

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN DRUG ABUSE, ADDICTION AND CRIME; A CASE STUDY OF PRISON INMATES IN ENUGU STATE.

BY

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Abstract

The study investigated drug abuse, addiction and crime using prison inmates (convicts and awaiting trial ATM) in Enugu State prisons as a case study. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study with the inmates in Enugu and Nsukka prisons as the population. Data was collected with a four-point likert type questionnaire from two hundred male and forty six female youths who constituted the sample. The data were analyzed using mean and real limit of numbers for the research questions. A mean of 1.00-1.49 is regarded as non use of drugs, 1.50-1.99 depicts drug use, 2.00-2.49 = drug abuse while 2.50-3.00 = drug addiction. The t test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses, at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that many youths tend to be addicted to alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana. The crimes committed ranged from robbery, murder, stealing and wandering about. Friends have some influence on the youths in drug addiction while there is significant difference between the crimes committed by youths based on gender. Based on the above findings, recommendations were made.

Introduction

There is public outcry through the mass media and people's experiences all over the world concerning the increasing rate of violent crimes perpetuated by youths in the country.

Currently, George (2010) reported that in Anambra State, "gunmen" (youths) kidnapped an industrialist and demanded a huge sum of money as ransom. This is just the latest of myriads of such reports in which some of the

victims either died or became psychologically traumatized.

Nigeria was plunged into mourning over the death of a former governor of Kano State after an armed robbery attack (Adeyemi, 2010). This again is but the latest of several armed robbery incidents in the country. A lot of reasons have been adduced for adolescent violent crime prominent among which is the influence of the home- parental practices and drug abuse/addiction.

Children, who are exposed to ineffective parenting practices such as low supervision, rejection, and harsh and inconsistent discipline, according to Sampson and Laub in Ejiofor and Ngwoke (2009), are at risk of developing antisocial patterns of behaviour. In an earlier report, Kasner (1991) noted that children, who have experienced maternal deprivation in infancy, display a relatively high incidence of anxiety and insecurity in later life. They have more social and psychological problems than children who received adequate affection as infants. In the final analysis those without love end up as adults full of hatred, indulge in illicit drug use, taking alcohol or smoking to compensate for loss of maternal love.

In addition to lack of parental love, Malqosa in Ejiofor and Ngwoke (2009) stated that

many of the young people who take drugs come from families which also use them. He opined that the example of the parents (especially during the 1st year of the children's lives) create a subconscious desire of imitation in the children. He pointed out that in many homes, parents drink alcoholic beverages, smoke cigarettes, and take tranquilizers and other socially accepted drugs which many think are harmless but are addictive and influence vulnerable children. This lends credence to the social learning theory of Bandura (1977) which stipulated that most human learning is observational and imitative. Very early in family interaction, the child identifies with a parent as a model and subsequently imitates the parent. As the child grows older, he meets and interacts with peers, school mates, members of their church and the immediate and larger society. Within these groups the child continues to learn.

Haro, Hart and Parcel (1997), in their own contribution, stated that peer pressure and social acceptability are prime motivators for the popularity of alcoholic beverage. Alcohol, though socially accepted can result in alcoholism (dependence on alcohol).

Supporting the issue of peer pressure, Okafor (2008) stated that peer group influence and

association with drug-using peers constitute perhaps the most strongly supported predictor of adolescents' substance abuse. Most boys, he went on, engage in smoking, alcohol use, drug use and abuse simply because their friends are victims and they also want to partake so as to have a sense of belonging and be accepted by their peers.

The term drug in everyday usage is any substance taken by people for prevention and treatment of diseases or sickness. It can be constituted as tablets or injectable chemicals and normally recommended or administered by doctors and patent medicine dealers for remediation or cure of an ailment. According to Haro et al (1997), a drug can be defined as any substance other than food, which when taken into the body, alters its normal functioning.

Drugs can be legal-antibiotics, antacids and analgesics used for therapeutic purposes or illegal- sometimes referred to as hard drugs used for pleasure or means of relieving tension. These have caused some concern in the society because of their adverse effect on users, families and the society. Ifaturoti (1994) attested to the fact that abuse of drugs such as cocaine and overindulgence in alcoholic drinks such as gin, and whiskey alter the user's mind and predispose it to violence.

Drug abuse, according to Akunyili (2006), is the use of any drug to alter the state of the body or mind for the purposes other than medically warranted. Drug abuse could also mean the taking of prescribed drugs in quantities that are detrimental to the body function due to carelessness or anxiety for fast relief.

The general population survey on drug abuse situation in Nigeria carried out in 1999 and medical reports from medical health institutions showed that besides 60 percent of youths, between 10 and 29 years old found to be using and abusing drugs, majority of patients admitted for drug related sickness are youths between the age of 11 and 35 years (Nwaiwu, 2002).

