

## The benefits of substance abuse prevention in our society and the Way forward

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### Abstract

**Background:** Substance abuse rates in Nigeria seems to be on the rise in recent times. Coupled with the rise are increase in related-harms like youth unrest, political violence, armed robbery and other indecent activities. Ability to prevent use of substances of abuse will certainly reduce both the rates and associated-harms. This paper subsequently discussed the benefits of successful prevention of drugs of abuse and how this can be achieved.

**Method/Result:** This paper reviewed the current rates of addictive substances in the Nigerian society and the associated-harms thereof. It further identified globally what benefits arise from previous success in reducing rates of substances of abuse. These benefits include reduction in crime rate, related health harms and increase in society's wellbeing. Finally, it highlighted efforts like addiction prevention interventional programs that bring about such benefits as worthy of emulation in the Nigerian society.

**Conclusion:** The paper concludes that all stakeholders from the family to school, civil societies and governmental agencies should work together to checkmate the rising tide of substance abuse in our society. Success in this will be assured if evidence-based prevention activities are adopted and adapted to bring about consequent benefits.

**Key Words:** Substance, Abuse, Benefits, Prevention and Society.

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### Introduction

Drug abuse is of great global concern. In Nigeria, the rising prevalence and its attending negative impacts<sup>[1]</sup> seems to be spreading like wildfire of the hammattan. And in order to be able to reduce the spreading fire of drug abuse and its harms, this paper reasoned that prevention is the way to go. Hence, this paper will approach the problem of addiction and the way forward as follows. First, it will described the burden of

drug abuse in Nigeria. Next, it will show us why prevention is a major way to go in tackling the wild spread of addiction in Nigeria. Lastly, it will emphasize the benefits of prevention to demonstrate why we must all work to reduce this burden.

### The Rise and Harms of Drug Abuse in Nigeria

The rise in the abuse of substance in our society in recent times<sup>[1]</sup> compared to before<sup>[2]</sup> is indeed alarming. This rise has

been associated with rise in drug-related harms. The harms include school dropout, youth unrest, political violence, burglary/armed robbery, family disintegration, poor job performance, harm to non-users and increasing health cost.<sup>[1,3]</sup> These harms seems to be echoing the ‘destructiveness’ element emphasized in defining addiction to psychoactive drugs.

Hence, drug abuse is the particular application of psychoactive substance in a destructive way by primarily abusing the user’s brain at the expense of its indicated constructive use to benefit specific individuals medically and ultimately the society.<sup>[1,3-5]</sup> The focus on the latter necessitated the need for effective prevention interventional programs in at risk individuals and the non-medically indicated users.

### **The Benefits of Substance Abuse Prevention in our society**

The following are some the benefits of substance abuse prevention in our society:

1. Reduction in substance use and abuse of substance will be beneficial to those who abused substance in our society.<sup>[5]</sup> This means that the resources used for purchasing of those substance can be channel to another important need of the family.
2. Direct benefits are the most transparent in terms of the link between prevention investment and benefits. For example, if someone is prevented from using substances, then the need for treatment services in the future would not arise, and the need to go to hospital for drug or alcohol abuse would also not arise.<sup>[6]</sup>
3. The benefits of substance abuse prevention in the society include lower crime rates and motor vehicle accident rates.<sup>[6]</sup> The prevention of substance abuse will lower a lot of crime from our society and also it will drastically reduce accidents rate in our society.
4. Higher levels of productivity associated with non-substance abusers. Workers are more likely to advance their careers, more likely to keep a stable job, and have higher work satisfaction.<sup>[6]</sup>
5. The prevention of substance abuse has economic benefits to the society. If the substance abuse is prevented from the society, all those who are involve in substance abuse will now channel the precious time for a better alternatives in the society.<sup>[6]</sup> This falls into the policy of planting food/cash

crops instead of cannabis or poppy plants. This is in line with the sustainable development goals.

### **Substance Abuse Prevention in our Society – the Way Forward**

Prevention is the way of stopping something from happening or the act of limiting someone from imbibing harmful habit.<sup>[6]</sup> In the context of this paper, prevention is a proactive process that should empower individuals and/or systems to meet the challenges of life events and transitions by creating and reinforcing healthy behaviours/lifestyles, while at the same time reducing the risks of starting or continue the use to alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs of abuse in our society. This by implication implies that prevention should confer benefits beyond stopping the use of drugs of abuse but will also further the health and wellbeing of individuals and society. The following are some suggested ways of substance abuse prevention in our society.

