

Nigeria's War Against Drug Abuse: Prevalence, Patterns, Ramifications, Policy and Multisectoral Response, Strategies and Solutions

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Abstract

Drug abuse represents a significant and complex public health challenge of global proportions. This extensive scientific review offers a comprehensive examination of drug abuse in Nigeria, delving into its prevalence, distinct patterns, underlying determinants, health ramifications, and multifaceted interventions. The review underscores the intricate interplay of social, economic, cultural, and environmental factors that contribute to the pervasive issue of drug abuse in Nigeria. Furthermore, it sheds light on the profound consequences affecting both physical and mental health, as well as the broader social and economic fabric of the nation. In closing, evidence-based solutions encompassing prevention, treatment, and policy frameworks are scrutinized for their efficacy in addressing the multifarious challenges posed by drug abuse within the Nigerian context.

Keywords: drug abuse, Nigeria, Colos, mkpuru mmiri, Nigeria

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Significance of Drug Abuse as a Global Health Concern

According to the UNODC's most recent World Drug Report-2019, 271 million people (or 5.5% of the world's population) between the ages of 15 and 64 took drugs in the previous year (UNODC, 2019). Additionally, it has been estimated that 35 million people will have drug use problems. Additionally, according to the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017 (UNODC, 2019; Abubakar et al., 2021), there were 585,000 drug-related fatalities worldwide in 2017.

Organized crime, illicit financial flows, corruption, and terrorism/insurgency are the four global concerns that have been linked to the burden of drug misuse (consumption, abuse, and trafficking (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017; Abubakar et al., 2021). Therefore, comprehensive understanding of the prevalence, often implicated substances, frequently involved population, sources of the drugs, and risk factors linked with drug misuse is necessary for global interventions for reducing drug abuse, including its impact on health, governance, and security.

Drug misuse is a growing problem in Nigeria and is becoming a public health issue. The most populous nation in Africa, Nigeria, has earned a reputation as a hub for drug use and trafficking, particularly among young people ((Pela & Ebie, 1982; Abiodun, 1991). One in seven people (aged 15 to 64) took drugs in the previous year, following the 2018 UNODC study "Drug use in Nigeria" — The first large-scale, statewide national drug use survey in Nigeria (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). Additionally, 1 in 5 people who took drugs in the previous year experience drug-related problems (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). Numerous criminal acts, including theft, burglary, sex work, and shoplifting, have been linked to drug misuse

(United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018).

Nigeria is a very varied nation, home to more than 400 different ethnic and religious groups () [9]. Because of its multicultural makeup, Nigeria views drug misuse in a wider context. For instance, the majority of civilizations do not view the use of some substances as drug addiction since they do not result in overt behavioural changes (Abubakar et al., 2021).



Figure 1. Showing several types of abused drugs in Nigeria (Source: Tinny, Meyer & Piccarreto, 2023)

Drug abuse is a complex and multifaceted global health concern with profound implications for individuals, families, communities, and societies at large (Akpala & Bolaji, 1991). It encompasses the misuse and dependency on a wide range of psychoactive substances, including illicit drugs, prescription medications, and alcohol. Understanding the background and significance of drug abuse is crucial for addressing its far-reaching impacts on public health and well-being.

- **The Global Prevalence**

Drug abuse knows no borders, affecting people across the world regardless of age, gender, race, or socioeconomic status. It is estimated that over 275 million people globally have used drugs at least once, and approximately 36 million individuals suffer from drug use disorders, making it a pervasive issue (Adelekan et al., 1992).

- **Health Implications**

Drug abuse takes a severe toll on physical and mental health. Substance misuse is associated with an increased risk of infectious diseases (e.g., HIV, hepatitis), cardiovascular problems, respiratory issues, and various forms of cancer (Ihezue, 1998; Nevadomsky, 1982). Additionally, individuals struggling with drug abuse often experience mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and psychosis.

- **Social and Economic Consequences**

The social and economic repercussions of drug abuse are staggering. Families are torn apart, communities are destabilized, and societies bear the burden of increased healthcare costs, lost productivity, and crime. The criminal justice system is also strained as it contends with drug-related offenses.

- **Interconnected Factors**

The drivers of drug abuse are multifaceted and interconnected. Socioeconomic factors, including poverty and lack of educational opportunities, can contribute to vulnerability (Essien, 2010; Famuyiwa et al., 2011; Dankani,

2012). Peer pressure, cultural norms, and the availability of drugs further exacerbate the problem. Genetic predispositions and mental health issues can also play a role.

- **Global Response**

Recognizing the global significance of drug abuse, international organizations such as the United Nations have developed frameworks and conventions to address the issue. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) work collaboratively to promote evidence-based prevention and treatment strategies (United Nations' World Drug Report, 2018; Ajibulu, 2020).

1.2 Scope and Objectives of the Review

The scope of this scientific review on drug abuse in Nigeria encompasses a comprehensive examination of various aspects related to drug abuse within the country. It delves into the prevalence, patterns, contributing factors, health implications, and interventions associated with drug abuse. The review primarily focuses on illicit drugs, prescription medications, and alcohol misuse. It covers both quantitative and qualitative aspects of drug abuse within Nigeria's socio-cultural and economic context.

1.2.1 Objectives

1) Assessing Prevalence and Patterns

To determine the prevalence of drug abuse in Nigeria, including the types of substances commonly abused and their forms (e.g., smoking, injection, oral consumption).

2) Identifying Contributing Factors

To explore the social, economic, cultural, and environmental factors that contribute to drug abuse in Nigeria.

3) Evaluating Health Implications

To examine the physical and mental health consequences of drug abuse, including associated risks of infectious diseases (e.g., HIV, hepatitis).

4) Analyzing Social and Economic Consequences

To assess the impact of drug abuse on families, communities, and the broader society in terms of social disruption, economic burden, and legal implications.

5) Reviewing Interventions and Treatment

To evaluate the effectiveness of prevention, treatment, and harm reduction strategies implemented in Nigeria, including education, counseling, rehabilitation, and pharmacological approaches.

6) Analyzing Policy and Regulatory Framework

To scrutinize drug-related policies and regulations in Nigeria, including their enforcement and the implications for addressing drug abuse.

7) Exploring Challenges and Future Directions

To identify challenges in addressing drug abuse within Nigeria, including stigma, healthcare infrastructure, and emerging drug trends. Additionally, to propose future research directions in the field.

8) Providing Evidence-Based Recommendations

To offer evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, healthcare professionals, researchers, and stakeholders to enhance drug abuse prevention, intervention, and policy strategies in Nigeria.

This scientific review aims to provide a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the drug abuse issue in Nigeria, shedding light on its complexities and offering evidence-based insights to inform future actions and policies to combat drug abuse effectively.

