

THE ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN CURBING DRUG ABUSE AMONG ADOLESCENT BOYS IN NIGERIA: A THEORETICAL EXAMINATION

OKOGWU, FLORA I.

Ebonyi State University Library, Abakaliki

Email: floraokogwu@gmail.com

Phone Number: 08033227155

Abstract

This study examines the role of libraries in curbing drug abuse among adolescent boys in Nigeria. The study discovered that substance abuse is on the increase. It is one of the major social problems plaguing Nigerian society. Although different classes of people are getting involved in the despicable act of drug abuse, the trend is disturbingly high among adolescent boys. The chronological age and other peculiarities associated with adolescence predispose this category of youths to experiment with mood-altering substances as recourse to ease off the unavoidable stresses and strains of life. The findings dovetail with the basic assumptions of Social Learning theory, which formed the theoretical framework to this study. That is, adolescent boys are easily swayed by the destructive influence of media advertisements, peer influence and pressure, and indeed, antisocial adults who they see as role models. The period of adolescence is characterised by a high propensity to make amorous advances towards the opposite sex which some boys believe that can be achieved under the influence of psychoactive substances. The study recommends that stakeholders on youth development and empowerment should organise regular intervention programmes with adolescents in their various schools and communities so as to sensitise them on the dangers of drug abuse, and how to stay away from illicit drug culture. Adolescents should be properly guided and encouraged to spend a great deal of their time in libraries studying to keep abreast of current trends in the vexed issue of substance abuse.

Keywords: Adolescent Boys, Curbing, Drug Abuse, Libraries, Role, Theoretical Examination

Introduction

The history of drug or substance abuse is of ancient origin. As evidence, the Holy Scripture (Genesis, 9: 20) reveals that Noah harvested his vine grapes, brewed it, drank of it, became inebriated and lay uncovered in his tent. Consequently, Noah the farmer had carnal knowledge of his daughter under the disastrous influence of a natural fruit he harvested in his vineyard. This development implies that our antecedents extracted,

brewed and experimented with plants, fruits, nuts, roots and herbs they considered intoxicating, edible and medicinal. The consequent use of this substance leads to abuse owing to the fact that it was taken without pharmacological and conventional processes, prescription and dosage.

By-products of these natural properties, which become psychoactive drugs, were institutionalized in many African societies by our remote ancestors and handed down from one generation to another in a manner such that this phenomenon becomes an integral part of African culture. For instance, though not in all African cultures, palm wine of all kinds were and are still freely served to every initiated male child during socio-cultural events such as traditional marriages, funeral rites, and initiation and naming ceremonies. Based on this, Kerachio (1994) states that the increase in drug abuse among young people incorporates all levels, and what began as the use of drugs in African traditional society for social relaxation evolved over time into a problem of abuse and dependence, and is of great concern in our present-day society.

At this juncture, the definition of drug or substance abuse becomes imperative as it will help to fill a void in the existing body of knowledge and literature and, more importantly, enables us to keep the study in perspective for in-depth understanding of this social problem. Fayombo (1998) defines drug abuse as the use of mood-modifying substances illegally, excessively and in a socially unacceptable manner. The drugs range from those that should not even be taken without medical prescription such as cocaine, amphetamine, heroine, marijuana, LSD 25 to the socially acceptable beverages such as tobacco, whisky, local gin, beer and other alcoholic drinks. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2000), the definition of drug abuse incorporates one or more of the following: recurrent drug use, resulting in a failure to fulfil major responsibilities at work, school, or home; recurrent drug use in situations in which it is physically hazardous, such as before or while driving a car; recurrent drug-related problems; and continued drug use despite persistent social or interpersonal problems caused or exacerbated by the effects of the drug. Afolayan and Afolayan (2010) conceive drug abuse as the taking of drugs or a deliberate use of drugs for purposes other than its intended purpose without the supervision of a physician or a medical practitioner. In this study, drug abuse refers to the intake of mood-altering substances in a manner that is considered socially, morally, psychologically, economically and medically unacceptable with far-reaching negative effects on individual abusers, their family and society at large.