- 1. Family:** Everyone grows up in a family. And interestingly, the greatest hero/heroine for each child moral development is always almost the parental figure(s) in the family.<sup>[7]</sup> This is evident in how parenting style and parent's drug using habits

influence in their wards the subsequent use or not of drugs of abuse.<sup>[7,8]</sup> Hence, the prevention of substance abuse should start first from the family. In other words, family being the smallest unit of the society, should be the first to prevent or control the abuse of substance in the society.

Parents should be committed in their service to Almighty Allah by living up to the expected rights they owned their children.<sup>[9]</sup> These rights are in existence before the conception of the children. Hence, parents should not only be devoted and dedicated faith wise but should also be worthy role models to their children. This is because children learn moral values first from both the obvious and hidden actions/inactions of their parents. That is to say, parents' duty of care for their children is all encompassing. From providing physical needs to active monitoring of children's life choices and demonstrating what living an Islamic value-laden life is about. This is a very important duty highly helpful in the struggle against drug abuse.

**2. School:** The school is a place of formal education where students go to become informed and get educated. However, schools environment and the resulting academic performance are now plagued by substance abuse.<sup>[10]</sup> Furthermore, drug abuse promotes cultism and other vices in the school environment. Hence, a proactive preventive approach to drug use and abuse in school is to promote school connectedness. School connectedness is “the belief held by all students that the adults and peers in their school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals.”<sup>[11]</sup> This is one of the ways to exemplify practically the Prophetic hadith that: “**verily, the believers are like a structure, each part strengthening the other**”<sup>[12]</sup> and “**the parable of the believers in their affection, mercy, and compassion for each other is that of a body. When any limb aches, the whole body reacts with sleeplessness and fever.**”<sup>[13,14]</sup> In a nutshell, school has an important role to play in prevention of substance abuse in our society. The sum focus is to connect everyone within and

related to the school in meaningful and healthy ways. Some specifics include: teaching students the dangers of substance abuse; caring and monitoring the students; organizing lecture/seminar/workshop for parents and students on the dangers of substance abuse and its effects; and efficient counseling centers should be opened to offer practical helps.

**3. Society:** Children are born into the society, schooled and cultured in the society, and live to become the society. A society is an agglomeration of individuals belonging to varying families, living in an area with persistent social interactions and put through similar political and cultural dominance.<sup>[15]</sup> This definition emphasized the protective role of positive social connectedness that boost individuals and collective resilience and wellbeing. In addition to social wellness promoting connectedness role of the society, it is paramount for the society create preventive awareness on the dangers of substance abuse, provide alternative to substance abuse like well-balanced recreational activities, equal job opportunities and ensuring

true heroes are promoted instead of addiction-celebrities. Other roles expected from the society is formal social control on the availability of alcohol and other drugs in the community, or semi-formally through establishing and empowering alcohol/drugs abuse vigilante groups. Further societal massive embarking on mass media campaign against substance abuse, promulgating effective drug abusing rate reducing legislation and creation of more counseling centers for troubled youths and treatment /rehabilitation facilities for those with substance use problems.

- 4. Government:** Government is basically, a way and manner in which a country is control. Furthermore, government is a group of people representing the entire population of the country who control and make decision for the wellbeing of that country or state. The primary responsibility of the government is to make a public polices and enforce them for the entire society. Hence, in the area of drug abuse supply reduction the **government created National Drug Law**

#### **Enforcement Agency (NDLEA).**

The agency is in charge of eliminating the growing, processing, manufacturing, selling, exporting, and trafficking of hard drugs in the Nigerian society.

Another agency for preventing harms from drug abuse in Nigeria is the National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and control (NAFDAC). NAFDAC is saddled with the responsibility of regulating and controlling the manufacture, importations, exportation, sales and safe use of food, drugs, cosmetics, medical devices, chemicals and package water in Nigeria.

A central Nigerian government agency in the enforcement of laws against the use of drugs of abuse is the Nigerian Police Force (NPF). They ensure the criminalization of drug peddlers and similar elements for prosecution in the judiciary system. Furthermore, the NPF also work with the forensic mental health professionals to channel drugs' abusers to treatment facilities.

## Conclusion

Substance abuse in our society appeared to be on the rise. This paper explored the possible factors that are associated with the rise in drug abuse. It also highlighted the benefits of an addiction free society. The paper concludes that all stakeholders from the family to school, civil societies and governmental agencies should work together to checkmate the rising tide of substance abuse in our society. It recommends that by employing, adopting and adapting evidence-based prevention activities, success in reducing drug abuse will be assured, persistent and bring about consequent benefits.

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Conflict of interest: Nil