2. Prevalence and Patterns of Drug Abuse in Nigeria



Figure 2. Showing a boy abusing codeine (The Guardian, 2018)

Epidemiological data on the prevalence of drug abuse in Nigeria reveals the extent of this public health concern within the country. While data can vary depending on sources and methodologies, here are key findings and statistics that offer insights into the prevalence of drug abuse in Nigeria:

According to the National Drug Use Survey conducted in 2018 by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in collaboration with the Centre for Research and Information on Substance Abuse (CRISA), an estimated 14.3 million Nigerians aged 15-64 years had used drugs in the past year. This represents about 14.4% of the population within this age group (Sloboda, 2002; Adesina et al., 2020). The same survey highlighted that drug abuse is particularly prevalent among young people. Among those aged 25-39, the prevalence of drug use was highest, with cannabis being the most commonly used substance. The 2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) reported that 10% of Nigerian adolescents aged 10-19 had used psychoactive substances, with boys being more likely to use drugs than girls (Egbo, 2012; Abasiubong et al., 2014; Odejide, 2006).

Drug abuse rates vary by region in Nigeria. Northern states, in particular, have reported higher rates of drug use, with the North-West region having one of the highest prevalence rates. Regional differences are influenced by factors such as cultural norms, accessibility of drugs, and socioeconomic conditions.

Cannabis (marijuana) is one of the most commonly abused drugs in Nigeria, followed by opioids such as tramadol and codeine. Non-medical use of prescription medications, especially pain relievers and sedatives, is also a significant concern.

Intravenous drug use, often associated with heroin and other opioids, has been reported in some parts of Nigeria, posing risks for the transmission of blood-borne diseases like HIV and hepatitis.

Factors contributing to drug abuse in Nigeria include poverty, lack of education, unemployment, peer pressure, easy access to drugs, and the influence of cultural practices and traditions (The World Bank, 2020). Drug abuse is more prevalent among males in Nigeria, with a higher percentage of male drug users compared to females (Raimi et al., 2019). Drug abuse in Nigeria has significant public health implications, including increased rates of infectious diseases (e.g., HIV, hepatitis B and C), mental health disorders, accidents, and violence.

Nigeria has implemented various interventions, including awareness campaigns, treatment centers, and stricter regulations on certain pharmaceuticals, to address drug abuse.

It is important to note that drug abuse data can change over time, and more recent surveys and studies are essential for monitoring trends and tailoring effective interventions. These findings underscore the need for evidence-based prevention, treatment, and policy strategies to combat drug abuse in Nigeria (Oshodi et al., 2010; Pike, 2012).

2.1 Commonly Abused Substances in Nigeria And Their Forms

Commonly abused substances in Nigeria vary in terms of types and forms. These substances are often misused for recreational, medicinal, or self-medication purposes. Here are some of the commonly abused substances in Nigeria and the forms in which they are commonly found:

i. Cannabis (Marijuana)

Form: Cannabis is typically abused in its dried and crushed form, known as “weed” or “skunk.” It is often smoked in rolled cigarettes (joints), pipes, or bongs. Cannabis is also sometimes cooked into edibles.

ii. Tobacco

Form: Tobacco is commonly abused in the form of cigarettes, cigars, and smokeless tobacco (chewing or snuff tobacco). Some individuals also mix tobacco with other substances like cannabis.

iii. Alcohol

Form: Alcohol abuse is prevalent, and it includes various forms such as beer, wine, and spirits (e.g., whiskey, gin, rum). These beverages are typically consumed orally.

2.1.1 Prescription Medications

Forms: Several prescription medications are abused, including opioids (e.g., tramadol, codeine), benzodiazepines (e.g., diazepam, alprazolam), and stimulants (e.g., methylphenidate). These medications are often taken orally, but some individuals crush and snort them or inject them intravenously (Nwagu, 2012; Ekpenyong, 2012).

i. Cocaine

Form: Cocaine is abused in its powdered form, which can be snorted, ingested orally, or dissolved and injected. Crack cocaine, a more potent form, is smoked.

ii. Heroin

Form: Heroin is typically abused in its powdered form. Users may inject, snort, or smoke it after converting it into a smokable form known as “chasing the dragon.”

iii. Methamphetamine

Form: Methamphetamine is abused in its crystalline form, commonly referred to as “crystal meth” or “ice.” It can be snorted, smoked, or dissolved and injected.

iv. Ecstasy (MDMA)

Form: MDMA is often abused in tablet or capsule form. Users ingest it orally.

v. Ketamine

Form: Ketamine is usually found as a white powder that can be snorted, ingested orally, or dissolved and injected.

vi. Solvents and Inhalants

Forms: Some individuals abuse household solvents, such as glue, gasoline, and aerosol sprays. These substances are inhaled or “huffed” to produce psychoactive effects.

vii. Synthetic Cannabinoids (“Spice” or “K2”)

Form: Synthetic cannabinoids are often sprayed onto plant material and sold as an herbal smoking blend. They are smoked in a manner similar to cannabis.

viii. Club Drugs (e.g., GHB, Rohypnol)

Forms: These drugs are typically abused in liquid or tablet form. They may be ingested orally or added to beverages.

It’s important to note that the abuse of these substances can lead to serious health, legal, and social consequences. Effective prevention, treatment, and harm reduction strategies are essential to addressing substance abuse issues in Nigeria and elsewhere (Atoyebi & Atoyebi, 2013; Ani, 2014).

2.2 Regional and Demographic Variations

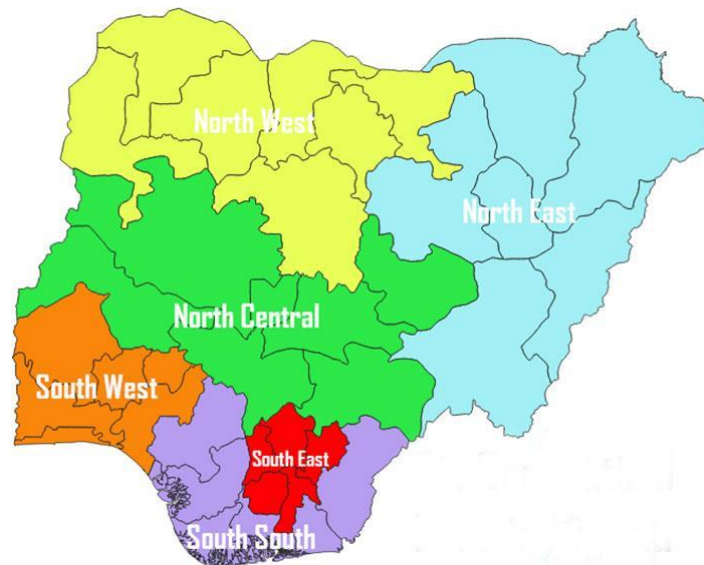


Figure 3. Showing the map of Nigeria with clear areas for southern and northern region

Regional and demographic variations in drug abuse exist within Nigeria due to a complex interplay of factors, including socioeconomic conditions, cultural influences, accessibility of drugs, and historical patterns (Dumbili, 2015; Anyanwu et al., 2016; Amadi & Akpelu, 2017).