Drug addiction is an overpowering desire to continue taking drug and to obtain it by any means due to consistent use. According to Chibuko (2008), drug addiction is a continuous dependence on drug that it becomes a formalized practice to the individual. Under the influence of those drugs, he further stated, the student may engage in delinquent behaviours like rape, stealing and robbery, among other crimes to obtain money to sustain the habit.

This view supports Akunyili (2006) who summarized the dangers inherent in engaging in drug abuse as increased tendency

to commit crimes like armed robbery, burglary, car theft, cultism, among others. Crime according to Webster (2008) is a serious offence against the public law. It is something reprehensible, foolish or disgraceful. Violence is the "threatened or actual use of physical force against oneself or an individual or group that either results, or is likely to result in injury or death" (Christoffel in Fraser, 2003). The tendency to engage in violent crimes according to an earlier submission by Adegoroye (2003) lies in the fact that most of the hard drugs are very expensive and addicts need a lot of money to maintain the habit. Security experts say that criminals use drug to get high and operate with bravado. This situation made Bello-Lafiagi in Eno Abasi (2004), to lament that the pervasive, sophisticated and destructive nature of drug abuse/addiction among the youths have debased the youths (who kill and maim like wild animals), impeded the hope of families (as these youths now become a burden), destroyed young talents and frustrated careers of the youths. Who then are the youths? Youth is a psychosexual period of lack of experience that falls between childhood and adulthood (Freud in Abhuere, 2000). In terms of persons, Abhuere (2000), quoting Friedman, stated that youth is a

group that have reached puberty, but not yet acquired the full rights and duties of adult life, such as marriage, family and earning of living.

Statement of the Problem

From literature, youths are implicated in drug abuse and addiction which may lead to incidences of crimes in the society such as murder, rape and destruction of property, among others. The relevant questions here are: Are the youths in Enugu State involved in drugs? Which drugs are they addicted to? What crimes do they commit and are they in prison because of drugs and related crimes? These questions span the problem of this study?

Scope of Study

The scope is limited to drug abuse, addiction and crimes among prison inmates in Enugu State prisons.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- i. What are the drugs youths get addicted to?
- ii. What crimes do these youths commit?
- iii. What are the factors that draw the youths to drug addiction?

Null Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the crimes committed by youths based on gender.
2. Age will not significantly affect the type of crimes committed by the youths.

METHOD

The design adopted in this research is descriptive survey in which a group of people is studied to be representative of the entire group (Nworgu, 2006)

The study was conducted in Enugu State with four prisons located at Nsukka, Oji River, Ibitolu and Enugu. These prisons were chosen because there are male and female youths from many parts of the country in them. The population of the study consists of 246 prison inmates in Nsukka and Enugu City prisons.

While simple random sampling was used to select Nsukka prison out of the 3 male prisons in Enugu State, Enugu city prison was chosen because it has both male and female inmates. Simple random sampling was also used to choose male inmates from both Enugu and Nsukka prisons.

The instrument for data collection was a four point scale likert type questionnaire with Strongly Agree (SA,4), Agree (A,3), Disagree (D,2) Strongly Disagree (SD,1). It has two sections: section A- sought the demographic data of the respondents, while section B-

sought information on drugs addicted to and crimes committed by youths.

The instrument was given to two experts in educational foundations and guidance and counselling for face and content validation. The instrument was then trial-tested with Oji River prison inmates to ascertain the reliability and an internal consistency coefficient of 0.83 was got using cronbach Alpha.

The prison warders helped to distribute and retrieve the copies of the questionnaire from the respondents in Nsukka and Enugu prisons. The data were analyzed using mean and real limit of numbers for the research questions. A mean of 1.00-1.49 is regarded as non use of drugs/never committed the crime/no influence, 1.50-1.99 depicts drug use/occasional commitment of the crime/little influence, 2.00-2.49 = drug abuse/often commits the crime/influence, while 2.50-3.00 = drug addiction/regular commission of the crime/great influence. The t-test statistics was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance and appropriate degrees of freedom.

RESULTS

Research Question I: What are the drugs the youth get addicted to?

Table 1: Mean responses on the type of drugs youths get addicted to

SN	Items	Mean	Standard deviation	Remark
1	Alcohol	2.30	1.22	Abuse
2	Cigarettes	2.21	1.29	Abuse
3	Cocaine	1.37	0.75	non use
4	Marijuana	2.16	1.24	Abuse

From table 1, the mean scores of items 1, 2 and 4 is within the real limit mean of 2.00-2.49 indicating that the youths abuse alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana.

Research Question 2

What crimes did these youth commit? See table 2.

Table 2: Mean responses and standard deviation on crimes the youths committed.