Accordingly, information is pivotal to the overall social and educational upbringing of children in the world over. To this end in view, libraries are established within and outside the school environment to provide a wide range of information on topical issues like drug abuse. People may need to insulate themselves from getting involved in illicit drug culture by making proper use of libraries. Of all the information sources, according to Okogwu and Nnam (2013) and Nnam (2013) the library is exceptional. It is an indispensable information-seeking centre established virtually in all institutions of learning of the society for the provision of knowledge on certain sensitive issues (such as substance abuse). Lancaster (2003) maintains that people generally see libraries as familiar, accessible and reliable source of information that exposes the evil

effects of drug problem, and how to guide and guard them from tasting and experimenting illicit drugs. Based on this background information, the study sets out to examine the role of libraries in curbing drug/substance abuse among adolescent boys in Nigeria.

Adolescence has been widely acknowledged by scholars across the globe to be a period of curiosity, innovation, agility and assiduity in the industry. It, thus, follows that adolescent boys are catalysts for social engineering, political reconstruction and national development. Nonetheless, these ideals expected of our young boys have been thwarted and supplanted by illicit drug use and abuse. These virile boys are no longer a unifying force in achieving these lofty dreams but rather street urchins, autistic youngsters in the asylum (mental hospital) and insane criminals on committal (prisons). As Otu (1995) rightly argues, Nigerian hospitals, correctional institutions and streets are now flooded with victims (mainly adolescents) of drug abuse. We can no longer sympathise with the degree of emotions for the insane on the street and psychiatric patients in diverse hospitals in the country, because one cannot easily differentiate between those of 'natural' occurrence and that of drug-related.

Like in many developing countries of the world, adolescent boys in Nigeria abuse various kinds of drugs over time. The consequences of this drug culture on their social, psychological, medical and economic well-being are devastating. For instance, Amosun *et al.* (2010) report that the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency in 1992 collected drug use and abuse data from schools, records of patients admitted at mental health institutions for drug related problems and interview of persons arrested for drug offences. The findings of their study revealed that youths constitute the high-risk-group for drug trafficking and abuse. Friends and schoolmates account for about 90% of the source of influence of the use and abuse of different psychoactive substances. Similarly, alcohol and cigarette are legal substances, which cause physical damage to human bodies. These substances are also said to be 'getaway drugs' to other more potent drugs like heroin and cocaine.

The problem of drug abuse is so grave that, though it was originally conceived as the problem of a 'select few, it has extended beyond the usual characteristics of abusers being male, adult and urban-based people to now include female, youngsters, and rural dwellers. These abusers erroneously believe that drugs enhance their performance and put them in good mood. The accompanying problems of this act constitute a major threat to the well-being of the society (Ajala, 2009). Be that as it may, concerted efforts have been made by scores of scholars in different professions, researchers, counsellors and medical practitioners, formal and informal agents of social control, and all levels of government to combat drug abuse among teenagers. Despite the general outcry against drug abuse and the existing stiffer punishment meted out to offenders (drug abusers) in Nigeria, this social problem continues unabated. The central problem confronting this study, therefore, is to shift our attention from the conventional ways of preventing and controlling drug abuse in the country. Against this backdrop, the study explores the indispensable role of libraries in curbing drug abuse among adolescent boys in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The study uses basic assumptions of social learning theory as a springboard for explaining the issue of drug abuse among adolescent boys in Nigeria. This psycho-social approach to the study of substance abuse explores the prevailing social processes and psychological arrangements underlying adolescent stage. At issue here is to theoretically examine the concomitant effects of children who were not properly socialised to moderate their antisocial and 'criminogenic' tendencies before and upon adulthood, to assess the symbiotic relationship between imitation/emulation and the onset of substance abuse and its trajectories. Delinquent behaviour like substance abuse is structured and patterned along the same psycho-social learning processes all non-delinquent behaviour assumes. Banduras (1979) reiterates that children (adolescents) learn how to behave by modeling their behaviour after that of others, especially those people they see as role models. Behaviour is socially transmitted through examples that come from the intimate personal groups such as family, subculture, and mass media.

