RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AS A COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO DRUG/SUBSTANCE USE: WHY NOT ADOPT THIS POLICY OPTION IN NIGERIA?

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ABSTRACT

There exists observable shortcomings in the drug policies/laws and futility in the war on drugs. This is because, despite the efforts of drug policymakers in State and non-State agencies such as schools, religious bodies, and families to combat drug use and its ensuing problems using various strategies, the phenomenon is still on the increase in Nigeria. This has necessitated the introduction of restorative justice as a policy option/alternative that could successfully address the problem. The predictions of social bonds and re-integrative shaming theories supported the promise and roles of this community-based psycho-socio-legal framework. Its official use in both formal and informal settings has a significant end in view which is that drug offenders are made to mend fences with individuals and institutions affected by their conduct. Instead of being in the traditional criminal justice system, they are treated and corrected in the community where the offensive behaviour originated. The programme stands to create a practical pathway and framework for handling the changing patterns of substance abuse in the local communities and neighbourhoods. It is a strong driving force and construct for achieving the long sought for drugs-source-control and treatment plans, and a plausible, reliable and accurate scale-of-justice-balancing measure that can direct the path to effective drug policy in Nigeria.

Keywords: Community Response, Drug/Substance Use, Nigeria, Policy Option, Restorative Justice.

INTRODUCTION

The use of psychoactive substances or drugs to escape reality and provide stimulation, relief, or relaxation has been a common practice for thousands of years. Known as the 'plant of joy', opium, for instance, was used 4,000 years ago by the

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Mesopotamian (Inciardi, 1986). Siegel (2008) reviewed a number of studies on mind-altering substances and came to the conclusion that many ancient societies knew and understood the problem of drug use. This study further revealed that the use of marijuana by the Arabs was common during the Crusades; natives of Mexico and South America chewed coca leaves and used 'magic mushrooms' (which contained powerful intoxicating agents) in their religious ceremonies; and that drug use (cocaine and heroin solutions precisely) was also accepted in Europe well into the 20th century. In African societies of old generally, and Nigeria in particular, only alcohol and local substances and, rarely marijuana, were commonly used, unlike in the Western world where the latter and synthetic drug use prevailed.

In the African continent, a plethora of research findings point to the fact that such substances as alcohol (especially palm wine and locally made gin and other indigenous brewed intoxicants), snuff, kola nuts and tobacco are often required as a custom in many native ceremonies and social events. Examples include traditional marriage rites, offering of prayers and libation, naming newborn babies and even wedding (Adelakan, 1989; Adelakan, & Ndon, 1997; Omigbodun, & Babalola, 2004; Obot, 2005; Gureje, Degenhardt, Olley, Uwak, Udofia, Wakil, Adeyemi, Bohnert, & Anthony, 2007; Ngesu, Ndiku, & Masese, 2008; Ajala, 2009; Abasiubong, Idung, Udoh, & Ekanem, 2012; Okogwu, 2014; Abasiubong, Udobang, & Idung, 2014; Nnam, 2016a). A salient thought, though implicit, common in the expressions of these scholars is that drugs/substances were so sparingly and cautiously used in ancient times that problems as-

sociated with their use were minimal compared to what is obtainable in recent times. The reason for this is not far-fetched: most traditional African societies are kin-knitted. They have a strong, unifying and binding community-based regulatory system, as evidenced by socialisation institutions, informal restorative justice programmes and 'collective sentiments' (norms, values, laws, and customs).

Granted, the problem of illicit drug use has been in existence for centuries and a common practice in most ancient cultures and civilisations, but its attendant negative effects were insignificant compared to the current situation. Indeed, there is a high degree of persistence in drug culture in present-day society. This complex problem manifests in so many diverse forms, one being that its current pervasive influence is universal and destructive, cutting across cultures, gender and social class. Kelly and Clarke (2003) acknowledged the fact that there is a strong relationship between drug use and antisocial conducts, and that the problem cuts across culture, class and gender lines. Information elicited from the repositories of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reveals that drug use is a universal problem—that is—it is not limited to geographic boundaries (UNODC, 2007; Atkinson, McCurdy, Williams, Mbwambo, & Kilonzo, 2011).

