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## A REPORT ON THE INCREASE IN EXCESSIVE DRUG ABUSE AMONG TEENAGERS IN THE SOCIETY.

Drug abuse among Nigerian youth has been a scourge to the overall sustainable development of the nation. Substance abuse is a serious issue; a global and international issue particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. Drug abuse is also a major public health, social and individual problem and is seen as an aggravating factor for economic crises; hence, for Nigeria's poverty status. While youth are supposed to be the major agent of change and development, some of them have been destroyed by drug abuse (rendering them unproductive). Drug abuse has become a global concern in Nigeria because of its effect on youth and the nation as a whole. Drug abuse has a negative impact on the education of undergraduates in different universities across the globe. The overall health of the user is affected negatively and behaviours associated with drug abuse predispose the abuser to crime and contagious diseases including HIV/AIDS (Center for Disease Control, 2000).

Educational stakeholders like parents, teachers and the society at large are worried over the prevalence of drug abuse and its causes and consequences on the undergraduates of the University of Ilorin in Kwara State. Drugs are produced for a variety of different reasons including those associated with ensuring a state of

wellbeing, curing illness, and sustaining mental and physical stability. Modern medical substances commonly known as 'medicine' (many derived from plants), do not constitute any danger. If properly administered, drugs can assist human beings in many positive ways. The term 'drug' refers to "any substance, when taken into a living organism, limits ill-health", however if drugs are abused, they can become very "destructive to the individual and to society at large". A drug is a chemical modifier of the living tissues that could bring about physiological, sociological and behavioural changes (Nnachi, 2007; Okoye, 2001).

Drugs, are substances which, when taken, can limit cognition, perception, mood, behaviour and overall body function. It can also produce a change in biological functions through its chemical actions (Balogun, 2006). A drug is used for reasons such as curing or alleviating pain and diagnosing ill-health and is seen as a common process in many communities. Studies by Kypri, Cronin and Wright (2005), and Melchior, Chastang, Goldberg and Fombonne (2008) submitted that across the countries of the world, drug abuse tends to be rampant among youngsters between the ages of 18 and 25 (the current age of university undergraduates).

Falco (2008) stated that the chronic use of drugs can cause serious damage, sometimes irreversible physical and social damage (either temporarily or for a long period of time). Internal damage could result as well. To this effect, some of these undergraduates, who are still in their growing stage, become insane, socially misfit in school situations and eventually drop out of school. The misuse of medication, self-medication and the use of illegal substances is called Drug Abuse. Some of these substances in the form of medication give pleasure to the user and some brain nerves

becomes the end user (which is known as pleasurable pathways). The user at first may enjoy it and will want to experience the sensation again.

A person who allows himself/herself to be controlled by a psychoactive substance is called a 'drug abuser'. A drug abuser brings forth a condition called neurological functions and his/her moods, perception, consciousness, and energy levels change and the drugs can take over his/her normal functioning and well-being. The negligent use of any substance, mostly the ones that have effects on one's consciousness like alcohol, cocaine, codeine, and methamphetamines results in discomfort and malfunction. High-risk drug users represent a sub-population of the more hidden, regular and problematic drug users that are not usually sampled in household surveys. For the purpose of this survey high-risk drug users were defined as those who had used opioids, crack/cocaine or amphetamines in the past 12 months, and had used those drugs on at least 5 occasions in the past thirty days.

In Nigeria, an estimated 376,000 (0.4 per cent of the population aged 15-64) were estimated as high-risk drug users. Nearly 90 per cent of the high-risk drug users had been regularly using opioids – mainly pharmaceutical opioids such as tramadol, codeine, or morphine - while the remaining had either used cocaine or amphetamines. Over 20 per cent of the high-risk drug users were injecting drugs.

The current report reveals that 14.4 per cent of the population aged 15-64 years in Nigeria (14.3 million people) have used drugs in the past 12 months. Cannabis was the most widely used substance in Nigeria, followed by prescription opioids (such as tramadol, codeine, or morphine) and cough syrups containing codeine or dextromethorphan. High-risk drug users<sup>38</sup> were estimated to account for 0.4 per

cent of the population (approximately 376,000 people) and almost all were regularly using opioids, pre- dominantly pharmaceutical opioids such as tramadol, codeine or morphine. Among the high-risk drug users, nearly 80,000 were those who injected drugs.

One out of five persons who used drugs in the past year is suffering from drug use disorders, and there is an unmet need for drug treatment. Nearly 40 per cent of high-risk drug users wanted treatment but were unable to get it. Cost of treatment, the stigma associated with drug use, and the limited availability of drug treatment services were major barriers to accessing drug treatment in Nigeria.

In July 2018, prior to finalisation of this report, the key findings of the drug use survey were presented to the Technical Working Group and the National Steering Committee<sup>39</sup>. In light of the findings of the drug use survey, the stakeholders suggested as the way forward some important issues for consideration by policy makers to address the drug problem in Nigeria.

In conclusion the rate of drug abuse increases everyday and it is advised that the government should look into this through its agencies to fight against the selling and purchasing of illegal drugs.