These variations are important to understand for the development of targeted prevention and intervention strategies. Here are some key regional and demographic variations in drug abuse in Nigeria.

i. Regional Variations

- **Northern Nigeria:** Northern regions, particularly the North-West and North-East, have reported higher rates of drug abuse compared to other parts of the country. Factors contributing to this trend include high levels of poverty, unemployment, and limited educational opportunities (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019).
- **South-West Nigeria:** The South-West region has also experienced significant drug abuse challenges, with substances like cannabis and tramadol being commonly abused. Urban centers like Lagos often face higher prevalence rates due to population density and accessibility.
- **South-South and South-East Nigeria:** These regions have reported relatively lower rates of drug abuse compared to the North and South-West. However, they still face challenges related to drug trafficking and substance abuse, particularly among young adults.

ii. Demographic Variations

- **Youth and Adolescents:** Drug abuse is more prevalent among young people, especially those aged 15-35. Peer pressure, curiosity, and a desire for experimentation contribute to higher usage rates in this demographic (Abiodun, 1991).
- **Gender:** In Nigeria, drug abuse is generally more common among males than females. This gender difference can be attributed to various factors, including societal expectations, roles, and access to drugs.
- **Urban vs. Rural Areas:** Urban centers often report higher rates of drug abuse compared to rural areas. Urbanization can lead to increased exposure to drugs due to greater availability, social networks, and economic opportunities.
- **Education Level:** Lower educational attainment is often associated with higher rates of drug abuse. Individuals with limited access to quality education may be more vulnerable to substance abuse.
- **Occupation:** Certain occupational groups, such as commercial drivers and laborers, may be at a higher risk of drug abuse due to work-related stress and accessibility to substances.
- **Socioeconomic Status:** Individuals in lower socioeconomic brackets may be more susceptible to drug abuse due to factors like poverty, unemployment, and limited access to healthcare and support services.

iii. Types of Abused Substances

The choice of abused substances can vary by region and demographic group. For example, in the North, abuse of prescription opioids like tramadol is a significant concern, while in the South, cannabis and other recreational drugs may be more prevalent (Benjamin & Chidi, 2014; Gobir et al., 2017). Understanding these regional and demographic variations is essential for tailoring prevention and intervention efforts to specific populations and areas within Nigeria. Targeted strategies that address the unique challenges and risk factors faced by different groups can be more effective in combating drug abuse and its associated problems

3. Contributing Factors to Drug Abuse in Nigeria

3.1 Socioeconomic Determinants

Socioeconomic determinants play a significant role in drug abuse patterns and prevalence in Nigeria. These determinants encompass a range of social and economic factors that can influence an individual's vulnerability to drug abuse. Here are some key socioeconomic determinants of drug abuse in Nigeria:

- **Poverty**

Poverty is a major socioeconomic determinant of drug abuse. Individuals living in poverty may turn to drugs as a coping mechanism for stress, hopelessness, and economic hardship.

- **Unemployment**

Lack of employment opportunities, particularly among young adults, can lead to boredom and frustration, increasing the likelihood of drug abuse as an escape or source of income through drug trafficking.

- **Limited Access to Education**

Low educational attainment is associated with a higher risk of drug abuse. Individuals with limited access to quality education may have fewer opportunities for socioeconomic advancement, making drug abuse more appealing.

- **Income Inequality**

Income inequality within Nigerian society can contribute to feelings of social injustice and alienation, driving some individuals toward drug abuse as a form of protest or rebellion.

- **Access to Healthcare**

Limited access to healthcare services, including mental health and addiction treatment, can hinder individuals from seeking help for drug-related issues.

- **Family Environment**

Dysfunctional family environments, including family members with substance abuse issues, can increase the risk of drug abuse among children and adolescents.

- **Peer Pressure**

Socioeconomic status can influence an individual's social network. People in lower socioeconomic strata may be more exposed to peer pressure and social norms that encourage drug abuse.

- **Urbanization**

Rapid urbanization can lead to increased drug abuse rates, as urban centers often have greater drug availability, more diverse social networks, and economic disparities.

- **Cultural Factors**

Socioeconomic factors can intersect with cultural norms and beliefs, influencing drug abuse patterns. For example, in some communities, there may be cultural acceptance of specific substances.

- **Economic Desperation**

Individuals facing economic desperation may turn to drug trafficking or other illegal activities as a means of financial survival.

- **Media Influence**

Media portrayal of drug use and lifestyle in movies, music, and social media can glamorize drug abuse, particularly among youth from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

3.2 Cultural and Societal Influences

Cultural and societal influences play a significant role in shaping patterns of drug abuse in Nigeria. These influences are deeply rooted in the country's diverse cultural heritage, traditions, and social dynamics. Understanding how culture and society impact drug abuse is essential for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies (Erah & Omatseye, 2017; Yunusa *et al.*, 2017). Here are some key cultural and societal

influences on drug abuse in Nigeria:

- **Traditional and Ritualistic Use:** Some indigenous Nigerian cultures have a long history of using psychoactive substances in traditional rituals and ceremonies. While these practices are often sacred and controlled, they can introduce individuals to the use of psychoactive substances.
- **Cultural Acceptance:** In some Nigerian communities, the use of certain substances is culturally accepted and considered a norm. For example, kola nuts, which contain caffeine, are commonly used as part of traditional hospitality and ceremonies.
- **Peer Pressure:** Peer groups and social networks have a significant influence on drug abuse. Young people, in particular, may be influenced by their peers to experiment with drugs to fit in or be accepted.
- **Religious Practices:** Nigeria is a religiously diverse country, and religious practices can either discourage or condone drug abuse. Some religious groups promote sobriety and discourage substance use, while others may not have specific guidelines on drug abuse.
- **Traditional Healers and Herbal Remedies:** Traditional healers and herbal remedies are prevalent in Nigeria. While many traditional practices have therapeutic benefits, they can also involve the use of psychoactive substances or concoctions that may contribute to substance abuse (Adamson et al., 2010; Namadi, 2016).
- **Media Influence:** Mass media, including music, movies, and social media, can influence perceptions of drug use. The glamorization of drug abuse in media can make it appear attractive or normal, particularly to young people.
- **Economic Factors:** Socioeconomic conditions, such as poverty and unemployment, can influence drug abuse patterns. Some individuals may turn to drug trafficking as an economic opportunity.
- **Migration and Urbanization:** Urbanization and migration trends can expose individuals to different cultural influences and drug availability, contributing to changes in drug abuse patterns.
- **Stigmatization and Discrimination:** The stigma associated with drug abuse can discourage individuals from seeking help or treatment. Societal discrimination against drug users can exacerbate the problem.
- **Legal Framework:** The legal status of certain substances can influence patterns of drug abuse. The prohibition of certain drugs can lead to a thriving black market.
- **Social Disintegration:** The breakdown of social structures and traditional family values in some areas can contribute to increased drug abuse as individuals seek solace or escape from social challenges.
- **Migration and Transnational Drug Trade:** Nigeria's position as a transit country for drug trafficking can lead to the introduction of new substances and drug abuse patterns.