Substance abuse among adolescent boys is always a social experience and a learning behaviour. This is because one of the fundamental psychological phenomena observed during adolescent period is experimentation and testing of different kinds of 'things', which include illicit drugs use with its subsequent abuse (see Swaid, 1988). Other studies indicate that substance abuse may result from observing parental drug use. Parental drug abuse have a damaging effect on children as young as two years old, especially when parents manifest drug-related personality problems such as depression or poor impulse control (Brook & Tseng, 1996; Wills *et al.*, 1996). It then goes without saying that human behaviour, criminal or non-criminal, is considered acceptable and thus imitated and emulated when it is reinforced/rewarded, or abandoned when it is sanctioned/punished. On that score, coupled with their chronological age which is characterised by curiosity and experimentation, adolescent boys tend to abuse drugs believing it is an acceptable act since such behavioural pattern comes from the significant others (parents, older siblings, role models, celebrities, etc) or from their highly revered peers. Little wonder therefore that children whose parents abuse drugs are more likely to have persistent abuse than children of non-abusers.

Research suggests that youngsters often learn how to use and abuse drugs by watching friends and elders committing this act, as well as submitting totally to media advertisements on drugs. For instance, children from homes where parents abuse drugs tend to imitate or learn the behaviour of such parents by resorting to illegal drug intake (see Pudo, 1998 cited in Ngesu *et al.*, 2008). One study of drug abusers conducted in five large United States cities found a significant association between drug abuse and learning process. About 53 percent of drug abusers and 37 percent of alcohol abusers have at least one serious mental illness; all these were caused by observing parental drug use. Another study on social psychology of drug abuse also suggests that children whose parents abuse drugs are more likely to have persistent abuse problem more than children of non-abusers (Wills *et al.*, 1996).

Underlying Causes of Drug Abuse among Adolescent Boys in Nigeria

Drug/substance abuse is one of the major social problems plaguing Nigerian society. Although different classes of people are getting involved in the despicable act of drug abuse, the trend is disturbingly high among adolescent boys owing to their chronological age and other peculiarities associated with adolescence: curiosity, experimentation, ego identity, and youthful exuberance and bravado. Adolescent stage falls within secondary school age, and this stage in human growth and development is characterised by bizarre risk-taking and the propensity to make amorous advances towards the opposite sex, which they believe that can be achieved under the influence of mood-altering substances. Most of these students are so gullible and naive that they are easily swayed by the advertorial culture of alcohol and tobacco consumption widely promoted and rewarded on the Television, Radio, and other electronic and print media by different companies using world renowned personalities and celebrities. Again, adolescent boys are easily tainted by peer influence and pressure, and may take directives from some drug abusers who they see as 'role models'.

Supporting the above viewpoint, Hope Networks (2005) reports that some parents are themselves drug addicts. Therefore, the chances of children of alcoholic parents becoming alcoholics themselves late in life is 50%, and parents who are drug abusers found it difficult to caution their children on the adverse effects of drug abuse since they are not good role models. Meeks *et al.* (2006) explain that certain individuals may inherit a genetic predisposition to drug abuse. A genetic predisposition is the inheritance of genes that increase the likelihood of developing a certain condition, say the tendency to abuse drugs. Children born to parents who have history of alcoholism are more likely to be alcoholics than those born to non-alcoholic parents. Corroborating the views of these scholars, the researcher includes the following risk factors as underlying causes of drug abuse among adolescent boys in Nigeria: having friends and role models who take to drugs, easy access to illicit drugs, living in a deviant neighbourhood, attending school where drugs are peddled, poor academic performance, lack of information and poor attitude of adolescents towards library-use, broken home, improper socialisation, and belonging to a sub cultural gang or cult group.

