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**Drug Abuse and Crime – The Challenges to Nation  
Building**

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## **Drug Abuse and Crime – The Challenges to Nation Building**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** Drug abuse and crime are very strongly linked and connected, one may precede the other. The close connect between drug use and criminal behaviour is supported by many studies. Drug use or abuse and crimes are prevalent among the youths, who are the age range most needed for productive work and nation building or development. Drugs decrease cognitive operations, making it difficult, and at times impossible for the young person to develop a functional set of values and ideals. Consequently drug and crimes pose very great and grave challenges to nation building and development of the society.

**Methodology:** Several books, journals, internet materials and case laws reviewed have analyzed drug use/abuse by the youths, stated the consequences and decried it.

**Findings:** Unfortunately, this has not received adequate, sufficient or and commensurate attention the world over, worse still in developing countries of the world as Nigeria. It has negatively affected the behavior and conduct of users particularly the younger generation and consequently a clog to nation building.

**Recommendations:** It is recommended that drug abuse and crimes can be drastically reduced or completely eradicated by good training and nurturing of the child by political and social institutions; putting in place adequate legal framework with effective enforcement mechanism; proper education of the public. By Comity of nations giving adequate attention to curbing the use of drugs, drug abuse and drug addiction.

**Keywords:** *Drug abuse, crime, drug addiction, challenges, nation building.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Societies all over the world, have witnessed slow socio-economic development or progress because of the problem related to drug abuse. Awareness of the existence of illicit drugs, access to them and their abuse have dramatically been on the increase over the years. This was well elucidated by the UNODC World Drug Report 2022, which stated that cannabis legalisation in parts of the world has accelerated its daily use, that young people today are using more drugs than the previous generation. According to this report, around 284 million people aged 15 – 64 used drugs worldwide in 2020, a 26% increase over the previous decade<sup>1</sup>. Drug use or abuse cuts across all ages, but prevalent among young persons.

There are several serious problems of crimes, induced or at best associated with drug use and its abuse. The United Nations report and the general agreement is that the populations at highest risk of drug use or abuse and crime are those in the age range most needed for productive work and nation building or development. Consequently drugs and crimes pose very great challenges to nation building and development of the society. The right and health of a nation is what is at stake. Hence the Nigerian Legislature (National Assembly) enacted a Law called the *National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) Act*<sup>2</sup>. This Law put in place a specialized agency with aggressive investigators and prosecutors to go after hard drug dealers and drug barons. The Court of Appeal in *Adebayo V FRN*<sup>3</sup> per *DongbanMensen JCA* held that the Legislators put in place a specialized agency and arms it with aggressive investigators and prosecutors to go after hard drug dealers-against whom stiffer penalties have been put in place.

## 2.0 MEANING OF DRUG

Generally speaking, a drug is a substance which has a physiological effect when ingested or otherwise introduced into the body. It is a substance that cures, treats, prevents or reduces symptoms of a disease. It can be addictive and abused. It is a substance which when taken taps into the brain's communication system and which affects (disrupts) the way nerve cells normally or ordinarily receive, process and send information. The *Black's law Dictionary*<sup>4</sup> defines Drug as a substance intended for use in the diagnostic cure treatment, or prevention of diseases. It also defines drug as a natural or synthetic substance that alters ones perception or consciousness. It went further to state the different kinds of drug thus: addictive, adulterated, copycat, dangerous, designer, ethical, generic etc. The Supreme Court of Nigeria in *Okewu V FRN*<sup>5</sup> citing the *Black's Law Dictionary* defines drug as 'natural or synthetic substance that alters ones perception or consciousness' and a narcotic drug as a drug that is controlled or prohibited by Law. It held further that;

*there is no doubt that all the drugs mentioned in Section 10(h)(now section 11) of the Law (NDLEA Act), that is, Cocaine, LSD and Heroine with Cannabis Sativa otherwise known as Indian Hemp are substances that are known to alter users perception or consciousness. They are also narcotic drugs hence, they are prohibited by Law.*

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<sup>1</sup> UNODC, *UNODC World Drug Report 2022*, Published June 2022. <http://reliefweb.int> > report > unodc. Accessed 29/10/2022.

<sup>2</sup> Cap N30 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004.

<sup>3</sup> (2017) LPELR 42395 CA

<sup>4</sup> B. A. Garner, *Black's Law Dictionary* (9<sup>th</sup> ed. West Publishing Co., St Paul MN, 2009) p.571.