3.3 Accessibility and Availability of Abused Drugs In Nigeria

The accessibility and availability of abused drugs in Nigeria are influenced by a combination of factors, including geographic location, regulatory enforcement, and economic conditions. These factors contribute to the prevalence and patterns of drug abuse in the country. Here are some key factors affecting the accessibility and availability of abused drugs in Nigeria:

- **Geographic Location:** Accessibility to abused drugs can vary by region within Nigeria. Some areas, especially urban centers and border regions, may have greater access due to their proximity to drug trafficking routes and markets.
- **Border Proximity:** Nigeria shares borders with several countries, including Benin, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. These borders can serve as entry points for illegal drug trafficking, making certain drugs more accessible in border regions.
- **Economic Conditions:** Poverty and unemployment can drive individuals to become involved in the drug trade, either as producers, traffickers, or users. Economic desperation can increase the availability of drugs in certain communities.
- **Informal Markets:** Informal markets and street vendors can be sources of easily accessible abused drugs. Street vendors often sell prescription medications, counterfeit drugs, and illicit substances without regulation.
- **Pharmaceutical Industry:** Some abused drugs, particularly prescription medications, may be diverted from the legitimate pharmaceutical industry. This includes medications like codeine-based cough syrups and tramadol.
- **Cannabis Cultivation:** Cannabis cultivation is widespread in Nigeria, particularly in states like Ondo

and Ekiti. This contributes to the ready availability of marijuana in various forms.

- **Transportation Networks:** Nigeria's extensive transportation networks, including roadways and waterways, facilitate the movement of drugs within the country and across borders.
- **Corruption and Weak Enforcement:** Corruption within law enforcement agencies and regulatory bodies can undermine efforts to control drug trafficking and abuse. Weak enforcement can allow drug markets to flourish.
- **Inadequate Drug Regulations:** Inadequate regulations and monitoring of pharmaceuticals and over-the-counter medications can lead to the diversion of these substances for non-medical use.
- **Drug Trafficking Routes:** Nigeria serves as a transit country for the trafficking of illicit drugs, including cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine. This role in international drug trade can contribute to increased availability.
- **Online Drug Trade:** The internet has enabled the online sale of drugs, including prescription medications and illicit substances, making them easily accessible to individuals with internet access.

3.4 Peer Pressure and Social Networks

Peer pressure and social networks are significant contributing factors to drug abuse in Nigeria, as they play a pivotal role in influencing individuals' choices and behaviors, particularly among young people. Here's how peer pressure and social networks contribute to drug abuse in Nigeria:

Conformity to Group Norms: Adolescents and young adults, in particular, are highly susceptible to peer pressure as they seek acceptance and belonging within their social groups. They may be compelled to conform to group norms, including drug use, to fit in and avoid social isolation.

- **Experimentation:** Peer groups can encourage drug experimentation. Individuals may try drugs out of curiosity, especially if they see their peers doing so. This initial experimentation can lead to regular use and addiction.
- **Availability and Access:** Peer networks can provide easier access to drugs. Friends who use drugs may share or introduce substances to their peers, making it more convenient for individuals to try them.
- **Social Events and Parties:** Social gatherings, parties, and celebrations are common settings where drug use may occur. Peer influence can lead individuals to engage in substance use during these events.
- **Normalizing Substance Use:** When drug use is normalized within a social network, individuals may perceive it as a socially acceptable behavior, reducing the perceived risks associated with drug abuse.
- **Pressure to Consume:** Some individuals may experience direct pressure from their peers to use drugs. They may be encouraged or coerced into trying substances, sometimes against their own will.
- **Risk-Taking Behavior:** Adolescents are more prone to risk-taking behavior, and peer pressure can amplify this tendency. The desire to impress or fit in with peers can lead to reckless drug use.
- **Vulnerability to Influence:** Young people are at a stage of development where they are more susceptible to external influences. They may lack the maturity and decision-making skills to resist peer pressure effectively.
- **Social Networks and Drug Dealers:** Social networks can connect individuals with drug dealers or sources of illicit substances, making it easier for them to obtain drugs.
- **Coping Mechanism:** In some cases, individuals turn to drug use as a coping mechanism for dealing with stress, anxiety, or peer-related issues. They may see drug use as a way to escape problems or emotions.

3.5 Psychological and Genetic Factors to Drug Abuse in Nigeria

Drug abuse in Nigeria, like in other parts of the world, can be influenced by a combination of psychological and genetic factors. Understanding these factors is essential for effective prevention and intervention strategies. Here's a look at how psychological and genetic factors contribute to drug abuse in Nigeria.

- **Psychological Factors: Mental Health Disorders:** Individuals with certain mental health disorders, such as depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), may turn to drugs as a way to self-medicate and alleviate emotional pain.
- **Stress and Coping Mechanisms:** High levels of stress, especially in urban areas and among marginalized populations, can lead individuals to use drugs as a coping mechanism to escape reality or manage stressors in their lives.
- **Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs):** Exposure to traumatic events or adverse

childhood experiences, such as abuse or neglect, can increase vulnerability to drug abuse later in life as individuals may use substances to numb emotional pain or distress.

- **Low Self-Esteem:** Individuals with low self-esteem or a poor self-image may turn to drugs to enhance their self-confidence or temporarily boost their mood.
- **Peer Pressure and Social Influences:** As previously discussed, peer pressure and the desire to fit in or conform to social norms can significantly impact drug use among young people.
- **Sensation-Seeking Behavior:** Some individuals have a natural inclination toward sensation-seeking behavior, which can lead them to experiment with drugs for the excitement and thrill it provides.
- **Impulsivity:** Impulsive individuals may be more prone to drug abuse, as they are less likely to consider the long-term consequences of their actions.
- **Lack of Coping Skills:** People who lack effective coping skills for managing life's challenges may resort to drugs as a quick and easily accessible solution.

3.5.1 Genetic Factors

Family History: There is evidence to suggest that a family history of substance abuse can increase an individual's genetic susceptibility to drug addiction. Genetic factors can influence an individual's response to drugs and their likelihood of developing dependence.

Genetic Variations: Specific genetic variations can make some individuals more sensitive to the effects of certain drugs, making them more prone to abuse and addiction.

Metabolism: Genetic factors can affect how quickly a person metabolizes drugs. Individuals who metabolize drugs slowly may experience prolonged and intensified effects, increasing the risk of addiction.

Reward Pathway: Genetic variations in the brain's reward pathway can impact an individual's response to the pleasurable effects of drugs. Some individuals may experience greater euphoria, making them more susceptible to drug abuse.

Heritability: Studies have shown that there is a hereditary component to addiction, suggesting that genetic factors can account for a significant portion of an individual's risk for drug abuse. It's important to note that while genetic and psychological factors can contribute to drug abuse vulnerability, environmental factors, including societal influences and access to drugs, also play a crucial role. Preventative measures and treatment strategies should consider the complex interplay of these factors and provide a holistic approach to addressing drug abuse in Nigeria.

