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The Role of Institutions in Minimizing Drug Abuse among Nigerian Youths: Implications for Nation Building

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Abstract

The paper investigates the role of institutions in fighting drug abuse among the Nigerian youths. Philosophical research method is adopted in the study and kate turabean style of citations and referencing are used in this research. The article highlighted the role of NDLEA, health practitioners, mass media, religious intuitions, home, and school management, national and international communities in prevention efforts. This paper thus, examines the causes of drug abuse and its health implications on the Nigerian Youths and discuss various organs in the society that would assist in the campaign against drug abuse in Nigeria today. The article recommended that international communities should be given more cooperation in order to give the best assistance they tend to render to Nigeria and also the affected victims should be rehabilitated and trained for one vocational skill which they may depend on to earn their living.

Keywords: Drug and Drug Abuse

Introduction

Drug abuse among the Nigerian youths has become a social problem with far reaching consequences for individuals, nations and the global world. Nigeria, like many other countries is battling with the menace of drug abuse among its youths. The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA)[1] opined

that drug abuse among the Nigerian youths has reached alarming propositions with devastating effects on individuals, families, and society largely. The welfare of the Nigerian youths involves all such measures that will aides the proper growth and total wellbeing. These includes, educational opportunity to the maximum capacity, conducive environment and adequate health care system through preventive and curative measures, opportunity have to be provided by the family or the immediate community or the nation .

The welfare mentioned above are not fully given attention, as the issue of street trading and hawking by the Nigerian youths has degenerated to an unacceptable level. Hence, it is not surprising to find youths hawking sachets water and bottle water on major roads, around court premises, and motor parks. The point mention above exposed the youths to incidence of drug abuse and other undesirable behaviours or danger in the society. It is therefore the interest of the researchers to under study the institutions that will help in curbing the menace of drug abuse among its youths and subsequently intervention strategies that will aides in minimizing the intake of drug with the intention that it will give a better background to the menace cause by drug abuse. This paper will also examine the complex nature of drug and drug abuse among the Nigerian youths in other to unravel the underlying prevalence, consequences, and most importantly, the measures available to curtail this menace. The article also goes further to shed light on effective measures or approaches that can be adopted to curb this menace and secure a safer and healthy environment for promising future of the Nigerian youths.

The Concept Drug

Drug is any substance which is used for treatment or prevention of disease in man and animal, i.e, it can curative and preventive purposes. It alters the body functions either positively or negatively depending on the body composition of the user, the types of drug used, the amount used and whether used singly or used with other drugs at the same time. Drug is view in different perspective by different authors. For instance, Balogun [2] opined that drug is any substance that modifies perceptions, cognition, mood, behaviour and general body functions. They could thus, be considered as chemical modifiers of the living tissues that could bring about physiological and behavioural changes [3] . In the same vein, Caroll as cited in Essien [4] ,perceive drug as any substance which upon entering the body can change either the function or structure of the organism .

The Concept Drug Abuse

The fight against drug abuse has become a national and international issue, considering the high rate of its health and economic implications to the affected nations. Drug abuse literally refers to the exercise or persisted taking of drugs without regard to accepted medical practices even if these drugs are obtained legally. Abdullahi [5] define drug abuse as the use of drugs to the extent that it interferes with the health and social function of an individual. In essence, drug abuse may be defined as the arbitrary over-dependence or misused of one particular drug with or without a prior medical diagnosis from qualified health personnel. It can also be viewed as the unlawful overdose in the use of drugs. Consequently, Ogunremi [6] perceive drug abuse as the harmful use of mind altering drugs. The author added that the term usually refers to problem with illegal drugs which also means harmful use of legal prescription of drugs such as self-medication . Going further, Ajayi and Ekundayo [7] explained that drug abuse is over-dependence and misuse of one particular drug with or without a prior medical diagnosis from a qualified health personnel.