There has been a significant increase in drug use worldwide, and risk factors associated with it are detrimental not only to the users, but also their families and the larger society. No society—whether urban or rural, developed or developing—is free; all are affected by one drug problem or another, with the youth population leading in this unhealthy behaviour. Kelly and Clarke (2003) contended that

drugs and illegal activities associated with their use are the cornerstones of youth misconducts in society. In the same way, Weisheit (1993) explained that urban areas are beset by drug-dealing gangs, and drug users engage in crime to support their drug habits and involvement in alcohol-related violence. The rural areas are important staging centres for the shipment of drugs and are often the production sites for synthetic drugs and marijuana farming (see also Siegel, 2008). The incidence of drug use has continued to be major risk behaviour across the globe. The abusers, who are mainly youths, suffer from physical (i.e. social, legal, economic, and psychological problems) to mental health complications (Mamman, Othman, & Lian, 2014).

Although drug problems are much felt in developing countries, their control is difficult even in advanced nations (UNODC, 2012). Nevertheless, the problem is particularly overwhelming in developing countries owing to myriads of associated social problems, reason being that health facilities are not equally distributed across nations (Obot, 2012; Abasiubong *et al*., 2012). Admittedly, the attendant effect of substance use may be more pronounced and devastating in developing countries like Nigeria due to poor healthcare delivery and uneven distribution of health facilities for the treatment of drug cases. However, it must be pointed out that this idea is not the only or main cause of the problem; hence, the major cause of substance use (i.e. dysfunctional drug policy and regulation) in the country seems to have largely been ignored. The predictor(s) of substance abuse and its resultant multiplicity of social problems are, without doubt, basically linked to the glaring inadequacies and weaknesses

observed in the existing drug policies and responses. Drug laws in Nigeria have limited application; for instance, both extant laws and current regulations on drugs are primarily, if not solely, focusing on drug trafficking/peddling and traffickers/peddlers (Iwarimie-Jaja, 2003; Igbo, 2007).

Clearly, much has been written on different drug policies, responses, treatment and care and many more are still coming up from national and international governments through their security, justice and correctional institutions. Despite punitive measures adopted by these agencies in curbing drug use and the public outcry against this social problem, particularly in Nigeria, there is still increasing violation of the act by individuals and groups, especially the youth population. This calls for an alternative remedy, an additional policy or response that are community-based to support the existing measures so as to effectively deal with this social malaise bedeviling human society. The justification is that most drug offences are committed in the community, so addressing the core of the problem from and/or where it originated will make for a serious reduction in the victims, offence and offenders. The subjecting argument, which becomes the thrust of this paper, is to initiate a critical discourse on the application of restorative justice by both the formal and informal agencies/agents of social control in combating substance use in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Drug/Substance use is a complex problem, which presents as a common characteristic of modern societies. In essence, as implicated in the nature and extent of drug problems across the globe, a methodical theory deconstruction is

required to account for the spate of this social problem in contemporary society. This therefore evokes the urgency for integrating social control and re-integrative shaming theories to build a strong theoretical framework that stands to elucidate the problem of drugs. Drawing inspirations from Walter Reckless' control theory, Travis Hirschi propounded social bond theory in 1969 to account for the prevalence of social problem in human society.

The central question posed by this theory is: 'why do people obey the law instead of otherwise'? In other words, as applied in this paper, why do people engage/persist in substance use instead of desisting or aging out? Hirschi (1969) responded that, it amounts to exercise in futility to continue to identify what pushes or pulls people to engage in antisocial behaviour (like illicit drug use). This is because human beings are inclined to violate laws, especially if and/or when such conduct norms have not been socially and morally instilled into them as part of the legal and moral code of conduct and socialisation processes of their society. Applying social bond theory to the subject of discussion, it is clear that people use and experiment with illicit drugs, perfect in using or abusing them and even get addicted to the act when their social bond to the society is or has been broken, weakened, or absent.

Social bond theory is anchored in four basic principles: attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. These four variables are determinants of substance use and, on the other hand, insulators from/against this aberrant behaviour. That is to say, the motivation for drug use is dependent upon the level and type (whether prosocial or antisocial) of attachment, commitment, involvement and belief an individual ascribes or subscribes

to his/her familial and societal values. The proponent of this theory explained the four variables thus: "elements of social bonding which include *attachment* to families, *commitment* to social norms and institutions (e.g. school, places of work and worship), *involvement* in prosocial activities, and the *belief* that these things are important" (Hirschi, 1969, p. 16). From the theory, the strength and durability of an individual's bonds or commitments to conventional culture (not drug [sub]culture) in society inhibit social deviance, delinquency, crime, and other morally and socially abhorred acts like drug abuse (see also Hirschi, 1969; Simpson, 1976).

