

**DRUG ABUSE AND CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES AMONG YOUTH IN JALINGO
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA IN TARABA STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study sets out to assess drug abuse and criminal activities among youth in Jalingo Local Government Area, Taraba State. The specific objectives of this study were to: Find out the types of drugs abused by youth in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State, Find out the causes of drug abuse among youth in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State, ascertain the effects of drug abuse on criminal activities among youth in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State and proffer solutions on what can be done to curtail the effects of drug abuse among youth in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State. The study adopts Differential Association Theory and made use of questionnaire and interview as methods of data collection. Findings revealed that, the types of drug abuse among youth are Marijuana. In tackling peer pressure which is the major cause of drug abuse, this should be done through early intervention using the community as platform for such campaign because children are indulging in substance use early now and, low obedient which is the effect of drug abuse among youth should be curtailed through advocacy campaign and counseling through value orientation of youth on the dangers and effects of drug abuse which will help curtail the effects it has on youth. Also, community based education programmes should be carried out to enable parents recognize if their children are abusing drugs to enable them take appropriate actions.

Keywords: Youth, Drugs Abuse, Criminal, Activities, Taraba State

Introduction

About 200 million people of the world's population aged 15 - 64 have used drugs at least once in the last 12 months, 15 million more than the previous year's estimate (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime UNODC Report, 2017). Likewise, the use of illicit drugs in all nations has increased in recent years and the increasing availability of a variety of drugs to an ever widening socio-economic spectrum of consumers especially the youths is fast rising (World Health Organization WHO. Report, 2016).

Drug abuse has thus become a national concern in Nigeria, given its impacts on education and future leadership, innovations and human resources. Secondary school students are particularly at risk given that they are in their formative years of education, career development, social skills and identity formation. Despite National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and other organization-based interventions, drug abuse is on the rise with over 40% of students abusing various types of drugs.

Some Nigerian youths ignorantly depend on one form of alcohol or the other for their various daily activities such as social, educational, political, moral boosting, fright among other reasons. Such drugs include: Tobacco, Indian hemp, Cocaine, Morphine, Heroin, Alcohol, Ephedrine, Madras, caffeine, Glue, Barbiturates, Amphetamines and so on. These changes are

maladaptive and inappropriate to the social or environmental setting therefore may place the individual at risk of harm. Others substances like Indian hemp, which is frequently produced in Nigeria and other substances like Methamphetamine and tablet with codeine capable of intoxicating are mostly found in schools (Staff, 2012).

The abuse of licit and illicit drugs is forming a youth sub-culture in Nigeria. This development is a significant concern for Nigerian society. When a drug is abused it causes injury to the brain and often irreversible alterations in the central nervous systems. When psychoactive substances destroy several thousand neurons, the consequences are fatal and a number of youth end up under performing in their future focus when under the control of this mode stimulating and controlling substance and some have died from drug overdoses so also get involve in critical criminal behavior.

Statement of the Problem

Drug abuse and criminal activities have become increasingly prevalent in Jalingo Local Government Area, posing serious threats to public safety, social stability, and youth development. Despite government efforts and community interventions, there has been a noticeable rise in substance abuse particularly among young people and a corresponding increase in crimes such as theft, assault, vandalism, and cult-related violence.

Several reports and local observations suggest that the easy availability of illicit drugs, peer pressure, unemployment, and lack of effective parental and institutional supervision are contributing to this surge. The social consequences are evident: school dropouts, family breakdowns, rising insecurity, and a deteriorating quality of life for residents.

However, there is limited empirical research that critically examines the link between drug abuse and the increase in criminal activities within Jalingo LGA. Most interventions are not data-driven and fail to address the root social and behavioral factors that lead individuals especially youths into these destructive paths.

Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the patterns, causes, and consequences of drug abuse and its relationship with criminal behavior in Jalingo. It aims to provide evidence-based recommendations to inform local policy, prevention strategies, and community-based interventions.

General Objective

To examine the relationship between drug abuse and criminal activities in Jalingo Local Government Area, with the aim of understanding the patterns, causes, and social implications, and to provide recommendations for effective intervention strategies.

Specific Objectives

1. To determine the prevalence and patterns of drug abuse among different age groups in Jalingo LGA.
2. To identify the common types of drugs abused within the local government area.
3. To investigate the types and frequency of criminal activities associated with drug abuse in Jalingo LGA.

4. To assess the socio-demographic factors (e.g., age, gender, education, employment status) influencing drug abuse and criminal behavior in the area.
5. To explore the role of peer influence, family background, and community environment in promoting or preventing drug abuse and criminal activities.