Substances commonly abuse by Nigerian youths includes: Tobacco, Indian hemp(marijuana), Chinese capsules, codeine, tramadol, alcohol, diazepam(valium) and inhaling of petrol and solution e.t.c.

Causes of Drug Abuse

The causes of drug abuse among the Nigerian youths are too numerous to mention, but the major cause start at home considering the rights of the children being denied by their parents due to economic constraint or nonchalant attitudes of parents towards their children. Similarly, teachers on the other hand are making learning environment un-conducive and uninterested for the students which may lead to the problem of drug abuse.

Moronkola [8] summarizes the causes of drug abuse as peer pressure, availability of drugs, curiosity, rebellion against constituted authority and frustration. Others are ignorance, expression of maturity, fun, experimentation, sleep inducing, to increase work output, search for identity.

Health Implications of Drug Abuse

Drug abuse seems to have become a prominent social problem in Nigeria among the youths. Nwaghu [9] opined that, drug abuse leads to serious health hazard for drug addicts. Drug abuse has adverse effects on the brain, kidney, liver, pancreas, heart and lung, thereby making them vulnerable to disease. It also leads to other physical complications such as, hepatitis, hepatic, failure, tuberculosis in relation to alcohol abuse, infection and emaciation [10] .

Again drug abuse may result to serious psychiatric implications, these includes, confusion, restlessness and sometimes serious abnormal behaviour or outright madness. At least one out of the psychiatric cases is due to delirious effects of marijuana. Besides, statistics have shown that 70% of patients undergoing treatment for drug abuse in Nigeria psychiatric hospitals are mostly the youths between the ages of 16-25 years. It may also lead to poor performance in school work and may result ultimately to school drop-out. Apart from that, it leads to the development of aggressive behaviour and depression mood that may esteem.

Intervention Strategies for Minimizing Drug and Drug abuse among the Nigerian Youths.

Drug education is the effective tool for solving drug abuse in our society today, considering the fact that youths are the higher percentage of the population. For drug education programme to be successful it has to involve many bodies to join hands and solve the problem as no single individual or group can fight drug abuse alone. Attention is therefore needed for the prevention of drug abuse, its early detection and rehabilitation of the addicted youths. These bodies includes; Home, school management, Mass media, Pharmacists/Doctors/Health practitioners, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, Religion and community leaders, National and International Organizations etc.

The Role of the Home

As the saying goes that " charity begins at home, it is then imperative that the home plays a vital role in shaping individuals and also determines positive and negative behaviour of individuals. It is as a result of these major reasons that the home should be a moral ground for the children. Moronkola [11], opined that it is the responsibility of the home to create an environment where each member will be able to live a drug-free life. Parents and adults in a family set-up must have the right attitudes and practice as far as drug issues are concerned.

Adults must have factual information on drug matters to be able to answer children and youths questions on drugs adequately. They must also be aware of the sign and symptoms of drug abuse and be able to take prompt action. In the researcher's opinion, children at home should be guided and considered. Parents should make their homes conducive and free for children to play, interact with elders and monitored on the types of friends they move around with as well as their activities. Parents should be free with their children and provide them with the basic needs for living. However, parents should not expose their children into early hawking but take very good care of them

and their education. If these conditions will be adhere by parents, then a drug-free society and nation is possible.

The Role of the School Management

The role of the school management in curbing the menace of drug abuse among the Nigerian youths is instrumental in creating a safe and conducive learning environment. Schools are not only centers of education but also platform for fostering holistic development, including preventive effort against drug abuse. Schools serve as hubs for importing knowledge and shaping young minds. School management plays a pivotal role in integrating drug and drug abuse prevention education into the curriculum [12].By providing age appropriate information about the risks and consequences of drug abuse, schools empower students to make informed decisions and resist peer pressure to engage in drug abuse. Schools management is responsible for establishing and enforcing clear policies and codes of conduct that explicitly prohibit drug abuse in school premises. This proactive measure sends a strong message that drug use is not tolerated and set the foundation for maintaining a safe and drug-free learning environment. Consequently, Tyough Msaan [13] assert in an interview that school management can organize peer support and mentorship programmes. Peer support and mentorship programmes organized by school management provide an opportunity for positive social interactions and relationship among students. These programme foster a sense of belonging and provide an opportunity for older students to guide and mentor their younger peers, steering them away from the pitfalls of drug abuse. An effective strategy for curbing drug abuse requires collaborative efforts between schools, parents, and the community.