4. Health Implications of Drug Abuse in Nigeria

4.1 Physical Health Consequences

Drug abuse in Nigeria can have severe physical health consequences, often resulting from the direct effects of drugs on the body or as a consequence of risky behaviors associated with drug use (Lawoyin et al., 2005; Yisa et al., 2009; Nahvizadeh et al., 2014). These consequences can vary depending on the type of drug abused, the method of consumption, and the individual's overall health. Here are some of the physical health consequences of drug abuse in Nigeria:

Addiction and Withdrawal Symptoms: Drug abuse often leads to addiction, characterized by physical and psychological dependence on the substance. When an individual attempts to stop using the drug, they may experience withdrawal symptoms, which can be physically distressing and sometimes dangerous.

Cardiovascular Issues: The abuse of certain drugs, such as cocaine and methamphetamine, can lead to elevated blood pressure, irregular heart rhythms, heart attacks, and other cardiovascular problems. These conditions can result in life-threatening emergencies.

Respiratory Problems: Smoking drugs like marijuana or crack cocaine can lead to respiratory issues, including chronic bronchitis and lung infections. Injecting drugs can increase the risk of lung infections due to unsterile equipment.

HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis: Individuals who inject drugs may share needles and other injection equipment, increasing the risk of contracting blood-borne diseases like HIV/AIDS and hepatitis B and C. This is a significant concern for public health.

Liver Damage: Chronic alcohol abuse can lead to liver damage, including fatty liver, alcoholic hepatitis, and cirrhosis. Some prescription and illicit drugs can also harm the liver.

Gastrointestinal Problems: The use of drugs, including opioids and cocaine, can lead to gastrointestinal issues such as constipation, abdominal pain, and bowel obstruction.

Malnutrition and Weight Loss: Drug abuse can lead to malnutrition and significant weight loss, as the drugs often suppress appetite and interfere with proper nutrition.

Dental and Oral Health Issues: Methamphetamine abuse, in particular, is associated with severe dental problems, often referred to as “meth mouth.” This condition involves tooth decay, gum disease, and tooth loss.

Skin Infections: Injecting drugs can result in skin infections, abscesses, and the development of painful injection sites. These infections can lead to more severe health problems if left untreated.

Neurological Effects: Long-term drug abuse can lead to neurological issues, including cognitive impairments, memory problems, and changes in brain structure and function.

Seizures: Some drugs, such as synthetic cannabinoids, can trigger seizures and other neurological complications.

Overdose: Drug overdose is a significant risk for individuals abusing opioids, such as heroin and synthetic opioids like fentanyl. Overdose can result in respiratory failure and death if not treated promptly.

Organ Damage: Chronic drug abuse can damage various organs, including the kidneys, heart, and lungs, leading to organ failure in severe cases.

Pregnancy Complications: Pregnant women who abuse drugs are at risk of complications such as preterm birth, low birth weight, and neonatal withdrawal syndrome (neonatal abstinence syndrome) in their babies.

Accidents and Injuries: Drug abuse impairs judgment and coordination, increasing the risk of accidents, falls, and injuries, which can have physical health consequences.

It's essential to recognize that drug abuse not only harms the individual but also has broader public health implications. Addressing the physical health consequences of drug abuse in Nigeria requires a comprehensive approach that includes prevention, harm reduction, and access to addiction treatment and healthcare services.

4.2 Mental Health Effects

Drug abuse in Nigeria can have profound and wide-ranging mental health effects, often leading to various psychological and psychiatric disorders. These effects can vary depending on the type of drug abused, the frequency and duration of use, and individual factors. Here are some of the mental health effects of drug abuse in Nigeria:

- **Depression:** Drug abuse, especially of substances like alcohol, opioids, and stimulants, can lead to depression. Substance-induced depression may persist even after the drug's effects wear off.
- **Anxiety Disorders:** Many drugs, including stimulants like amphetamines and cocaine, can trigger or exacerbate anxiety disorders. Individuals may experience panic attacks, generalized anxiety, or social anxiety.
- **Psychosis:** Some drugs, such as cannabis and hallucinogens, can induce psychotic symptoms, including hallucinations, delusions, and disorganized thinking. These symptoms can be short-term or persist long after drug use.
- **Bipolar Disorder:** Drug abuse can destabilize mood and trigger manic or depressive episodes in individuals with bipolar disorder. Managing both the mental health condition and substance abuse becomes challenging.
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** Substance abuse can be a maladaptive coping mechanism for individuals with PTSD, further complicating their mental health treatment.
- **Suicidal Ideation and Behavior:** Drug abuse can increase the risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviors. The co-occurrence of substance abuse and mental health disorders is associated with a higher risk of suicide.
- **Cognitive Impairment:** Prolonged drug abuse can lead to cognitive impairments, including memory problems, decreased attention span, and reduced decision-making abilities.
- **Personality Disorders:** Some individuals develop or exacerbate personality disorders, such as borderline personality disorder or antisocial personality disorder, as a result of drug abuse.
- **Dissociative Disorders:** Hallucinogenic drugs can induce dissociative states, leading to dissociative identity disorder or depersonalization/derealization disorder.
- **Eating Disorders:** Substance abuse can contribute to the development or worsening of eating disorders like anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, or binge-eating disorder.
- **Aggression and Violent Behavior:** Certain drugs, particularly stimulants and alcohol, can lead to increased aggression and violent behavior, putting individuals and others at risk.

- **Sleep Disorders:** Drug abuse can disrupt sleep patterns and contribute to insomnia or other sleep disorders, further exacerbating mental health issues.
- **Dual Diagnosis:** Many individuals with substance abuse issues also have co-occurring mental health disorders, known as dual diagnosis or comorbidity. Treating both conditions simultaneously is essential for recovery.
- **Isolation and Social Withdrawal:** Drug abuse can lead to social isolation, as individuals may prioritize substance use over relationships and social activities, worsening feelings of loneliness and depression.
- **Stigma and Discrimination:** Individuals with substance use disorders often face stigma and discrimination, which can exacerbate mental health issues and deter them from seeking help.

4.3 Neonatal and Maternal Health Issues

Drug abuse during pregnancy in Nigeria can have serious neonatal and maternal health consequences. It puts both the mother and the unborn child at risk of a range of adverse outcomes. Here are some of the neonatal and maternal health issues associated with drug abuse during pregnancy in Nigeria:

i. Maternal Health Issues

- **Complications During Pregnancy:** Drug abuse during pregnancy can lead to various complications, including high blood pressure (hypertension), placental abnormalities, and an increased risk of miscarriage.
- **Premature Birth:** Substance abuse can increase the likelihood of preterm labor, which may result in premature birth. Premature infants are at a higher risk of health problems and developmental delays.
- **Low Birth Weight:** Babies born to mothers who abuse drugs during pregnancy are more likely to have low birth weight. Low birth weight is associated with an increased risk of neonatal mortality and long-term health issues.
- **Stillbirth:** In severe cases of substance abuse, particularly with substances like cocaine or opioids, there is an increased risk of stillbirth, where the baby dies in the womb before delivery.
- **Placental Abruption:** Substance abuse can lead to placental abruption, a condition where the placenta prematurely separates from the uterine wall. This can cause severe bleeding and endanger both the mother and the baby.