Still on this, Siegel and McCormick (2006) indirectly accentuated the importance of Hirschi's four elements of social bonds in explaining the burgeoning trends in drug use in society. They provided insightful promise and strong foundation upon which the vexed issue of substance use in Nigeria, as in most societies of the world, can best be understood and explained for consequent policy development and implementation. Firstly, individuals' positive *attachment* to people from within or outside their families and immediate environment promotes sanity and conformity. Secondly, sincere *commitment* to productive activities is a safety valve that guards against offending. Thirdly, *involvement* entails activities that serve to further the bond of individual to others and leave limited time to become involved in deviant, criminal activities. The fourth and last variable is the *belief* in wider societal norms and values, which checks and balances human conducts. In summary, Siegel and his associates believed that these four aspects of social bond are control mechanisms which

interact with one another to protect an individual from engaging in antisocial behaviour (drug use), or being attached to law violators (drug users).

Following from these, it is clear from the predictions of social bond theory that the predictors of drug use are essentially influenced and determined by people's attitudes towards the Hirschi's (1969) four explanatory 'crime-causative-prevention/control' variables. That is, the strength of people's social bonds is a determinant of the type of life (prosocial or antisocial) they (will) live. The tendency of individuals' involvement in drug offences tends to decrease or weaken if the level and nature of their attachment, commitment, involvement and belief in prosocial community events is high. Even when the social bonds are available and strong, some members of the society will still require capable guardians to direct them, or else they will be attracted to use drug or get involved in socially and morally unacceptable drug-related activities. Therefore, the ideals of social bonds should be inculcated and internalised through quality 'social osmosis' (constant, intensive, and heuristic psychosocial learning). With this, societal members can acquire and build strong social control traits and thoughts that could go a long way in deterring them from using drug. This is believed to be more effective and sustained, since the basic assumptions of social bonds theory are intertwined with the dynamics of restorative justice.

Having discussed social bond theory and its relevance to the study of drug use in some depth, it becomes necessary to introduce re-integrative shaming theory in order to build a robust integrated theoretical framework that has direct bearing and impact on the subject under investigation. This theory also complements the basic tenets of social bonds theory, as it directs the path to a holistic analysis of restorative justice models as suitable framework for responding to the problem of substance use. Re-integrative shaming theory was propounded by John Braithwaite in 1989. According to Braithwaite (1989), re-integrative shaming only takes place when people's antisocial behaviour is condemned, but their self-esteem and confidence are upheld through positive comments about them and gestures of forgiveness and re-acceptance. The proponent of this theory strongly opposed the idea of disintegrative or stigmatic shaming, warning that it may not yield positive and important results in restoring justice and social harmony. This theorist added that victims and some of their supporters, offenders and some of their supporters, and other concerned community members appear before an experienced community facilitator to discuss the incident and what should be done about it (Braithwaite, 2001; Braithwaite, 2002).

The implication of the preceding argument is that the issue of substance use can be successfully tackled without recourse to official involvement of narcotics agents or any other arm of the conventional criminal justice system. Rather, it is better addressed at the community level where the act is said have taken place. Following Braithwaite (1989), Yekini and Salisu (2013) asserted that, when members of the community are the primary controllers of crime (drug use) through active participation in shaming offenders (drug users) and, having shamed them through concerted participation in ways of reintegrating the offender back into the community of law abiding citizens, crime

(illicit substance use) is best controlled. Low crime societies, these authors further argued, are societies where communities prefer to handle their own crime problems rather than handing them over to professionals in the traditional criminal justice system. Similarly, Nnam (2016b) posited that the outcome of re-integrative shaming, as a social gesture of restorative justice mechanisms, is bound to be a reflective of public policy, interest and safety, especially when influential and people of high moral rectitude in the community (including victims' and offenders' family members) actively participate in the restoration process or exercise.

For clarity of purpose, Nnam (2016b) defined the concept of shaming as a successful attempt to make or direct law violators in a humane manner to show remorse, imbibe attitudinal change and make up for their antisocial behaviour as a way of restoring justice, law and order in the community. He further explained that the process of shaming offenders or law violators (i.e. substance users) does not entail exclusion, humiliation and stigmatisation as the name implies. Rather, the community, through its justice facilitators, not only punctiliously 'shamed' (corrected) the antisocial behaviour of people but also follow them up to guarantee their proper re-integration and necessary aftercare services. Implicitly supporting re-integrative shaming, Hirschi (1969) and other advocates of social bond theory like Whitehead and Lab (2012) provided a convincing explanation to substance use when they maintained that, when the social bonds to society are strong, they (social bonds) prevent or limit crime (drug use). But when the social bonds are weak, they increase the probability of deviance and crime. Although this causal

relationship is self-evident and quite direct and simple to comprehend, the underlying principles of this theory emphasize that there is a significant relationship between attitudes and behaviour. This is where the two theories formed a correlate and synergy to account for community responses to the rapidly increasing rate of drug use in both rural and urban communities in Nigeria; hence, the primary reason for their integration.