The Role of Religion and Community Leaders

Nigeria is a very religious country. Most religion respects the dignity of man. It is therefore imperative for religious leaders to educate their adherents on the danger associated with drug abuse. These they can achieve by preaching against drug misuse and abuse. The religious and community leaders have the responsibility of punishing their adherents when they refuse to respond to the laws of the community. Thus, they should be vigilant on the sale and abuse of drugs in the community. However, parents should be caution on the habit of exposing under-age children into hawking and also sending their children to farm during school hours.

The Role of the Media

The media yields a significant positive influence in curbing the menace caused by drug abuse among the youths. As a platform for information dissemination and public

perceptions, the media plays a critical role in educating, informing and engaging the community on the dangers of drug abuse, the media serve as a primary source of public awareness about the negative influence and health implications of drug abuse. Through the medium of television, radio, newspaper, and digital platforms, it disseminates information about the risks, consequences and prevention of drug abuse. Educational campaign and informative content help the youths and their families understand the gravity of drug abuse and make better choice. Through news report, feature articles, and opinion piece, it can highlight success stories, challenges and best practices in curbing the menace cause by drug abuse. The media can collaborate with schools, community, health care facilities and law enforcement agencies to create comprehensive anti-drugs initiative. By leveraging its reach and resources, the media can promote events, programs and campaigns against the danger associated with drug abuse from different angles.

The Role of Pharmacists/Doctors/Health Practitioners

Pharmacists, Doctors and health practitioners are playing a pivotal role in curbing the menace caused by drug abuse among the Nigerian youths. Their wealth of experience added with their expertise within the health sector; position them as key influencers in identifying, preventing and addressing drug related issues, undoubtedly contributing to the overall wellbeing of the youth population. Health workers serve as educators, disseminating valuable information about the risks associated to drug abuse among the youths in Nigeria.

Health workers possess the necessary skills to identify signs and symptoms of drug abuse at an early stage. Regular check-ups, medical histories, and interactions with patients allow them to spot behavioural and physical indicators of drug abuse. Early detection enables timely intervention, ensuring that's youths receive the necessary support and guidance needed to overcome their struggles before addiction persist or deepens. Pharmacists and Doctors are responsible for prescribing and dispensing medications. Their vigilance is essential to prevent the misuse of prescriptive drugs, which are often abused by youths seeking easy access to substance.

The Role of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA)

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) plays a critical role in the fight against the menace caused by drug abuse among the Nigerian youths. Established as a frontline agency to enforce drug laws and regulations, the NDLEA interventions extend beyond law enforcement to encompass prevention, education, rehabilitation and community engagement. In this context, exploring the agency multifaceted

contributions offers valuable insights into its significance as a key influencer in curbing the menace caused by drug abuse and its challenges after wards among the youths in Nigeria. At its core the NDLEA is mandated to enforce laws that can control the manufacturing, trafficking and distribution of illicit drugs [14.] . By intensifying surveillance, apprehending drug traffickers and dismantling clandestine drug production facilities, the agency creates a safer environment. The fear of legal consequences serves as a deterrent to potential offenders, thereby reducing the availability of illicit drugs within the country.

Consequently, Odejide [15] , assert that the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency is encouraging the drug free clubs in schools which campaigns, workshops, seminars and conferences are used for the general public.