Conceptual Clarifications

Drug Abuse

The term drug abuse applies only to instances in which people take drugs purely to change their moods, and in which they experience impaired behaviour or social function as a result of doing so. For example, someone could take alcohol or Indian hemp in large quantity; and do to feeling intoxicated and drunk, would be a threat to the public; and people would not like that. Unfortunately, when people consume consciousness-altering drugs on a regular basis, they often develop dependence—they come to need the drug and cannot function without it.

Drug abuse is the improper use of drugs or alcohol to the degree that the consequences are defined as detrimental to the user or to the society (Okorie, 2011). In Nigeria where medical quacks and roadside patent medicine dealers seem to have assumed the role of qualified medical practitioners, all types of drugs including antibiotics are dispensed without due regard to the conditions of use. In most cases, self-prescription is the order of the day.

Criminal Activities

Criminal activities refer to actions or omissions that are prohibited by law and punishable by the state. These acts violate legal codes and can result in sanctions such as fines, imprisonment, or community service.

Relationship between Drug Abuse and Criminal Activities

There is a well-documented and complex relationship between drug abuse and criminal behavior:

A. Direct Links:

- **Possession, use, or distribution** of illegal drugs is itself a criminal offense in many jurisdictions.
- Individuals under the influence may commit crimes due to **impaired judgment** (e.g., assault, driving under the influence).

B. Indirect Links:

- Drug addiction may lead individuals to **commit crimes to finance their addiction** (e.g., theft, prostitution).
- **Organized crime** is often involved in the **production, trafficking, and sale of drugs**.

C. Systemic Violence:

- Drug markets are often associated with **violence**, including turf wars between dealers and enforcement-related violence.

D. Societal Impacts:

- Drug abuse and related criminal activity contribute to **overcrowded prisons, public health crises, and economic burdens** on legal and healthcare systems.

Policy and Legal Implications

- Many governments adopt a mix of **punitive and rehabilitative approaches**.
- There's a growing trend toward **decriminalization of drug use** and emphasis on **treatment over incarceration**.
- Programs like **drug courts** aim to reduce recidivism through **supervised rehabilitation**.

Theoretical Framework

This section of the study is on theoretical framework adopted for the study. The study made use of differential association theory.

Differential Association Theory Application to Drug Abuse

According to DAT, individuals learn **attitudes, techniques, and justifications** for drug use through **interactions with peers, family, or community members** who engage in or support substance use.

Key Mechanisms

- **Frequency and intensity** of exposure to drug users increase the likelihood of adopting similar behaviors.
- The more **favorable definitions** (i.e., rationalizations or justifications) a person hears about drug use compared to unfavorable ones, the more likely they are to use drugs.

Over time, this learned behavior becomes part of their lifestyle.

Application to Criminal Activities

Criminal behavior, like drug abuse, is learned through **interactions with others who commit crimes**. Individuals pick up:

- **Skills** to commit specific offenses,
- **Motivations and rationalizations** for breaking the law,
- And **attitudes** that neutralize the guilt of criminal acts.

Common Applications:

- **Gangs:** Members are socialized into criminal norms and behaviors.
- **White-collar crime:** New employees may adopt unethical business practices by learning from superiors.
- **Organized crime:** Involvement in networks where illegal behavior is the norm leads to further criminality.

Relevance of Differential Association Theory

1. Explains Crime as Learned Behavior

It asserts that criminal behavior is **learned through interaction with others**, particularly within close personal groups. This contrasts with earlier theories that attributed crime to biological or psychological abnormalities.

2. Shifts Focus from Individual Pathology to Social Environment

It emphasizes the **role of social context** especially peer groups, family, and community in shaping attitudes toward law-breaking, making it a sociological rather than purely psychological explanation of crime.

3. **Applicable to Various Types of Crime**

The theory can be applied to street **crimes (e.g., theft, assault)** and **white-collar crimes** (e.g., corporate fraud), reflecting Sutherland's own concern with how elites commit crime.

4. **Supports Prevention through Social Intervention**

Since behavior is learned, altering social environments (e.g., youth mentoring, community programs) could reduce criminal tendencies, making it relevant for **policy-making and rehabilitation.**

Implications of Differential Association Theory

1. **Influence on Criminal Justice Policies**

- Encouraged **rehabilitation-based approaches** rather than just punishment.
- Suggested that criminal behavior can be "unlearned" through positive associations and re-socialization.

2. **Foundation for Later Theories**

It laid the groundwork for **social learning theories**, including Akers' Social Learning Theory, which expanded on Sutherland's ideas by incorporating reinforcement and modeling.