ROLE OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF DRUG/SUBSTANCE USE

When a crime is committed, the scale of justice cannot weigh equal again except justice is restored. The scale must be balanced, but should be carefully done through a humanistic and constructive legal approach to avoid causing further harms and injustices, or even escalating or exacerbating the cause(s) of the original criminal behaviour. Among modern approaches to handling social problems in a democratic society, restorative justice programmes seem to be more advantageous. Particularly, when it comes to the issue of drug use and its related problems, this model appears to be making more headway compared to other interventions and policy development. Known by many terms or concepts, among which are, "'communitarian justice', 'making amends', 'positive justice', 'relational justice', 'reparative justice', and 'community justice'" (Miers, 2001, p. 88), facilitators and agents of social control apply the social democratic principles and practices offered by restorative justice to systematically balance the scale of justice that was made uneven by drug use and users.

The 2006 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report shows that restorative justice is a way of responding to criminal behaviour by balancing the needs of the community, the victims and the offenders. It is an evolving concept that has given rise to different interpretation in different countries, one around which there is not always a perfect consensus. Also, because of the difficulties in precisely translating the concept into different languages, a variety of terminologies are often used (UNODC, 2006). Restorative justice has been an important approach to understanding offending behaviours (like substance use) in recent years. Yet there are so many diverse programmes which are described as 'restorative' that there is still no single definition of what constitutes restorative justice (Presser, & Voorhis, 2002). In a laconic manner, another criminologist attested that the concept of restorative justice "is often hard to define because it encompasses a variety of programmes and practices (Siegel, 2008, p. 189).

Even at that, Zehr (2002), like other ardent supporters of this ideology (Karp, & Breslin, 2001; Elechi, 2006; UNODC, 2006; Okwendi, & Nwankwoala, 2014; Nnam, 2016b), averred that restorative justice requires that society addresses victim's harms and needs, holds offenders accountable to put right those harms, and involves victims, offenders, and communities in the process of healing. No wonder Siegel (2008) defined restorative justice as a process of using humanistic, non-punitive strategies to right wrongs and restore social harmony, and that it has grown out of a belief that the traditional justice system has done little to involve the community in the process of dealing with crime and wrongdoing (including drug use).

Over the years, studies and war on drugs have been centred upon punitive measures, and growing emphasis is on the policy or idea of 'getting tough on drugs'. Yet no real and significant result has been achieved using these procedures. The global debate over the legalisation of drugs and the control of alcohol has greatly favoured the apologists of criminalisation philosophy. This has regrettably exacerbated the situation as the incidence of substance abuse is currently soaring like the eagle, thereby casting aspersions on the strengths and usefulness of State narcotics agents/agencies in particular and allied institutions in general. Stevenson (2011, p. 2) suggested that the "criminalisation of improper drug use has resulted in increased use of harsh, punitive sanctions imposed on drug offenders and dramatic increase in the rate of incarceration. These policies have had limited impact on eliminating or reducing illegal drug use and may have resulted in adverse consequences for social and community health".

Moreover, Stevenson (2011) stated that the criminal justice system has proved to be an ineffective forum for managing or controlling many aspects of drug trade and the problem of illegal drug use. In recent years, some progress has been reported when governing bodies have managed drug use and addiction as a public health problem which requires treatment, counselling and medical interventions rather than incarceration. Stevenson (2011) was indirectly referring to the constructs and dictates of restorative justice when he made this statement. Given the far-reaching success in most countries of the world (such as US, Britain, etc), and particularly the impact and role of the age-long informal 'restorative justice' initiatives in

most Africa societies (like Nigeria) in ensuring conformity and public safety, this approach undoubtedly holds great promise for maximum reduction in substance use and other related offences if timely and objectively applied in Nigeria. Elechi (2006) agreed that restorative justice programmes exist in most African traditional societies like Afikpo community, and are more effective and legitimate in conflict resolution, justice and drug control. Like most African societies, Afikpo indigenous justice system employs restorative, transformative and communicative principles in conflict resolution and addressing societal problems like drug use.