SN	Items	Mean	Standard deviation	Remark
5	Robbery	2.29	1.31	often
6	Rape	1.76	1.12	never
7	Murder	2.10	1.27	often
8	Stealing	2.14	1.20	often
9	Destruction of property	2.00	1.11	often
10	Wandering about	2.07	1.19	often

From the table, the mean scores of all the items except item 6 is within the real limit of 2.00- 2.49 which is an indication that they commit robbery, stealing, murder, wandering about and destruction of property often.

Research Question 3

What are the predisposing factors to youth's drug addiction?

Table 3: Mean responses on predisposing factors of youth drug addiction.

SN	Items	Mean	Standard deviation	Remark
11	People in the family who use drugs	1.70	1.06	little influence
12	People they live with	2.03	1.12	influence
13	The desire to feel high	2.03	1.11	influence
14	Age and classmates	2.08	1.17	influence
15	Peer group/friends	2.44	1.24	influence
16	Quarrels and fights in the home	1.73	0.95	little influence
17	Single parenting	1.62	.92	*
18	Parents' drug use	1.58	.92	*
19	Neglect by parents	1.75	.99	*

From table 3, Youths are influenced by their peer group, age and class mates, the desire to feel high and people they live with respectively.

Hypothesis 1 There is no significant difference in the crimes committed by youths based on gender.

Table 4; *t*-test statistics on gender differences in crimes committed by youths

Crimes	Sex	Mean	Standard deviation	df	t-cal	t-critical SL
	Male	13.32	5.39	244	6.41	1.96 .05
	Female	8.13	2.08			

Number males: 200 females 46

The *t*-calculated is greater than *t* critical; the null hypothesis is thereby rejected.

Hypothesis 2; Age will not affect the type of crime

committed by the youth.

Table 5: *t-test statistic on age difference in crime committed by youths*

Crimes	Age	Mean	Standard deviation	Df	t-cal	t-critical
	16-20 years	14.38	6.07	152	2.43	1.96
	21-25 years	11.74	5.08			

Number: youths 119 adults 127

The *t* calculated is higher than the critical value of *t*, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

DISCUSSION

The study was conducted to examine the relationship between drug abuse/addiction and crime among youths with the incarcerated youths in Enugu State prisons as case study.

The purpose of the study was to determine the drugs the youths get addicted to, what crimes were actually committed under the influence of drugs and how the youths got involved in drugs. These were studied using gender and age as intervening variables. It was found that some youths abuse drugs like alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana but are not addicted to any and committed crimes ranging from robbery, destruction of property, murder to wandering about. Although the respondents are not addicted to any of the listed drugs, the fact that they abuse them tend to lend credence to Adegoroye's (2003) statement that drug addiction

contributes immensely to the increasing incidences of criminal activities in contemporary Nigerian society. It also supports Akunyili (2006) who summarized the dangers inherent in engaging in drug/substance abuse as increased tendency to commit crimes like armed robbery, burglary, car theft, cultism and other dreadful crimes.

The most common drugs abused by the youths are alcohol, cocaine, tobacco and marijuana. The findings also indicated that the youths are mostly influenced by their peer group, age and class mates, the desire to feel high and people they live with respectively.

This confirms Smith's (1993) statement that among the things that motivate people to take drug are pleasure, improvement of their environments, use of drugs by adults, commercials and advertisement in the mass media. Based on this, he stated that youths as a group are more likely to use substances such as cigarettes alcohol, marijuana at an early age.

The finding equally lends credence to Okafor's (2008) assertion that peer group influence and association with drug-using peers, perhaps, constitute the most strongly supported predictor of adolescents' drug abuse. Most boys, he went on, engage in smoking, alcohol use, drug use

and abuse simply because their friends engage in such habits and they also want to partake so as to have a sense of belonging and be accepted by their peers. Parker (1998) had earlier observed that among youths, peer pressure has a strong influence in motivating people into taking a variety of drugs.

The findings on age and gender as intervening variables supports Ellis' (1993) report on a study conducted on substance abuse among youths between the ages of 17 to 20 in Nsukka. He discovered that the level of alcohol and tobacco use were relatively high and comparable to similar students elsewhere.

Concl usion

Findings from this study suggest that some youths abuse alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana, commit crimes such as robbery, murder, stealing and wandering about. Friends, besides people they live with and the desire to feel high, have great influence on the youths in drug abuse. Gender and age significantly influenced the crimes committed.

Recommendations

The findings of this study imply that parents need not only to know their children's friends, monitor their movement but also educate them on the effects of drugs.

Drug education should be given to the youths in the schools by the guidance counselors, especially during group guidance activities like orientation and career day/week. This is very necessary because these youths meet and socialize more in the school. The campaign against drugs for the general public in the media by the Nigerian drug law enforcement agency (NDLEA) and other stake holders should be intensified.

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