ii. Neonatal Health Issues

- **Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS):** Babies born to mothers who abused opioids, such as heroin or prescription painkillers, during pregnancy are at risk of NAS. NAS is characterized by withdrawal symptoms in the newborn, including irritability, feeding difficulties, tremors, seizures, and respiratory problems.
- **Developmental Delays:** Drug exposure during pregnancy can lead to developmental delays in the newborn, affecting physical, cognitive, and emotional development.
- **Respiratory Distress Syndrome:** Premature birth and low birth weight associated with drug abuse during pregnancy increase the risk of respiratory distress syndrome (RDS) in newborns. RDS can be life-threatening and requires intensive medical care.
- **Neurological and Behavioral Problems:** Substance-exposed infants are at a higher risk of long-term neurological and behavioral problems, including learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and cognitive impairments.
- **Birth Defects:** Some drugs, such as alcohol, can cause birth defects in the newborn, including heart defects, facial abnormalities, and developmental issues.
- **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS):** Babies born to mothers who abused drugs during pregnancy may be at an increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), a sudden, unexplained death of an otherwise healthy baby.
- **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD):** Maternal alcohol abuse during pregnancy can lead to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, a range of physical, cognitive, and behavioral impairments in the baby.

We must add that addressing neonatal and maternal health issues related to drug abuse in Nigeria requires a multidisciplinary approach. Prenatal care, addiction treatment, and social support services are essential components of preventing and mitigating these health risks. Pregnant women who are struggling with substance abuse should receive timely medical intervention and support to protect both their health and the well-being of

their unborn child.

5. Social and Economic Consequences of Drug Abuse in Nigeria

5.1 Family Disruption and Social Disintegration

Drug abuse in Nigeria can have far-reaching consequences for families and communities, contributing to family disruption and social disintegration. Stories of how junkies have killed their loved ones abound (Ogoh et al., 2004). In an Autopsy Study of the Pattern and Yearly Trend of Homicide in Warri, Nigeria, it was shown that unnatural death as a result of homicide was very common in the study area and mainly perpetrated using firearms and sharps with young males being the most vulnerable age group (Nwachokor et al., 2019).

These consequences can be particularly detrimental, as they affect not only individuals but also the broader fabric of society. Here are some ways in which drug abuse contributes to family disruption and social disintegration in Nigeria:

i. Family Disruption

- **Breakdown of Family Bonds:** Drug abuse can strain family relationships, leading to conflicts, misunderstandings, and breakdowns in communication. Family members may struggle to cope with the erratic behavior and mood swings of the individual abusing drugs.
- **Neglect of Responsibilities:** Substance abuse can lead to neglect of parental and household responsibilities. Parents who abuse drugs may fail to provide for their children's basic needs, such as food, shelter, and emotional support.
- **Child Neglect and Abuse:** Drug abuse can impair judgment and decision-making, increasing the risk of child neglect or abuse within the family. Children may experience physical, emotional, or psychological harm.
- **Financial Instability:** The cost of sustaining a drug habit can lead to financial instability within the family. Funds that should be allocated for essential needs may be diverted to support the individual's drug use.
- **Legal Issues:** Individuals engaged in drug abuse may face legal consequences, including arrest and imprisonment. This can result in the separation of parents from their children and disrupt family dynamics.
- **Domestic Violence:** Substance abuse can contribute to domestic violence within families. Under the influence of drugs, individuals may become more prone to aggressive and violent behavior.

ii. Social Disintegration

- **Community Violence:** Drug abuse can fuel violence within communities, as disputes over drug territory, trafficking, and addiction-related conflicts may escalate into violence and crime.
- **Crime and Criminal Networks:** The drug trade and drug abuse are often associated with criminal networks. These networks can undermine community safety and social cohesion.
- **Increased Healthcare Burden:** Substance abuse leads to an increased burden on healthcare services, including emergency rooms and addiction treatment facilities, diverting resources away from other essential healthcare needs.
- **Economic Drain:** Drug abuse can drain economic resources, as individuals may spend their income on acquiring drugs rather than investing in education, job training, or productive economic activities.
- **Erosion of Trust:** Widespread drug abuse can erode trust within communities. Neighbors and community members may become wary of one another due to concerns about drug-related crime and instability.
- **Stigmatization and Discrimination:** Individuals struggling with drug addiction and their families often face stigmatization and discrimination, which can hinder their access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities.
- **Educational Disruption:** Children in families affected by drug abuse may experience disruptions in their education, leading to lower academic achievement and limited future opportunities.
- Addressing family disruption and social disintegration resulting from drug abuse in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach. It includes prevention, education, access to addiction treatment and rehabilitation services, community support networks, and efforts to address the social determinants of drug abuse, such as poverty and lack of educational opportunities. Comprehensive strategies can help mitigate the negative impact of drug abuse on families and communities while promoting recovery and

social cohesion (Ju and Odejide, 1993; Adelekan et al., 2001).

6. Interventions and Treatment

6.1 Prevention Strategies (Education, Awareness, Community Programs)

Preventing drug abuse in Nigeria requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach that includes education, awareness campaigns, and community programs (Obiechina & Isiguzo, 2016). These strategies aim to raise awareness about the risks associated with drug abuse, provide support and resources for individuals at risk, and create a community environment that discourages substance abuse (Onyechi et al., 2017). Here we listed some key prevention strategies:

- **Education and School-Based Programs**

Implement drug education programs in schools that provide students with accurate information about the risks of drug abuse. Teach students about the consequences of drug abuse on physical health, mental health, academic performance, and future prospects. Promote life skills training to enhance decision-making, problem-solving, and resistance to peer pressure.

- **Parent and Family Education**

Offer parenting programs that educate parents about the signs of drug abuse, communication with children, and setting clear expectations and boundaries. Encourage family bonding and communication to create a supportive home environment.

- **Community Awareness Campaigns**

Conduct public awareness campaigns through various media channels, including television, radio, newspapers, and social media. Raise awareness about the dangers of drug abuse, the signs of addiction, and available resources for treatment and support.

- **School-Based Counseling Services**

Provide access to school-based counselors who can offer support and guidance to students facing substance abuse issues or those at risk. Establish peer counseling programs where students can seek help from their peers.

- **Community-Based Support Groups**

Establish community support groups for individuals struggling with drug addiction and their families. These support groups can provide a safe space for sharing experiences, seeking advice, and receiving emotional support.

- **Community Policing and Law Enforcement**

Collaborate with law enforcement agencies to address drug-related crimes and drug trafficking. Conduct community policing initiatives to improve safety and reduce drug-related criminal activities (Yakubu et al., 2020).

- **Mental Health Services**

Increase access to mental health services, including addiction treatment and counseling, to address underlying mental health issues that may contribute to drug abuse.

- **Youth Engagement Programs**

Create recreational and educational programs for young people that offer alternative activities to substance abuse. Encourage youth involvement in community service and leadership roles.

- **Community Coalitions**

Form community coalitions comprising local leaders, educators, healthcare providers, law enforcement, and concerned citizens to develop and implement drug prevention strategies. Collaborate with these coalitions to identify local risk factors and tailor prevention efforts to community needs.