<sup>5</sup> (2012) LPELR 7834 SC

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*<sup>6</sup> on its part defines drug as a substance used as a medicine or used in a medicine – medicine being a substance or liquid taken in order to cure an ailment. It also defines drug as an illegal substance that some people take for physical or mental effect it has. From the definitions above considered, it is clear that drugs can either be good or bad in itself, legitimate or illegitimate, legal or illegal. It can also be procured or used for good or bad, legal or illegal purpose. When drugs are adverse or negative or otherwise procured or used for an adverse or negative purpose they are illicit and its consequential application or usage is hence an abuse thereto, thus drug abuse.

### 3.0 MEANING OF DRUG ABUSE

Drug Abuse, simply put, is the use of drug in a way that is wrong or harmful. It means the misuse of drugs. It is to make bad use of drugs or otherwise to use illicit drug or to use licit drug without or against prescription. Hence, the *Black's Law Dictionary*<sup>7</sup> defines drug abuse as the detrimental state produced by the repeated consumption of a narcotic or other potentially dangerous drugs, other than as prescribed by a doctor to treat an illness. Drug abuse is also otherwise called substance abuse, and often is a patterned use of a drug in which the user consumes the substance in amounts or with methods which are harmful to themselves or others and includes substance related disorder.

The *American Psychiatric Association (APA)*<sup>8</sup> created a definition of substance abuse that used legality, social acceptability and cultural familiarity as qualifying factors, thus; "... a pattern of compulsive substance use marked by recurrent significant, occupational, legal or interpersonal adverse consequences, such as repeated absence from work or school, arrests and mental difficulties". Drugs most often associated with abuse are alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, heroin, opioids, methaqualone, benzodiazepine etc<sup>9</sup>. The NDLEA Act 2004 deals with prevalence, nuisance and destructive social and adverse economic consequences of the misuse of hard drugs. Drug abuse does not just affect the abuser but rather has far reaching effects on others and the society at large. Most of the society's problems and crimes are related to drug abuse – burglary, stealing, robbery, kidnapping, murder, rape etc. The list of social problems caused by drug abuse are endless. Drug use and abuse are the major causes of health, psychological and or social problem (crime inclusive) and in some cases death.<sup>10</sup>

### 4.0 DRUG ADDICTION

The extreme cases of drug abuse or otherwise dependence on drugs is addiction. It is the over dependence or otherwise psychological or physiological need and or over dependence on drug. The *Chambers 21<sup>st</sup> Century Dictionary*<sup>11</sup> defines drug addiction as the physical and psychological state of dependence that results from taking certain drugs habitually. To the *American Psychiatric Association (APA)*<sup>12</sup> drug addiction is a state of psychological or physical

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<sup>6</sup> A.S Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* (8<sup>TH</sup> Ed, International Students Edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford UK, 2015) p.451

<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.* p572

<sup>8</sup> American Psychiatric Association Dictionary of Psychology. "substance use, Abuse and Addiction". <https://www.apa.org/topics/substance>. Accessed 13<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

<sup>9</sup> American Addiction Centres Editorial Staff, "Commonly Abused Drugs" Updated 30<sup>th</sup> May 2022, <https://drugabuse.com>. accessed 29<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

<sup>10</sup> UNODC, *UNODC World Drug Report 2022*, Published June 2022. <http://reliefweb.int> > report > unodc. Accessed 29/10/2022.

<sup>11</sup> M. Robbinson, *Chambers 21<sup>st</sup> Century Dictionary* (chambers Harrap publisher Ltd, Edinburgh, 2004) P 404

<sup>12</sup> *Op. Cit.*

dependence (or both) on the use of alcohol or other drugs. The term is often used as an equivalent term for substance dependence and sometimes applied to behavioural disorder. In the words of *B.A. Garner*<sup>13</sup> drug addiction is the habitual and temperate use of drug, especially a potentially harmful one such as a narcotic drug.

## 5.0 CRIME

A crime, simply, is an act or mission stipulated in a written law to be wrong and punishable by the state. It is also called an offence. The *Black's Law Dictionary*<sup>14</sup> defines a crime as an act that the law makes punishable: The breach of a legal duty treated as the subject matter of a criminal proceeding. The concept of crime as distinguished from wrong (civil) or Tort and from sin, involves the idea of injury to the state. *Section 2 of the Criminal Code Act*<sup>15</sup> defines a crime or an offence as an act or omission which renders the person doing the act or making the omission liable to punishment under the code. Crimes or offences are created by the national and state legislative authorities in response to the needs for protection of the people. They are acts or omissions prohibited by the state and the violation of which sanctions or otherwise punishments are provided. The acts or omission are prohibited because they are considered injurious to the society/state generally or to some of its individual members.

