

# 15 Impact of Drug Abuse on Youth Development in Gombe Metropolis

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## **Introduction**

Youth play a key role in the majority of global development programmes. This group of people is thought to help create a stable democracy, social justice, and a long-lasting economy. Consequently, Siro (2014) observes that in order to make these a reality, it is crucial that society generate young people of high quality. In Nigerian society like many other parts of the globe, young people who are supposed to spearhead societal change and lead development are becoming less productive due to drug abuse with attendant negative effects including widespread crime, broken homes, laziness and unemployment (Dukku, 2021; Haruna, Namadi, Dangiwa, Zamfara & Dunkrah, 2018).

In Gombe State, individuals who engage in drug abuse tend to exhibit unproductive behaviour including poor performance. Oliha (2014) noted that many individuals who engage in drug abuse end up losing their jobs in both public and private sectors. In Gombe Metropolis, many young people have turned to drug abuse instead of pursuing education or productive activities. This issue affects both males and females, including those who are married and/or divorced. Sadly, drug addiction among females in Gombe Metropolis, according to Namadi and Haruna (2019), has escalated to the point that abusers boil used sanitary pads in water and drink to get high. This behaviour poses a serious health risk and may lead to mental illness. The study area is facing a significant problem of illicit drugs abuse. Recently, a 21-year-old was arrested for possessing a large quantity of tramadol sachets worth millions of naira. The suspect admitted to being a drug dealer for approximately two years, operating in Gombe State and its environs (Abdulrazaq, 2020). Although, various efforts have been made by scholars including Namadi and Haruna (2019) to stem the impact of drug abuse in Nigerian society, not much has been achieved as the trend increases with attendant impact on youth development, thereby creating a vacuum for this chapter.

## **A Review of Relevant Literature**

Drug abuse is any habit forming substance that has the potential to be misused which according to Siro (2014) may be harmful to the user and/or society. It could be any substance that directly affects the brain or the body function, like mood, perception,

or consciousness. It is on this note that Abdulmalik, Omigbodun, Beida and Adedokun (2009) observe that hard drugs and prescription medicines are two examples of the various types of drug abuse. Therefore, drug abuse occurs when any of them are misused. Hard drugs, such as cocaine and marijuana, are among the substances that can be abused; when scholars discuss prescribed pharmaceuticals, they refer to codeine, etc.

Despite drugs being intended for medication; some people choose to utilize it for other purposes. Thus, drugs can be classified as either legal or illegal. Legal drugs are those that are tolerated by society and culture, such as alcohol, tobacco, prescription medications, and over-the-counter medications including cough syrups, codeine, tramadol, and pentazocine (which are being abused). Cocaine, heroin, amphetamines, and cannabis are all considered illegal drugs. Sa'ad (2016) observes that drugs can be divided into three main categories namely illegal, legal, and unreported drugs.

Many prescription medications, such as antibiotics, stimulants, analgesics, sedatives, and even over the counter medications, are included in the category of licit pharmaceuticals. The illegal substances are certain strong drugs like cocaine, hemp from India, steroids, and so forth. Substances that are rarely thought of as drugs yet are in fact are known as illegal drugs. These items include cola nuts, tobacco/nicotine, alcohol, bath salt, lizard feces, and excreta (Sa'ad, 2016).

Drug abuse has several impacts. There is a general belief that problems of drug abuse can be categorized into physical, psychological, and social, educational, and economic implications and can be from experimenting with substances to drug dependence (Ahmed, 2012). The physical, psychological, social, and economic impact of drug abuse among youth is becoming more obvious and disturbing (Yusuf, 2013). Young people who persistently abuse drugs experience many problems. These include academic difficulties, health-related problems including mental health disorders, poor peer and family relationships and involvement in social vices which include violence, stealing, bullying, and secret cult activities which have negative consequences on the family, community and society (Ahmed, 2012). For example, a study on drug abuse and its mental health and consequences among addicts in the Greater Accra region shows that the twenty-six participants interviewed acknowledged that drug abuse problems are increasing in Ghana, especially among youth. A cross-section of the respondents believed that drug abuse may result in mental illness, chest pains, tuberculosis, malnourishment, headaches, bodily pains, dizziness, and serious coughs, loss of weight, diseases, and general weakness. In addition, they also mentioned homelessness and unemployment as consequences of drug abuse (Affinnih, 2012).