- **Workplace Prevention Programs**

Encourage businesses and employers to implement drug-free workplace policies and provide resources for employees seeking help for substance abuse.

- **Early Intervention Programs**

Develop early intervention programs that identify individuals at risk of drug abuse and provide timely support and resources.

- **Access to Treatment Services**

Ensure that individuals struggling with drug addiction have access to affordable and evidence-based treatment

services, including detoxification, counseling, and rehabilitation.

• **Research and Evaluation**

Conduct ongoing research and evaluation of prevention programs to assess their effectiveness and make necessary improvements.

6.1.1 Legislation and Regulation

Enforce laws and regulations related to drug manufacturing, distribution, and sale to reduce the availability of illicit substances. Combining these prevention strategies can help create a supportive and informed community that actively works to prevent drug abuse and promote the well-being of its members in Nigeria. It is essential to adapt and tailor these strategies to the specific cultural and regional contexts within the country (Eneh & Stanley, 2004; Bramer et al., 2017).

6.2 *Pharmacological Treatment Options*

Pharmacological treatment options for drug abuse in Nigeria, as in many other countries, can be an important component of a comprehensive approach to addiction treatment. Medications can help individuals manage cravings, reduce withdrawal symptoms, and support long-term recovery. It's important to note that medication-assisted treatment (MAT) should be integrated into a broader treatment plan that includes counseling, therapy, and support services. Here are some pharmacological treatment options for drug abuse in Nigeria:

6.2.1 Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)

- i. **Methadone:** Methadone is a long-acting opioid agonist that can be prescribed to individuals with OUD. It helps reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms. Methadone maintenance treatment programs should be closely monitored and regulated to prevent diversion and misuse.
- ii. **Buprenorphine:** Buprenorphine is a partial opioid agonist that can be used to treat OUD. It has a lower risk of overdose compared to full opioid agonists. In Nigeria, buprenorphine-naloxone combination products may be available.
- iii. **Naltrexone:** Naltrexone is an opioid receptor antagonist that can be used to prevent relapse. It blocks the effects of opioids and reduces cravings. The extended-release injectable form (Vivitrol) can be administered monthly.

6.2.2 Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)

- i. **Disulfiram:** Disulfiram is an aversive medication that creates unpleasant physical reactions when alcohol is consumed. It serves as a deterrent for individuals trying to abstain from alcohol.
- ii. **Acamprosate:** Acamprosate helps reduce cravings for alcohol and may be used as part of a comprehensive treatment plan for AUD.
- iii. **Naltrexone:** Naltrexone can also be used to treat AUD. It reduces the rewarding effects of alcohol and can help individuals maintain abstinence.

6.2.3 Stimulant Use Disorder (SUD)

Currently, there are no FDA-approved medications specifically for the treatment of stimulant use disorders like cocaine and amphetamine abuse. Treatment primarily involves behavioral therapy and counseling.

6.2.4 Cannabis Use Disorder

While there are no specific medications approved for the treatment of cannabis use disorder, behavioral therapy and counseling are effective approaches for individuals seeking to reduce or quit cannabis use.

It's important for individuals with substance use disorders to undergo a thorough assessment by healthcare professionals to determine the most appropriate treatment approach. Medication-assisted treatment should always be used in conjunction with behavioral therapy and counseling to address the underlying causes of addiction, build coping skills, and support long-term recovery (Lawoyin et al., 2005).

Access to addiction treatment services and medications may vary in different regions of Nigeria, and efforts should be made to expand access to these treatment options, train healthcare providers, and raise awareness about the benefits of medication-assisted treatment. Additionally, the safety and regulation of these medications should be closely monitored to prevent diversion and misuse.

7. Challenges and Future Directions

7.1 Emerging Drug Trends

Emerging drug trends in Nigeria, like in many other countries, are influenced by a variety of factors, including changes in drug availability, drug trafficking routes, and shifts in societal and cultural norms (Adelekan et al.,

1992). Monitoring emerging drug trends is crucial for public health and law enforcement agencies to develop effective prevention and intervention strategies. Some emerging drug trends in Nigeria.

- i. **Synthetic Cannabinoids:** Synthetic cannabinoids, often referred to as “Spice” or “K2,” have gained popularity as alternatives to traditional cannabis. These synthetic drugs can have unpredictable and dangerous effects on users. They are typically marketed as herbal smoking blends or incense.
- ii. **Tramadol Abuse:** Tramadol, a prescription painkiller, has been widely abused in Nigeria. Its availability and misuse have raised concerns about its potential for addiction and adverse health effects.
- iii. **Codeine and Cough Syrup Abuse:** Codeine-containing cough syrups have been misused, particularly among young people. Nigeria implemented regulations to restrict the sale of codeine-containing cough syrups in response to this issue.
- iv. **Methamphetamine:** There have been reports of increasing methamphetamine production and abuse in Nigeria, particularly in the southern regions. It is popularly called *Mkpuru mmiri*, a slang coined from the Igbo language, which is loosely translated as ‘seed of water’. It has a chalk-like crystal form and can sometimes be blue hence the name ‘mkpuru mmiri’. It is a man-made drug developed during World War II, used by soldiers to stay awake or carry out dangerous suicidal missions. Its highly addictive nature makes a chemically similar drug, amphetamine — used to treat Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and narcolepsy, a sleep disorder — highly regulated and only available by prescription (Ujumadu, 2021).
- v. **Cocaine:** Although cocaine abuse has historically been less common in Nigeria compared to other substances, there have been reports of increased cocaine trafficking and abuse in recent years.
- vi. **Designer Drugs:** The availability of designer drugs, including synthetic cathinones (commonly referred to as “bath salts”) and synthetic opioids, poses a challenge to law enforcement and health authorities. These drugs are often chemically altered to evade legal restrictions.
- vii. **Polydrug Abuse:** Many individuals engage in polydrug abuse, where they use a combination of different drugs simultaneously or interchangeably. This trend complicates treatment efforts and poses additional health risks.
- viii. **Online Drug Sales:** The internet has facilitated the online sale of drugs, including prescription medications and illicit substances. This trend presents challenges for regulatory authorities in controlling drug availability.
- ix. **Kratom:** Kratom, a plant native to Southeast Asia, has gained popularity as a psychoactive substance. It is available in various forms, including as a powder, capsules, or as an herbal product.
- x. **Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS):** The emergence of NPS, which mimic the effects of traditional drugs while evading legal restrictions, remains a concern in Nigeria. These substances can be especially dangerous due to their unpredictability.
- xi. **A Mixture of Them All; Colos:** A drug that comes from a synthetic mixture. It contains heavy metals laced with chemicals, with weed as a mixture. Colos is unsafe for human consumption. Colos has other names like “Black Mamba”, “Potpourri”, “Arizona”, “Lamba” (when mixed with “Loud”), and “Scooby Snax”. Colos is ingested to mimic the effect of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) found in marijuana, which gives off the feeling of being high. However, it does more than that; it often sends users into a frenzy. The chemicals used in making Colos are banned substances smuggled into Nigeria.