An act or omission is a crime only if it is so stated in a written law and the punishment thereto provided. Thus, a person cannot be convicted of an unwritten offence. Hence the *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) 1999 (as amended)*<sup>16</sup> provides that a person cannot be punished for doing or omitting to do an act unless that the act or mission constitute an offence under the Law in force when it occurred, and a person shall not be convicted of a crime or offence unless that offence is defined and the penalty thereof is prescribed in a written law.

## 6.0 DRUGS AND CRIMES

Available records show a positive correlation between drug use/abuse and crime and or delinquency. Raheleh Rafeaie, Saeede Olyae and Alireza Sargolzaiee<sup>17</sup> in their work stated that there is a close relationship between drug abuse and crime. Drug abusers commit crimes to pay for their drugs and this inflicts damages to the society. Moreover, many criminals are under the influence of drugs while committing crimes. Drug trafficking is another outcome of drug abuse<sup>18</sup>. They further stated that according to a research in the United States in 2010, 70% of male prisoners were drug abusers which is significant compared to the 11.2% rate of drug abuse in the entire male population. Alcohol has the highest relationship with aggressive crimes. According to reports, criminals who had abused drugs and alcohol simultaneously committed 21.4% of aggressive crimes. Among individuals who were arrested in Australia during 2004, 82% had a history of drug abuse, 69% had abused drugs at least 6 months before their arrest and 62% frequently abused drugs<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup>B.A Garner, *Black's Law Dictionary* (9<sup>th</sup> ed. West publishing co, St Paul MN, 2009) P.571

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid*, p.427

<sup>15</sup>Cap C38 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004.

<sup>16</sup>S. 36 (8) & (12) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999(as amended)

<sup>17</sup> Raheleh Rafeaie, Saeede Olyae and Alireza Sargolzaiee, "The Relationship Between the Type of Crime and Drugs in Addicted Prisoners in Zahedan Central Prison", *Int. J. High Risk Behaviour Addicts* 2013. Accessed 29/10/ 2022.

<sup>18</sup> World Drug Report 2012. USA: United Nations Office On Drugs And Crime; 2012. Available from: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR-2012.html>. Accessed 29/10/2022.

<sup>19</sup> R. Rafeaie et al *op. cit*.

Matthias Pierce, Karen Hayhurst et al in their research were also able to demonstrate that opiate-use onset is associated with crime escalation, independent of changes which occur with age. Therefore, initiation of opiate use appears to be a crucial driver of offending; measures to reduce offending should include drug-use prevention<sup>20</sup>. Drug use/abuse and crime are inseparable, they are very strongly linked and or connected. Drug use may precede crime or the reverse. A close connection has been found to exist between drug abuse and criminal behaviour. Crime and drug literature shows that heroin addicts are usually deeply involved in crime and daily opiate use increases criminality several folds. J.C. Ball<sup>21</sup> in his research in New York City, Philadelphia and Baltimore found that the mean offence rates for heroin addicts were 603,631 and 567 offences per year, respectively. This participation rates, and frequency of crime among addicts in the three cities were remarkably similar.

Illicit drug use and crime and or delinquency are best seen as closely interrelated behaviours. The close connect between drug use and criminal behaviour is elucidated above. It is an offence in Nigeria to deal in illicit drug. Hence the NDLEA Act<sup>22</sup> clearly states that "Any person who, without lawful authority-

- (a) Imports, manufactures, produces, processes, plants or grows the drugs popularly known as cocaine, LSD, heroine or other similar drugs shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to be sentenced to imprisonment for life; or
- (b) Exports, transports or otherwise traffics in the drugs popularly known as cocaine, LSD, heroine or any other similar drugs shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to be sentenced to imprisonment for life; or
- (c) Sells, buys, exposes or offers for sale or otherwise deals in or with the drugs popularly known as cocaine, LSD, heroine or any other similar drugs shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to be sentenced to imprisonment for life.
- (d) Knowingly possesses or uses the drugs popularly known as cocaine, LSD, heroine or other similar drugs by smoking, inhaling or injecting the said drugs shall be guilty of an offence on conviction to imprisonment for a term not less than fifteen years but not exceeding twenty-five years."