3. **Challenges the Notion of "Born Criminals"**

Reinforces the idea that crime is **not innate** but is a product of **environment and experience**, promoting more humane approaches to justice.

4. **Explains Group Dynamics in Criminal Activity**

Useful in analyzing **gang behavior, radicalization, and corporate collusion**, where individuals conform to group norms that condone illegal actions.

5. **Critiques and Limitations**

- **Doesn't explain spontaneous or impulsive crimes** well.
- **Lacks emphasis on individual agency**-people sometimes reject their learned norms.
- May **underestimate structural factors** like poverty or systemic inequality

Methodology

Research Design

The research design adopted for this study was the survey method. Surveys allow researchers to collect data from a large number of respondents efficiently, both in terms of time and cost. This makes them especially suitable for studies involving generalizations or trends across populations.

Population of the Study

The target population for this study consists of **youths aged 15 to 35 years residing in Jalingo, Taraba State, Nigeria**. This age range aligns with Nigeria's National Youth Policy, which defines "youth" as individuals between the ages of 15 and 35.

This population includes:

- **Unemployed or underemployed youth** who are more vulnerable to drug abuse and involvement in criminal activities.

- **Youth in conflict with the law**, including those in correctional centers (if access is permitted).
- **Working-class youth**, to understand how drug use and criminal behavior may vary with employment status.

Sample Size

The sample size is 314 as determined using Taro Yamani

Sampling Technique

Stratified Random Sampling (Primary Technique)

- The youth population is **not homogeneous** — they vary by status (students, unemployed, employed, incarcerated).
- Stratification ensures that all **key subgroups** are proportionately represented.

Table 1: The Nature of Drug abuse by youth in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State

Nature of Drug Abuse	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Marijuana	116	36.9
Alcohol	86	27.4
Solution	71	22.6
Tramadol	28	9 8.9
Others	13	4.1
Total	314	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 1 above on the types of drug abuse among youth in Jalingo Local Government Area, shows that, majority of the respondents 36.9% (116) of the respondents revealed that, the type of drug abuse among youth is Marijuana, 27.4% (86) of the respondents revealed that, the type of drug abuse is alcohol, 22.6% (71) of the respondents revealed that, the type of drug abuse among youth is solution 9% (28) of the respondents revealed it is Tramadol while, 4.1% (13) of the respondents choose others.

From the interview conducted on the types of drug abuse among youth some of the responses were derive:

“Of recent, youth who have gone mental as a result of marijuana in take is on an increase, last year, three youth were hospitalized after they took a substance that was confirms to be marijuana. This has become a topical issue among the parents of recent.” (A parent in one of the area visited on the 24th day of Septembers, 2023).

The implication of the above analysis is that the type commonly of drug abuse among youth in Jalingo Local Government Area is marijuana as findings have shown that cases of drug abuse among youth has been on the increase due to continue reported cases of insanity as a result of its intake.

Table 2: The Causes of Drug abuse among youth in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State

Causes of Drug Abuse	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Family background	48	15.3
Peer pressure	133	42.4
Frustration	54	17.2
Social Media advert	43	13.6
Others (specify)	36	11.5
Total	314	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 2 above on the causes of drug abuse among youth in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State shows that, 42.4% (133) majority of the respondents revealed that, peer pressure was the cause of drug abuse, 17.2% (54) of the respondents revealed that, frustration was the cause of drug abuse, 15.3% (48) of the respondents revealed that, social media advertisement was the cause of drug abuse while, 11.5% (36) of the respondents indicated in others.

From the interview conducted on the causes of drug abuse, some of the following responses were derived;

“The friends children keep in the area help in molding their future, students who keep friends that are not in any way good but indulge in drug issues normally influence the once that are not into such acts, thus also affects others as their stay in the midst of those who do drug makes them want to experiment.” (37 years old school teacher in one of the schools visited on the 23rd day of September, 2024).

The implication of the above analysis is that, peer pressure is the cause of drug abuse among youth in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State. The reason is that, the company that students keep in secondary school have a great influence on the choices they make in life and the issue of drug abuse is one of such acts that peers who take can easily influence others who are not into drugs to become active partakers.

Table 4: The Effect of Drug abuse among youth in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State

Effect of Drug Abuse	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low academic performance	108	34.3
Absenteeism from class	84	26.8
Mental disorder	57	18.2
School Dropout	34	10.8
Others (specify)	10	3.2
Total	314	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 4 above on the effects of drug abuse among youth in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State shows that, majority of the respondents, 34.3% (108) revealed that, low performance is an effect of drug abuse among youth, 26.8% (84) of the respondents revealed that, absenteeism from school is an effect of drug abuse among youth, 18.2% (57) of the respondents revealed that, mental disorder is an effect of drug abuse among youth, 10.8% (34) of the respondents revealed that, school dropout is an effect of drug abuse among youth while,

3.2% (10) of the respondents indicated in others pointing out issues like psychological trauma among others as some of the effects of drug abuse among youth in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State.

