University) where she met her late boyfriend, who was also a student in the same institution, as well as “Yahoo boy” (an acronym used for internet fraudster in Nigeria), who later died on motor accident. Her life as an addict was said to have started when she was convinced by her late boyfriend that using the substance can be very benefiting, especially in the area of sexual enhancement and performance.

But overtime, she discovered that whenever she is under the influence of this substance, it makes her feel “coool” (hallucination). The mood that goes along with drug consumption apparently became interesting to her, and this continued until she became addicted to drugs. She also expressed how only one hypodermic syringe or needle is usually used by peddlers to inject drugs through their veins

to almost all the drug consumers. In her words, drug consumption has lured her into other habits. For instance, she now begs for money from people at random in public places. It also makes her engage in prostitution. Sales of her properties and other precious belongings, all to raise money to satisfy her drug addiction.

Apart from Mr. Ejike experience another thrilling circumstance was an interview with Mr. Collins Ejiogu,⁷¹ a Civil Servant, with state Ministry of Trade and Industry, who spoke extensively on the rate of drug consumption and the danger associated with drug trafficking and consumption in the society. He sees illicit drug consumption, as the major factor responsible for most of the social vices in the society. In his view, most parents should be blame for their inability to raise their children in a proper way. He condemned the new home fashion of having fancy drinking bars built into the common sitting room. Pointing out that, such facilities have a way of misleading the children. For instance, the relations who use drugs/ substances can expose the children into drug use, while using these facilities. He further advises parents to supervise their children very well, while been wary of who visit their homes.

In the part of Mr. David Nwachukwu,⁷² a retired health worker, condemned the media exposure by most parents to their children, especially those which propagate and exposes immorality and encourage drug consumption. He advised, that illicit drug consumption can lead to some undesirable circumstances like

1. Criminal activities
2. It can lead to incessant family/parental conflicts
3. It destroys/truncates schooling and careers
4. It isolates youth from good companion
5. It brings embarrassment to the abuser child, parents, family, school and community, he concluded.

However, the growing effect of this trend has created a very complex development for NDLEA to overcome. The biggest issue confronting NDLEA at the moment is not anymore on how to curb drug trafficking in and out of the country, but rather the internal problems associated with local drug sales and distribution within the country.

Conclusion

The reasons for the establishment of the NDLEA in Nigeria were to fight the crime of drug abuse as made manifest in illicit drug production, trafficking and

consumption in the society and to curtail the availability of drugs. Considering that there are vulnerable classes of people and army of youth who are unemployed and who have continued to find reasons to trade and consume these substances, and on the other hand, women who are continuously driven by desperation.

The research also identified corruption, duplications of duty, and delay of justice as major issues of concern militating against the prosecution of the war of illicit drugs, especially drug trafficking in the country. It also identifies drug crimes and abuse of the substance as an obstacle primarily linking other social vices. In all this challenges, however, it appears reasonable to predict that the war will only continue to worsen the problems associated with drugs. While reviewing the global drug situation and the apparent drug war failure, studies have shown that no government can ever conceivably convince all segments of the general public to either abstain from illegal trading in these substances, or from consumption or drug use.

This research, however, is not only about giving Nigerian drug policy makers suggestions on water-tight alternatives on how hard drugs or narcotics could be eradicated in Nigeria. It is about analysing the array of critical issues and implications of trafficking and consumption of illicit drug among women and youth in our society. Nevertheless, it becomes imperative to call on drug policy makers for a rethink, recognising that the pros and cons of this war are multiple. In other words, the present study suggests a need for a nuanced debate on the war and the need for experimentation with other drug policy alternatives, especially a homegrown alternative, which traditionally will centre on grassroots norms and values. For instance, the advocacy of Gottfredson and Hirschi's social theory, should be made relevant, which talks about the control of individual's behaviour by establishing a strong moral bond between the juvenile and society, consisting of an attachment to others, commitment to conventional behaviour, involvement in conventional activities, and a belief in the moral order and law, which tends to promote conformity and prevent delinquency. This suggestion becomes necessary, based on the fact that the current prohibition laws has not being much effective, as the number of arrested persons trading in the illicit substances increases on daily basis. Therefore, there is a need to advocate for a new approach to this important social problem, through policy change.

Finally, while advocating for this change in approach, the research laid further emphasis on youth unemployment, poverty and general loss of hope in the society as another major factor encouraging indulgence of persons, particularly the youth, in crime related activities in Nigeria. In that vein therefore, the research also

suggests the implementation of Gottfredson and Hirschi's social theory, which also advocate human capital development by government as a way to deter youth from criminal activities. increasing burden of drug crimes and its related vices in the Nigerian society. Apparently, this social theory if well harnessed will by far, remain an ideal philosophical response to remedy and checkmate the illicit drug related challenges.

Recommendations

However, since, it has been argued that the majority of those associated with illicit drugs, both in respect of abuse and trafficking are mostly youths. It, therefore, means that if the youth are kept away from drugs, the entire problem is almost solved. In other words, the Nigerian youth need to be further oriented on the dangers involved with engaging in trafficking and abuse of drugs and should further discourage to see it as a means of livelihood. This orientation should not be left only with the NDLEA and government or educational institutions. Adequate awareness should be strengthened by print and electronic media on the dangers posed by illicit drug trafficking and consumption. Furthermore, religious leaders, teachers, parents, guardians and all molders of opinion should also step up to the challenges and play their role in this regard and to ensure that through institutional pressure, that the youth in our society are discourage from getting involved in the trafficking, use and abuse of hard drugs.

This preventive education is one of the best measures to be in place to avoid problems associated with drug abuse. In line with the preventive education, the modern leaders in Nigeria should gather under one roof and trash out these issues. They should put human development in high priority; otherwise, it wouldn't be good to rest, until this issue is settled in this country. Apparently, the society should be made conducive for all, by finding a lasting solution to eliminate this problem from grassroots. These will only be possible, through finding a meaningful solution to the current state of the drug problem by NDLEA and concern Nigerians. Other recommendations, remedial measures, should also be looked into.

First, the control of illicit drug demand is no doubt the major war in the drug consumption and trafficking control. For instance, where demand is properly controlled, there will be no need for illicit drug trafficking or supply. This fact contradicts the effort of NDLEA in trying to push forward their best in the control of supply of narcotics without appropriate logistics. This contradiction arises

when those drugs which came in through our porous border could not find its way outside the country and certainly revolves within the internal market. The study recommends therefore, that the NDLEA should concentrate its effort, predominately on the drug demand reduction strategy, in other to abate or discourage supply. By this means therefore, when the demand is discouraged, through this regulative approach, supply will die a nature death. To achieve this, NDLEA should establish more rehabilitation centres to address the problems of Drug addiction. More special centres for the treatment and rehabilitation of drug-dependent persons will be needed in every locality.

These centres should develop a range of treatment and rehabilitation programmes, which will combine strategies for medical, psychological and social services. Such centres will need interdisciplinary staff. The rehabilitation centres should be made available to the grassroots level. In other words, every local government area or even communities in the country should have these facilities for the treatment of drug addicts. Since the drug abuse issue has entered deep in every nooks and crannies of the country. Existing centres should also be expanded and equipped for more effectiveness. And to do this efficiently, motor vehicles, equipped materials, should be adequately supply. More funds should be made available to official of the agency to enable them perform to this expectation, because there is no output without input.

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