**Physical Impact of Drug Abuse:** Drug abuse has an impact on the physical body of youth who are involved in the act. Intoxication with drugs can cause physical effects,

intoxication with heroin; sedative or hypnotic drugs can cause marked sleepiness and slowed breathing. Also, cocaine intoxication can cause rapid heart rate, or tremors, while, seizures can occur due to alcohol withdrawal syndrome (Edwards, 2014). Also, youth who are involved in the abuse of drugs may not realize they have a problem until the pronounced effects of these drugs start to manifest physically (Edwards, 2014). According to Tracy (2014), the effect of drug abuse on the body varies depending on the type used; all drug abuse has negative impacts on the health of abusers. Common effects of drug abuse on the body include sleep changes (Ahmed, 2012). Violence is another physical effect of drug abuse witnessed in various communities and tertiary institutions leading to bloodletting, rape, stealing and cultism (Mohammad, 2014). Other common physical impacts include abnormal vital signs like respiration, heart rate and blood pressure, chest or lung pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, skin can be cool and sweating or hot and dry. Diseases such as hepatitis B or C, or HIV from needle-sharing, impotence and more frequent illnesses can occur due to indulgence in drug abuse (Affinnih, 2012).

**Psychological Impact of Drug Abuse:** This tends to vary and depends on the type of drugs involved (Edwards, 2014), as the general effects of abuse can be devastating. Psychologically, intoxication with drugs can cause euphoria as with alcohol or inhalant intoxication, paranoia which occurs due to marijuana or steroid intoxication, while cocaine or amphetamine withdrawal will lead to severe depression or suicidal thoughts (Edwards, 2014). One of the primary effects of drug abuse can be found within the definition of drug abuse itself, which is an increasing, intense desire to use the drug (Gaidhane, Syed, Waghmare, Shanbhag, Zodpey & Johrapurkar, 2008). Psychological effects of drug abuse then include preoccupation with where to get the drug, how to get money for the drug, and where and when the drugs can be used. Psychological effects of drug abuse also include mood changes, the individual may be anxious, thinking about when next to use the drug, or can be depressed due to the side effects of the drug. Other psychological side effects include aggression, irritability, selfishness, hopelessness, lack of pleasure from previously enjoyed activities and pressure on others to involve in drug abuse (Tracy, 2014).

**Social Impact of Drug Abuse:** Yusuf (2013) study found that drug abuse may reduce undergraduate chances of graduating from school and holding a steady job, as it may also be causing students' unrest in the campus which will disturb academic calendar and result to poor academic performance. However, Ahmad (2012) observes that there is a significant association between crimes committed by adolescents and their use of alcohol and other drugs. This shows that many youths can commit crime under the influence of drugs. Thus, other social effects of drug abuse include dishonesty, bribery and corruption, forgery, reckless driving, gambling and prostitution, (Mohammad, 2014). Nevertheless, youth who abuse drugs are involved in political violence which always undermines peace and harmony within the public and society (Aliyu, 2014). It can be inferred that abuse of drugs among youth triggers violence,

especially during elections which in turn engender loss of lives and properties threatening the future of society.