However, they should do the following in the fight against drug abuse among the Nigerian youths:

1. Reduction in supply
2. Reduction in demand
3. Form and sponsor Drug-free clubs
4. Organize symposia
5. Production of posters e.t.c

By combating the supply, reduction in demand, form and sponsor drug-free clubs, organizing symposia and production of posters, and providing rehabilitation options, the NDLEA contribute positively to creating a conducive and drug-free environment for the youths. The agency commitment to fostering a drug-free society stands as a cornerstone in the collective effort in fighting to secure a brighter future for the Nigerian youths.

The Role of the National and International Organizations

National and international organizations have a great role to play in the control against drug abuse among the youths in Nigeria. Drug abuse is a global problem and as such, the international communities have to as well step in to contribute their quota against the fight. Ibrahim [16] , reports that drug abuse prevention and control agencies were in fact envisaged and provided for by the United Nations Convention against Narcotic drugs and Psychotropic Substance of 1961, 1971, 1988, and domesticated in the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) established act of 1999(hitherto NDLEA established decree 48 of 1989).

The international community is also up and doing, but it has to redouble its efforts. Some of the things the international community are doing include the June 2006

UNICEF Zonal workshop on focusing resources on effective school health (FRESH) at Niger state college of Education Minna.

Other bodies like the World Health Organization (WHO), the food and Agricultural organization (FAO), United Nation Education, Social and cultural organization (UNESCO), International Network for Rational use of Drugs (INRUD), National Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), are all doing their best towards fighting a drug-free society.

Control of Drug abuse toward Nation Building.

The fact that the youths constitute a sizeable larger proportion of the country, it is then necessary to consider drug problem in our society as detrimental to nation building. There is no nation that can develop rapidly without its youths being in good health condition. The tool for nation building which is basically the acquisition of optimum knowledge ranging from the sciences, arts, engineering, technology to other disciplines may not be obtainable without the youths being in good health condition. To this end, efforts of the above mentioned collaborative agencies have to further enhance towards training and preventing the youths from the danger accompanied with illicit drug or drug abuse.

Recommendations

The study on the role of institutions in minimizing drug abuse among the Nigerian youths has unearthed recommendations to effectively address this critical and timely issue. These recommendations are as follows:

1. The international community should be given more cooperation in order to give the best assistance they intend to render to Nigerian youths
2. Lunch public awareness campaign that utilize various media platforms to disseminate relevant information about the risk involved in drug abuse and available resources for help
3. The three tiers of government in Nigeria should consider drug abuse problem with all seriousness. As such, law enforcement agencies should be more equipped to discharge their duties effectively.
4. Mass media should desist from advertising alcohol and other drugs in their media
5. Schools need to incorporate drug and drug –abuse education in their curriculum.
6. Places where hard drugs could be obtained should be demolished and be converted to a meaningful place for skill acquisition progammes.

Conclusion

Drug abuse in Nigeria is taking another dimension whereby local substances such as contaminated water from gutters and petrol where been inhaled on a daily basis by the youths. This shows clearly that the fight against drug abuse should not be left completely in the hands of National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) alone. All other law enforcement agencies, institutions and individual have a role to play in the campaign against drug abuse for positive nation building.

Comparatively, the article examines the role of institutions in minimizing drug abuse among the Nigerian youths. Through a comprehensive analysis, numerous findings have emerged, illuminating the intricate nature of youths and drug abuse. The study also highlights the pressing need for a collaborative and comprehensive approach to tackle the problem of drug abuse among Nigerian youths. These findings shed more light on the complex interplay of factors contributing to youths and drug abuse, while offering solutions for creating a safer environment free from drug abuse. Consequently, the article also examines the significance of recognizing drug and drug abuse as a collective concern requiring the engagement of various stakeholders, including government agencies , homes, school, religious and community leaders, mass media, national and international organizations, pharmacists, Doctors, and health practitioners, and the youths themselves. The high rate of drug and drug abuse among the Nigerian youths necessitated the urgency of immediate action and the shared responsibility of all stakeholders in prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation efforts.

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