Restorative justice is one of the global philosophies of modern 'punishment' (treatment) in penology that are seriously struggling to gain currency in terms of official attention, recognition and dominance in the sphere of criminal justice administration. It is a non-punitive and humanistic approach employed at the community level to restore social justice, and enforce and maintain law and order in society (Nnam, 2016b). The traditional criminal justice system almost always advocates strict adherence to the idea that 'tough on drugs' involves an effective system of coerciveness, punishment, custody and imprisonment and, that, this alone would address the problem of drug use. As reported by Downen (2011) and Nnam (2016b), the standing belief by crime fighters and some members of the public was that the punitive aspects of imprisonment would deter further crime and effectively hold offenders accountable for their decision to commit crime.

Although there is little literature directly connecting restorative justice with prevention of alcohol and other drug problems, circumstantial evidence for the preventive potential of these practices abound. For instance, risk factors diminish as a result of restorative practices, and protective factors increase (Page, 2013). Again, huge success has been recorded in the use of this alternative penological ideology in reducing the menace of substance use and its concomitant problems to the barest minimum. Alluding to the view of Siegel (2008), the researcher explained that many schools and communities in the United States, for instance, have come to realise the importance of restorative justice techniques in dealing with students who are involved in drug and alcohol use without resorting to such more harsh and coercive punishment measures as outright rustication, suspension, or handing them over to the formal criminal justice system for processing.

Experts' opinions attest that some schools are now trying to involve students in 'relational rehabilitation' (an integral aspect of restorative justice) programmes that strive to improve individuals' relationships with key figures in the community who may have been harmed by their actions (Karp, & Breslin, 2001; Siegel, 2008). For restorative justice practices to succeed in tackling drug offences, Morozini (2011) insisted that they should be based on the following premises:

The drug 'offenders' should not be called as such, but should be recognised as human beings, worthy of respect and as vulnerable parts of the society, who need empowerment through treatment, through the interaction with drug users and non-drug users and, above all, who need acceptance. State actors, the whole community, counsellors, doctors, families should unite and form units

of dialogue, understanding, where all the people affected by drug use will be able to share stories, talk about their experiences and reintegrate in society through activities, job training and team projects. In this way, there would be an obvious effort for a repair of the harm, but between victims and not by placing offenders and victims in clearly distinguished adversary camps. In other words, everyone will work in its own way and together with others towards the repair of the harm, without stigmatising drug users as criminals (Morozini, 2011, n. p.).

In relation to the prevention and control of drug use, restorative justice can assume many dimensions, but two are outstanding: (1) healing and peace circles and (2) family and community group conferencing. Braithwaite (2001) illustrated that the healing process might contribute to the treatment of drug use because it can deliver the love and care to motivate holistic change in a life. Restorative justice is about repairing injustice, and there are important ways that drug use is implicated in the generation of injustice. Braithwaite (2001) made these two illustrations to substantiate his argument. Firstly, a restorative justice approach to substance abuse can catalyse confrontation of a profound community injustice. Secondly, confronting injustice can help tackle substance abuse. The import is that drug offenders are not treated with unnecessary leniency; their act is actually condemned and disciplinary, correctional treatments (not punishment) are usually applied during family and community group conferencing. It follows that a strong but constructive condemnation of drug use (not

the user) is an indispensable tool that should be extensively used in the course of justice restoration.

The art of healing and conferencing are major justice restoration dynamics for tackling drug use. These models, together with other psycho-socio-legal therapeutics, make for a far-reaching success in healing the harm caused by drug users and ultimately restore peace and social order. Several reports of restorative conferences show that, victims (of theft) bearing the burden of injustice out of love for the offender, offering support from one friend or family member to another, moved substance abusers to want to be part of healing the relationships (Braithwaite, 2001). Braithwaite and other avid supporters of conferencing as a principle of restorative justice maintained that, because substance users routinely steal from loved ones and friends who protect them by declining to lodge complaints and because users often suffer unacknowledged shame for putting their loved ones in this position, restorative justice programmes outside the State criminal justice system can provide an opportunity for these hurts to be healed. The hope is that the process of confronting hurts and acknowledging shame to loved ones who care about will motivate a commitment to rehabilitation in a way that meetings with more unfamiliar victims would not. The love-empathy paradigm is greater in restorative justice conferences than in court cases, and empathy predicts success in restorative justice processes (Maxwell, & Morris, 1999; Ahmed, Harris, Braithwaite, & Braithwaite, 2001).