Furthermore, Usman and Karofi (2012) observes that about 63 percent of Nigerian youth who abuse drugs were involved in violent activities. Youths tend to problems with their girlfriends or boyfriends due to the high demand for sexual intercourse. This is due to high sexual desire manifested by the youth who abuse drugs such as alcohol and marijuana (Floyd & Latimer, 2009). The use of Alcohol and marijuana is associated with an increase in sexual intercourse due to an increase in libido among youth aged between 15 to 24 years (Floyd & Latimer, 2009). Moreover, poor relationships with other people were found to be another effect of drug abuse among the youth and the impact of drug abuse on student behavior include laziness and lack of concentration, poor relationships with others, lack of interest in school and work, absenteeism from school, withdrawal, and indiscipline (Ekpenyong, 2012).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Differential Association Theory could be traced to the work of Sutherland (1939). According to Paternoster and Bachman (2001), Differential Association Theory was first developed by an American trained sociologist, Edwin H. Sutherland. The assumption of the theory is based on nine principles in respect to mode of acquiring delinquent and criminal behaviours among individuals in a society. These nine principles according are:

1. Criminal behaviour is learned like any other normal behaviour.
2. Criminal behaviour is learned as a result of social interaction among individuals in a process of communication.
3. The main learning process occurs within intimate personal groups.
4. The learning process include the techniques of committing the criminal act which are sometimes very complicated and/or very simple, and the specific direction of motives, drives and rationalisation and attitudes.
5. The specific direction of motives and drives are learned from definitions of legal codes as favourable and unfavourable.
6. An individual becomes delinquent or criminal because of an excess of definitions favourable to violation of stated rules and regulations.
7. The differential associations may differ in frequency, duration, priority and intensity.
8. The process of learning a deviant or criminal behaviour by association with criminal and anti-criminal patterns involves all of the mechanisms that are involved in any other learning.
9. While deviant or criminal behaviour is an explanation of general needs and values, it is not explained by those general needs and values since norm criminal behaviour is an expression of the same needs and values.

Based on the above theory, contact, communication, and close relationships produce social interactions, which in turn shape human behaviours. In other words, human conduct is the outcome of being exposed to situations in which specific behaviours, both normal and deviant or criminal are taught through encounters with other persons. It follows that an individual's interests and behaviour are determined by the influence they gain from their relationships with significant others, such friends and relatives.

The theory is very good in explaining many types of deviant or criminal behaviour including drug abuse among youth in the sense some youth engage in drug abuse as a result of the people they associate with, especially those who are already in such a deviant or criminal act. It is on this ground that Ugwuoke 2015 observes that many young individuals in Nigerian society engage in delinquent and criminal behaviours through the intimate association with significant others, such as friends, teachers and parents who often engage in delinquent and criminal activities. However, the theory could be criticized on the ground that not all individuals that associate with criminal elements could engage in such act, as some individuals may be constrain based on their moral grounds. Thus, not all youth who are friends to people abusing drugs are likely to engaging in such act, even though there are tendency of some engaging in same act.

### **Research Methods**

The study used a cross-sectional survey with both qualitative and quantitative data. The sample size for the quantitative data was 624 respondents while 10 participants were interviewed to generate qualitative data. A multi-stage cluster and purposive sampling procedure were adopted for the study. Firstly, the residential areas in the Gombe Metropolis were considered as cluster. Secondly, simple random sampling (balloting) was used to select five residential areas in the Gombe Metropolis, namely: Bolari East, Kumbiya-Kumbiya, Shamaki, Ajiya, and Dawaki. In the next stage, systematic random sampling was employed to select several households from a list of all households in the five selected residential areas. This was done by listing all households assigning them numbers, and then conducting a systematic random sampling on the listed or numbered houses. In the third stage, a simple random sampling was used again to select the actual respondents, either male or female between the ages of 18 and 35, one per household. In case a household was unwilling to provide information on the research topic, the researchers would move to the next household until the sample size for the quantitative data was achieved. Purposive sampling was used to select participants for in-depth interviews with five ward leaders (Mai Anguwa), two religious leaders from both Islam and Christianity in the area, two police officers, and one NDLEA staff.