Table 4: Possible Solution in curtailing the effects of Drug abuse among youth in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State

Possible Solutions	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Value Orientation of students	148	47.1
Proper Parental upbringing	37	11.8
Punishment of offenders	41	13.1
Enforcement of drug related laws	66	21
Others (specify)	22	7
Total	314	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

Table 5 above on the possible solutions in curtailing the effects of drug abuse among youth in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State shows that, 47.1% (143) of majority of the respondents revealed that, value orientation of youth on the dangers and effects of drug abuse will help curtailing the effects it have on youth. This is because, when students are given the right information through value orientation and proper sensitization by the relevant authorities be it school management or non-governmental organizations in this regard, their chances of shunning drug abuse become high thereby helping them academically.

Also, 21% (66) of the respondents suggest the enforcement of drug related laws in community as a way of curtailing the effects of drug abuse. This is because, with enforcement of drug laws in youth across the local government area, youth will become more skeptical as those who are already in the act will desist to avert the wealthy consequences of giving against such laws this will in turn greatly enhance and help curtail the effects of drug abuse among youth. In addition, 13.1% (41) of the respondents revealed that, punishment of student who are drug offenders laws will help curtail the effects such drugs have among youth. This will help also in deterring other students from taking illicit drugs if such punishment is carried out on youth.

Nevertheless, 11.8% (37) of the respondents revealed that, proper parental upbringing will help in this regard as most students who are found to be drug abusers do come from broken homes but with proper parental upbringing such effects will be greatly reduce.

Last but not the least, 7% (22) of the respondents chooses in others which imply options that are different from the four that are highlighted.

Discussion of Findings

With the following specific set objectives: to ascertain the types of drugs that are mostly abuse among youth in Jalingo local government, the causes of drug abuse among youth in Jalingo local government, the effect of drug abuse among youth in Jalingo local government and possible solutions to the menace of drug abuse among youth in Jalingo local government.

On the causes of drug abuse among youth in Jalingo local government, study results shows that, 33.5% majority of the respondents believe peer pressure is the cause of drug abuse among youth in Jalingo local government. This is because; most youth who start taking drugs learn it

from friends they see as role models or close associates and people they frequently move around with. This finding is also in line with Falaye, (2017) and Enang, (2017) whose separate studies asserts that, most University students are young adults below the age of 24 years. They are therefore susceptible to the influence of peers. Consequently, some of them start smoking, taking alcohol, and eventually advance to the use of hard drugs like marijuana, heroin and cocaine due to the influence of friends on campus.

Furthermore, on the effects of drug abuse among youth in Jalingo local government, the findings revealed that, 29.2% majority of the respondents believe stealing is the effect of drug abuse among youth in Jalingo local government. This is because, drug abusers hardly workhard, lack concentration during day time and are compel to steal. The result finding is also in agreement with that of Ogunyemi, (2016) that, youth who are into drugs experience different levels of personality disorders. As a result of their involvement in drug related activities, truancy and absenteeism, poor study skills and poor memory, many of them resort to stealing to survive.

Conclusion

Drugs are a source of medication and treatment for various illness and preventive disease if properly prescribe by medical professionals. Drug abuse constitutes one of the major social problems in Nigeria. It is a social problem basically associated with young people. The Nigerian society's definition of some drugs as acceptable while others as not acceptable without reference to their effects on mental and physical wellbeing of the user such as alcohol has contributed to its continued intake by students of various universities in Nigeria. Drugs wrongly use without medication prescription has negative consequences for the academic, social, psychological and physical development of students. This problem is widely spread and it affect all and sundry. In other words, its wrong use has cause damage to traditional values and undermines the ability of secondary school students to learn. It is important for guidelines and students ethical conduct to be considered as a guide towards solving this social problem in our institutions of higher learning as the trend has continue to increase among students of our Nation ivory towers and youth in Jalingo local government are not an exception in this regard.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made;

First and foremost, there should be proper orientation of youth on the dangers associated with drug abuse. This measure should be embark upon by parent as this will enable them avoid the take of illicit drugs.

Secondly, counseling services should be provided by counseling unit of our Nations against peer pressure.

Thirdly, enforcement of drug related laws by community authorities will go a long way in arresting those who miss use drugs and go against the school guidelines for appropriate action. Also, youth who engage in the act of drug abuse should be adequately punish by the community.

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