It’s important to note that drug trends can evolve rapidly, and new substances may emerge over time. Comprehensive strategies, including prevention, education, treatment, and law enforcement efforts, are essential to address emerging drug trends and reduce the associated harm to individuals and communities in Nigeria. Additionally, close collaboration between healthcare professionals, law enforcement agencies, and community organizations is critical to effectively respond to these challenges. For the most up-to-date information on emerging drug trends in Nigeria, it is advisable to consult local authorities and public health agencies.

7.2 Future Research Directions on Drug Abuse in Nigeria

Future research directions on drug abuse in Nigeria should aim to deepen our understanding of the evolving drug landscape in the country and inform evidence-based policies and interventions. Research can help identify trends, risk factors, and effective strategies for prevention, treatment, and harm reduction (Adamson et al., 2010; Fareo, 2012). Here are some potential future research directions for drug abuse in Nigeria:

Epidemiological Studies: Conduct comprehensive and up-to-date epidemiological studies to assess the prevalence and patterns of drug use across different regions and demographics in Nigeria. This should include the monitoring of emerging substances and trends.

- **Risk Factors and Protective Factors:** Investigate the individual, familial, social, and environmental

factors that contribute to drug abuse, as well as those that protect against it. Understanding these factors can inform targeted prevention efforts (Makanjuola & Sabitua Oyelekeandanimola, 2007; Makanjuola et al., 2007).

- **Polydrug Abuse:** Examine the prevalence and consequences of polydrug abuse, where individuals use multiple substances simultaneously or sequentially. Research should explore the motivations and health outcomes associated with polydrug use.
- **Pharmacological Research:** Explore the pharmacological properties and effects of substances commonly abused in Nigeria, including synthetic drugs, to better understand their mechanisms of action and potential for addiction.
- **Treatment Efficacy:** Evaluate the effectiveness of different treatment modalities, including medication-assisted treatment (MAT), counseling, and behavioral therapies, in the Nigerian context. Identify barriers to treatment access and retention.
- **Harm Reduction Strategies:** Investigate the feasibility and impact of harm reduction strategies, such as needle exchange programs and supervised injection sites, in reducing the health risks associated with drug abuse, including HIV and hepatitis transmission.
- **Mental Health Implications:** Examine the mental health consequences of drug abuse, including co-occurring mental health disorders, and explore integrated treatment approaches that address both substance use and mental health issues.
- **Cultural and Societal Influences:** Explore the cultural, societal, and religious factors that influence drug abuse patterns and perceptions in Nigeria. Assess how cultural practices and beliefs may impact prevention and treatment efforts.
- **Gender-Specific Research:** Investigate gender differences in drug abuse patterns, risk factors, and treatment needs. Develop gender-sensitive prevention and treatment programs.
- **Availability and Accessibility:** Analyze the availability and accessibility of drugs in Nigeria, including the role of the black market, the internet, and cross-border trafficking. Assess the impact of drug law enforcement efforts.
- **Community-Based Research:** Engage communities in research initiatives to better understand local drug-related challenges, develop community-specific interventions, and promote community ownership of prevention and treatment efforts.
- **Longitudinal Studies:** Conduct longitudinal studies to track the trajectories of drug users over time, examining factors that contribute to initiation, escalation, maintenance, or cessation of drug use.
- **Policy and Legal Analysis:** Evaluate the impact of drug policies and legal frameworks in Nigeria on drug abuse trends and public health outcomes. Assess the potential benefits and drawbacks of policy reform.
- **Public Health Interventions:** Explore innovative public health interventions that can effectively address drug abuse and related health issues in Nigeria, such as outreach programs and mobile clinics.
- **International Collaboration:** Foster collaboration with international organizations, research institutions, and neighboring countries to share data, best practices, and resources in addressing drug abuse and its transnational implications.

By pursuing research in these directions, Nigeria can develop evidence-based strategies to address drug abuse and its associated challenges while promoting the health and well-being of its population.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Call for a Multisectoral Approach to Address Drug Abuse in Nigeria

The increasing prevalence of drug abuse in our nation demands a unified and multisectoral response that transcends individual efforts. We call upon all stakeholders to join hands and collaboratively combat this pervasive issue.

8.2 The Scope of the Problem

Drug abuse is not confined to any particular demographic or region; it affects urban and rural areas, young and old, rich and poor. We have witnessed the emergence of new drugs, the proliferation of addictive substances, and the devastating consequences on individuals, families, and society as a whole (Abdulkarim et al., 2005; Edafiadhe, 2005; Abdallah, 2019; Pharmacists Council of Nigeria, 2020).

Why a Multisectoral Approach? Addressing drug abuse requires a holistic approach that draws on the expertise

and resources of multiple sectors:

- i. **Healthcare:** Medical professionals play a crucial role in prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation. We must enhance addiction treatment services and integrate them into mainstream healthcare.
- ii. **Education:** Schools and educational institutions are essential for early intervention and prevention programs. We need to educate our youth about the risks and consequences of drug abuse.
- iii. **Law Enforcement:** Law enforcement agencies are pivotal in curbing drug trafficking and illegal drug trade. Effective drug control measures are imperative.
- iv. **Community Engagement:** Communities have a powerful influence on individuals' choices. Mobilizing communities to create drug-free environments is essential.
- v. **Research and Data:** Continued research is vital to understanding emerging drug trends and evaluating the effectiveness of interventions.
- vi. **Policy and Legislation:** Policymakers must enact evidence-based policies that strike a balance between prevention, harm reduction, and rehabilitation.

8.3 Call to Action

- i. **Collaboration:** The silos have to be broken down and collaboration happening across sectors, sharing knowledge and resources to develop comprehensive strategies.
- ii. **Prevention:** Implementation of robust prevention programs in schools, communities, and workplaces to deter drug abuse before it begins has to be seriously and painstakingly encouraged.
- iii. **Treatment Access:** Ensure that every Nigerian has access to affordable and effective addiction treatment services, including medication-assisted treatment.
- iv. **Harm Reduction:** Explore harm reduction strategies to minimize the health risks associated with drug abuse, including needle exchange programs and supervised injection sites.
- v. **Community Empowerment:** Empower communities to identify and address local drug-related challenges through education, outreach, and support services.
- vi. **Policy Reform:** Advocate for drug policies that prioritize public health and emphasize treatment over punishment for non-violent drug offenders.
- vii. **International Cooperation:** Collaborate with international organizations and neighboring countries to address transnational drug trafficking and trade.
- viii. **Conclusion:** Drug abuse is not an issue that can be tackled in isolation. It requires our collective dedication and a multisectoral approach. Let us commit to working together to prevent addiction, support recovery, and build a healthier and drug-free Nigeria.

All stakeholders must join hands in this critical endeavor. Together, a lasting impact on the lives of fellow Nigerians can be made and create a brighter future for Nigeria.

This scientific review have provided a holistic understanding of the drug abuse issue in Nigeria, emphasizing the need for evidence-based strategies and policy changes to mitigate its adverse effects on public health and society.

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