However, in *Okewu v FRN (supra)* the Supreme Court per Ariwoola JSC (now CJN) in elucidating the above provision of the NDLEA Act held thus:

*There is no doubt that all the drugs mentioned in Section 10(h) (now section 11) of the Law, that is, Cocaine, LSD and Heroine with Cannabis Sativa otherwise known as Indian Hemp are substances that are known to alter users perception or consciousness. They are also narcotic drugs hence, they are prohibited by Law. In other words, Cocaine, LSD, Heroine and Indian hemp are prohibited in the same way because they are all drugs that alter one's perception or consciousness hence the prohibition by law. As a result, I am not in the slightest doubt and I hereby say with conviction that the Court below was right to hold that the substance called Indian Hemp, otherwise known as Cannabis Sativa falls within the phrase "any*

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<sup>20</sup> M. Pierce, K. Hayhurst, S.M. Bird, M. Hickman, T. Seddon, G. Dunn and T. Miller, "Insights into the Link between Drug Use and Criminality: Longtime Offending and Criminality-active Opiate Users" *Drug Alcohol Depend* 2017, 179, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5608072/> accessed 29/10/2022.

<sup>21</sup> J.C Ball, "Similarity of Crime Rates Among Male Heroin Addicts in New York City, Philadelphia and Baltimore", *Journal of Drug Abuse Issues*, Vol.21, Issue 2, 1999, pgs 413 – 427. <http://www.ojp.gov.ncjrs/abstracts>. Accessed" 13/9/2022

<sup>22</sup> S. 11 (a) - (d) *Op cit*

*other similar drugs" used in Section 10(h) of the NDLEA Act pursuant to which the Appellant was charged, convicted and sentenced by the tribunal.*

Consequently from the above discuss, one can surmise that drugs and crimes are related in several and many ways. In most cases drug abuse may lead to crime and in others criminal behaviour precedes drug abuse. They reinforce one another. The broader impact of drug abuse and crime often increases tension and other deviant behaviours, placing additional burdens on institutions such as the family, schools and churches. Drug related crimes cause instability in the polity/society and overpopulate police, courts and correctional facilities.

## **7.0 CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF DRUG ABUSE**

With neither a single cause nor a simple cure, drug abuse and its many related problems continue to increase in many parts of the world. Problems of disease, accidents, lowered productivity, deaths etc also continue to increase. Reports from United Nations<sup>23</sup> indicates that around 284 million people aged 15-64 years use drugs worldwide in 2020, a 26 percent increase over the previous decade. In Africa and Latin America, people under 35 years represent the majority of people being treated for drug disorders. Globally, this report estimates that 11.2 million people worldwide were injecting drugs. Around half of this number were living with hepatitis C, 1.4 million were living with HIV and 1.2 million were living with both.

In many countries of the world, as in Nigeria, social and political institutions appear weaker now than decades ago. Some countries have also legalised cannabis. In extreme cases, these institutions appear under siege having lost legitimacy and stability. When Government loose contact with the people and control of the economic processes, civil society is weakened. Thus, bad government, corruption and civil frustration create conditions ripe for illicit drug growth, production, use and abuse. Drug abuse has devastating (powerful negative) effects on the brain and human behaviour influencing a wide range of human activities. Drug abuse acts as a brake on human and social development and cannot be separated from endemic problems of disease, poverty, joblessness and crime.

United Nations office on Drug and Crime (UNODC)<sup>24</sup> estimated that in 2013 there were 187,100 drug-related deaths worldwide, corresponding to a mortality rate of 40.8 drug – related deaths per million people aged 15-64. It is quite obvious that these figures of mortality, morbidity, disability or impairment are not only incomprehensive, but are also under estimates of the real impact of addictive disorders. Patterns of abuse in different countries show enormous variations including different drugs abused, individuals who take drugs, various settings and range of impacts.

## **8.0 DRUGS AND CRIMES AS CHALLENGES TO NATION BUILDING**

United Nations reports<sup>25</sup>, observation from experts, studies of criminal activities from across the world, education, work and health reports in all cultures, all point to serious problems of

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<sup>23</sup>United Nations, "UN office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report 2022 highlight trends in cannabis post legalization, environmental impacts of illicit drugs and drug use among Women and Youth," (office of Drug and Crime)<http://www.unodc.org>" June un.....Accessed 13/9/2022.

<sup>24</sup> UNODC Research," Drug use-United Nations office on Drugs and Crimes",  
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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*; United Nations, "UN office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report 2022 highlight trends in cannabis post legalization, environmental impacts of illicit drugs and drug use among Women and Youth," (office of Drug and Crime)<http://www.unodc.org>" June un.....Accessed 13/9/2022; World Drug Report 201, USA: United Nations Office On Drugs And Crime; 2012. Available from: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR-2012.html>. Accessed 29/10/2022.

crime, induced or at best associated with drug abuse. The most vulnerable group of persons to drug abuse are the youths. Hence the population at the highest risk of drug use and or abuse and crime are those in the age range most needed for productive work and nation building or development. Thus clearly and evidently drug and crimes pose very great and grave challenges to nation building and development of the society. Drugs decrease cognitive operations, making it difficult, and at times impossible for the young person to develop a functional set of values and ideals. Reduced cognitive efficiency also leads to poor academic performance, decrease in self-esteem, contributing to instability of the individuals sense of identity.