## Findings

The findings of the study are presented below:

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents by the extent to which drug abuse affects key areas of youth development**

<b>Youth Development Indicator</b>	<b>Extent of effect</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Skill Acquisition</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>17.6</b>
	Moderate	146	25.2
	High	332	57.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Business/Trade</b>	Low	96	16.6
	Moderate	198	34.1
	High	286	49.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Studying/Work</b>	Low	154	26.5
	Moderate	182	31.4
	High	244	42.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Political/Civic Participation</b>	Low	82	14.1
	Moderate	138	23.8
	High	366	63.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023

To specifically measure the perceived impact of drug abuse on youth development, four components of youth development were presented to respondents and asked to indicate the extent to which drug abuse impacts on those activities. The response as presented in Table 1 shows that political/civic participation and skill acquisition are the most affected area of youth development. For instance, 63.1 percent of the respondents said that drug abuse negatively affects youth participation in political and civic responsibilities to a high extent, followed by 23.8 percent who indicated a moderate negative impact in that regard.

For skill acquisition, 57.2 percent of the respondents noted a high negative impact of drug abuse while 25.2 percent said that the impact is to a moderate extent. But in terms of business/trade, the proportion of respondents that perceived drug abuse as negatively affecting it to a high extent in Gombe Metropolis was less than half of the respondents. Also, more than one-third of the respondents regarded the impact as moderate. Similarly, 42.1 percent of the respondents perceived a high impact of drug abuse on youth involvement in studies and work, while 31.4 percent maintained that the impact is to a moderate extent.

The negative effects of drug abuse on different indices of youth development were also identified in the qualitative data. Specifically, it includes how drug abuse reduces youth productivities at place of work, leads to school dropout, lack of skill acquisition and entrepreneurship as it encourages laziness and criminal tendencies. A ward leader in one of the areas described the impact of drug abuse on youth development and through a personal story said:

You must first know that any young person that engages in drug abuse cannot think correctly. I told you how my colleague lost his job. Constant intake of drugs rendered him useless and unproductive in place of work. When you talk about youth development, you are considering how many youths are engineers, teachers, entrepreneurs, doctors and so on. But can we have these when they are wasting to drugs? It is these meaningful engagements by youth that will contribute to the gross domestic product of our country. But instead, the youth are stealing and begging for money to destroy themselves with drug in this country (IDI: with a Male Ward Leader, 49 years in Kumbiya-Kumbiya Area of Gombe Metropolis 17th July, 2023).

Another participant also explained the channel through which youth involvement in drug abuse affects youth development. He said:

You see when youth abuse drugs; it affects the development of a country and state. Youth ought to be in their various places of work. But when they choose to take such drugs, their productivity in the workforce is affected, and when youth who are the leaders of tomorrow are not in their various places of work, when we die who will take from us? Youth development means there are people who will take over from us. So, you see, development is not possible in this case. Another thing is, in terms of health, drug abuse affects their health status. When youth are sick and unable to work, there is a huge problem. In terms of education, some of them are sacked from school and become dropout (IDI: with a Male Christian Religious Leader, 48 years, in Dawaki Area of Gombe Metropolis 20th July, 2023).

**Table 2: Cross tabulation of presence of intoxicated youths on the streets and perceived impact of drug abuse on youth development**

Impact on youth development	Presence of intoxicated youth		Total
	<i>High presence</i>	<i>Low presence</i>	
High impact	211 (82.1%)	166 (51.4%)	377 (65%)
Others	46 (17.9%)	157 (48.6%)	203 (35%)
Total	257(100.0%)	323(100.0%)	580 (100.0%)

(Field Survey, 2023)

$\chi^2 = 59.32; df = 1; p = .000$

Deriving from the differential association assumption, this study proposed that individuals from areas with high presence of intoxicated youth will perceive a higher impact of drug abuse on youth development. This is because, if actually drug abuse inhibits youth development, people from such area will observe it in the recreating acts of intoxicated youth on the streets that young people emulate to also indulge in the abuse. The idea here is that places with larger presence of intoxicated youth signals larger recruiting avenue for more youth indulgence in drug abuse as argued by differential association. Therefore, the area will record optimum negative impact of drug abuse on youth development. The finding as indicated in Table 2 shows that 82.1 percent of the respondents from areas with high presence of intoxicated youth perceive higher impact of drug abuse on youth development, more than those from areas with lower presence of intoxicated youth on its streets (51.4 percent).