The family is the first and primary agent of socialisation and, as a result, the most influential and effective agent of social control across cultures. It is therefore, the

best staging point and springboard for the promotion of restorative justice practices. Restorative justice practitioners/administrators/facilitators are much aware that most societies of the world, especially in Nigeria where extended family and lineage/descent system is practiced, no family members would want to bring shame to his or her family or community because of the cultural values placed on individual's conduct. While maintaining bonds of respect (this further supports social bond theory), family life teaches us that shaming (i.e. referring to re-integrative shaming theory), as well as 'punishment' (corrections and rehabilitation) is possible. This attests to the fact that a properly understood re-integrative shaming by both participants and observers is vital to the success of restorative justice (Braithwaite, 1989; Braithwaite, & Braithwaite, 2001; Okwendi, & Nwankwoala, 2014). That is, it strives to bring back social harmony and reestablish justice and order which were previously harmed or strained by substance use. This notion is a clear reassertion and further validation of the adoption and application of social bond and re-integrative shaming theories which we coalesced to form a suitable integrated theoretical framework for examining the causes, effects and control of improper drug use and its attendant social problems.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Restorative justice initiatives have been widely and officially used in (re) solving crime and drug problems in many societies of the world, excluding Nigeria. Rather, ours is a society where this forward-looking emerging policy option is applied only in an informal context to right wrongs, mend fences, and curtail deviance, delinquency and crime. The Nigerian government and its drug policymakers and fighters should, as a matter of urgency and necessity, consider the paramount importance of restorative justice in the fight against substance use. This programme may not actually end the war on drugs, but certainly will go a long way in reducing the menace to the barest minimum. This is because most Nigerian communities still, to a large extent, retain their strong collective sentiments and informal criminal justice system, including old models of indigenous restorative justice and other native, local social control and regulatory agencies

Of course, restorative justice philosophy as a humanistic, treatment-oriented (not coercive or custodian punishment) and community-based socio-legal approach holds good promise since most drug and alcohol problems originate from the community where users are also members. Here, justice restoration and maintenance of social order and harmony are not only possible but also faster at the community level where the primary, secondary and vicarious victims of substance abuse are residing and, sometimes, even belong to the same primary group—whether nuclear or extended. This emerging global best practice is emphatic and realistic and consequently stands to make a sweeping change and therefore success in the war against substance use and users. This becomes realisable only if it is formally adopted and widely implemented by both the State and non-State actors because it is geared towards ensuring a near drug-free society (a complete drug-free society is utopia).

The universal application/adoption of restorative justice programmes is, among other interventions or policies, a strong driving force and construct for achieving the long sought for drugs-source-control and treatment plans.

The idea of using the conventional criminal justice procedures as a leading or sole strategy for fighting illicit drug use has not yield much positive result in Nigeria. The disconcerting changing patterns of drug use that is pervasive in our local communities and neighbourhoods is a testament to the futility of rigidly holding, depending or applying punitive policies and reactions to drug problems in the country. Even at that, many people, particularly the youth still persist in the act, refusing to accept desistance from and aging out of drugs, irrespective of the dangers and risk factors of this social pathology. The use of State social control actors does not help matters since most incidents of drug use take place in the local communities. An alternative intervention is necessary to stem the tide. The alternative is to promote a unifying and binding restorative justice as a plausible, reliable and accurate scale-of-justice-balancing measure that can direct the path to effective drug policy and control.

The theoretical framework provided a strong basis for grappling with the predictors of substance use. There is a strong relationship between the four identified interrelated elements of Hirschi's (1969) social bond theory and drug culture in Nigeria. A breakdown in one or more of these bonds or a total absence of them may predispose affected individuals to pursue activities, such as drug use, which are harmful to the growth and development of society. For instance, if an individual ceases to engage in prosocial activities, and maintains a criminogenic contact and network (i.e. negative involvement and attachment) with other individuals of antisocial background and belief, such a person may, over time, be exposed to or induced by opportunities and other intervening variables to indulge in substance use and associated problems. In a similar way, the strengths and usefulness of reintegrative shaming theory in explaining the growing incidence of substance use is discussed at length in relation to restorative justice models. Of great essence here is the message that, drug use instead of the users should be condemned. The perpetrators are not in any way to be rejected, eliminated or incarcerated, but rather should be reconciled with their individual victims, their families and community as vicarious victims.

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