Adolescent is a time when enormous changes take place in the process of normal development. It is a time for developing a person's sense of self-identity. It is a process that involves separating from parental attachments and values and establishing new social ties, values and ideas. In separating from parents, young persons need to form other meaningful relationships. The next inevitable stratum to fill this gap is the peer group. Often times the peers with whom the growing or young person associate with influence him or her to adopt drug usage or abuse as part of their social behaviour. Besides peer group relationships, drug abuse may be influenced by socio-cultural milieu, the degree to which a person is part of a structured environment (the home, school or church), his or her personal characteristics, the specific drugs involved and the circumstances of use.

It is my considered opinion that families have a powerful influence on shaping the attitudes, values and behaviour of children. Certainly, wrong and negative family dispositions and manifestations predispose, introduce and or encourage drug use and abuse among persons. Family factors that may lead to intensify drug use include but not limited to prolonged or traumatic parental absence, harsh parental discipline, failure of parents to communicate on an emotional level, chaotic or disturbed members and parental use of drugs which provides a negative role model for children etc. While any social problem may be highly resistant to change, drug use exerts powerful effects, influencing not only the brain processes that influence or control individual behaviour but also, ultimately the social milieu.

Drug use and abuse occurs among all ages, males and females alike but more prevalent in males and young persons. Socio-economic crisis like corruption, unemployment etc tend to exacerbate the use and abuse of drugs and consequently crime. There is an increase in the use and abuse of drugs across most regions of the world. Nigeria, among many African and developing countries, is one country where the use and abuse of drug is also on the increase. Drug use and abuse brought about so many challenges to nation building for it has drastically reduce the progress and development of the society because of the negative effects of drugs on the people, particularly the young persons.<sup>26</sup>

## 9.0 CONCLUSION

In modern society, like Nigeria, many contemporary social problems have emerged which are against the norms, ethics, morals and values of our society. One of the emergent and devastating social problems is drug use and or its abuse with its attendant criminality. As individuals from childhood through adolescent into old age, there is change. Change is the only permanent thing in life. These changes include growth physically of the persons and things around in the

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<sup>26</sup> <sup>26</sup>United Nations, "UN office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report 2022 highlight trends in cannabis post legalization, environmental impacts of illicit drugs and drug use among Women and Youth," (office of Drug and Crime)<http://www.unodc.org>" June un.....Accessed 13/9/2022.



environment, which are commonly characterized by events that are either pleasant or unpleasant, desirable or undesirable, and sometimes necessary or unnecessary.

Drug use and abuse and the consequential effect particularly criminal behaviours and activities are all issues involving persons or otherwise human beings. Thus response to drug problems should begin with the people, communities and institutions involved. The people should be considered as the heart – centre of the problem and the beginning of any solution. Unfortunately drug use or and abuse and its consequences have not received adequate, sufficient or and commensurate attention the world over. This is worse in developing countries of the world as Nigeria. There is an absence of sufficient education and systematic information about drug use and its abuse in the country. Sometimes drug abuse is considered a health problem, and at other times it is viewed as a crime, but no matter how viewed or considered, drug abuse presents unique and costly consequences for the society.

### 10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

To effectively curb the problems of drug abuse and crimes: The following are the recommendations:

1. The training and nurturing of a child should not be left in the hands of parents alone. The schools, the churches and the entire community should also and always come in handy
2. The young and adults should be gainfully employed to curb high tech crimes.
3. There should be a legal framework against drug use and abuse. This legal framework must also have effective enforcement mechanism. and to strictly monitor
4. The activities of the internet service providers should be monitored to safeguard the moral values of the society.
5. Education is certainly critical and a very important tool in the check of drug use or abuse and crime. All the requisite institutions, agencies and persons(formal and informal institutions)are important for the contributions they make to learning and socialisation. There should be integration of drug abuse education into the curriculum of the mainstream institutions whether public or private religious or secular. The public should always be enlightened on the consequences of use of illicit drugs and drug abuse. This is very important in the fight against drug use and abuse.
6. The Comity of nations should give adequate attention to curbing the use of drugs, drug abuse and drug addiction in the whole world.

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