This association was also supported by the Chi-square result ( $\chi^2 = 59.32$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p = .000$ ) which means there is a statistically significant relationship between areas with high presence of intoxicated youths, and perceived impact of drug abuse on youth development. As a result, the null hypothesis which states that individuals from areas with high presence of intoxicated youth are not likely to perceive the impact of drug abuse on youth development than those from areas with low presence of intoxicated youth is rejected. The study concludes that individuals from areas with high presence of intoxicated youth are significantly more likely to perceive high impact of drug abuse on youth development than those from areas with low presence of intoxicated youth.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Youth development involves all phases of youth activeness, and contributions to the economy from skill acquisition, education, involvement in trade and political participation. The overall measure is based on the assumption that development is possible when young people are actively involved in all key sectors of the society (Tarter, Schultz, Kirisci & Dunn, 2001). However, this current study found that youth drug abuse had high negative effect on skill acquisition 57.2percent, youth involvement in trade/business 49.3percent, youth engagement in studies and work (42.1 percent) and youth political participation (63.1 percent). This shows that drug abuse has negative effect on youth development in Gombe Metropolis. It further shows that 69.1 percent of the respondents affirmed that youth drug abuse contributes to criminal activities to a high extent. This corroborates with previous studies (including Ayodele, Adeleke & Gandonu, 2018) who for instance, noted a link between drug and criminal activities to the tune that they itemized certain criminal activities among young people as drug-induced crimes. They observed that drug consumptions facilitate the commission of these crimes and make youth unable to engage in productive lifestyle. However, the current study found that education is fundamental in understanding how disastrous drug abuse is to youth development because respondents with higher education significantly perceive the impact of drug

abuse on youth employment than those who had lower education. This is in line with Okafor (2020) who reported the negative impact of drug abuse on youth education. The study also observed that tendency of drug abuse to affect youth development by constituting a public health issue among youth 92.6 percent and increasing the rate at which young people drop out of school or fails to engage in other meaningful life endeavours (85.2 percent). This is further evident in the outlook of most areas in Gombe Metropolis as it is common to observe the presence of youth who litters the streets at a time they should be in school. The presence of these negative outcomes of drug abuse as observed in Gombe Metropolis further testifies the link between youth drug abuse and how it inhibits youth development.

Differential association theory is based on the assumption that socialization is an effective instrument in modeling behaviour as youth who grew up under loose socialization such a broken home and fewer moral bonds are posit to have higher tendencies towards delinquent behaviours like drug abuse. When young people grow without strict parental control and guidance, they will likely be influenced by peer group influence that challenges cultural values and conduct norms in pursuit of youthful exorbitant.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The impact of drug abuse on youth development in Gombe Metropolis are multifaceted and posed serious threats on the general wellbeing of individuals, groups and society, and therefore need to be curtailed to promote youth development. The chapter therefore offered the following recommendations:

1. There is need to mount a multi-level campaign against drug abuse by involving all agents of socializations from the family, neighbourhood, religious institutions and schools to prepare young people against the habit.
2. Family organisation should be revisited to ensure that families are compelled to take care of their younger ones till they are grown up. The phenomenon of releasing children to street life without adequate family ties and values increases their vulnerability to drug use and abuse.
3. Institutions such as national drug law enforcement agency (NDLEA) and the police should be strengthened by providing them with high level of independent status to prosecute and rehabilitate drug abuse cases without political interference.
4. There is need to institute compulsory basic and secondary education for all, that will be accompanied by compulsory skill acquisition. This will improve the level of meanings that young people attach to their life and prevent them from falling prey of drug abuse. With increase educational attainment, the youth will realize what they stand to benefit from good conduct and not deviant or criminal behaviour, such as drug abuse.

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