Similarly, the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (2002) affirms that belonging to a peer group or family that accepts or rewards drugs use is a significant risk factor for young people trying illicit drugs. The findings of Insel and Roth's (2006) study dovetail with the report of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (2004), which reveals that 20% of youngsters had used drugs with their parents, usually before the age of 18. Chaotic home environments, dysfunctional families, and parental substance abuse also increase the risk of drug abuse. Children with no parental monitoring after school are more likely to try illicit drugs than those with regular adult supervision. Although some people use drugs because they have a desire to alter their mood or are seeking a spiritual experience, others are motivated primarily by a desire to escape boredom, anxiety, depression, feelings of worthlessness, or other distressing symptoms of psychological problems. They use drugs as a way of coping with the difficulties they are experiencing in life.

Adolescence is a period of unnecessary inquisition (curiosity), trial and error (experimentation), unreasonable risk-taking and abysmal adventure. These deviant tendencies are almost always within a given subculture, and are pervasive in peer group setting and informal social interactions. The interest and expectations of peer groups are major determinants of whether or not an adolescent will abuse drugs, or to recluse. Peers and schoolmates, to a large extent, provide pieces of information for colleagues on the availability of drugs, their usage and dosage, mode of administration, and resultant effects when taking. Fantino (2002) admits that peer pressure all over the world plays a major role in drug abuse, especially among adolescent boys. This is because every adolescent wants to belong and therefore resorts to experimenting with drugs, and ultimately progresses to more intense and habitual user. This regrettable act is more common in secondary and institutions of higher learning where peer group pressure and corruptive influence of adults who are already substance abusers, account for why adolescent youths initiate one another into the subculture of substance abuse.

Libraries as Panacea for Drug Abuse among Adolescent Boys in Nigeria

The role of libraries encompasses social, psychological, political, religious, recreational, pecuniary, academic and medical aspects of human endeavours. Specifically, libraries have made substantial contributions to the fight against drug/substance abuse. It has in its repositories some useful information that can lower the risk of drug abuse, paves way for sobriety, and even encourages teetotalism. Library-information materials come in hard copies, audio, visual and electronic forms. It is not surprising that Anasi (2010) submits that libraries are positioned as hubs for formal and informal learning. School libraries, academic libraries, and public libraries support the education of youngsters. Information obtained from libraries can change the behaviour, attitudes, and mindset of young people on substance abuse. Admittedly, libraries are not just reading rooms; they are also information and research centres on topical issues that affect humanity like the problem of substance abuse.

Arguably, libraries provide detailed information about the dangers of drug abuse. Libraries serve as both overt and covert recreational facility where the stresses and strains associated with adolescence can be eased off without resorting to unconventional drug intake. Thus, making proper use of libraries diminishes the likelihood of disruptive influence of peers. Adolescent reading culture will rather broaden their horizons on how to cope with challenges and inexorable vicissitudes of life. Adolescent boys are the high risk population for substance abuse with its resultant social and health problems. Libraries, then, especially the school libraries play a pivotal role in educating students about the disastrous effects of drug abuse. Elegbeleye (2005) observes that recreational facilities like library provide a leeway for students to let off steam and become less stressed. This is because stress always precipitates a feeling of frustration in adolescents, a development that is more likely to predispose them to take recourse to drugs

Library is a great melting pot. It is where vital information and relevant ideas are stored and retrieved for the purpose of shaping and directing adolescents' social consciousness and expanding their horizons on the negative implications of indulging in

substance abuse. By implication, the fight against drug abuse will remain a continual futile effort and elusive except the indispensable role of library as a powerful agent of social control is accorded its rightful position in the onerous task of crime prevention and control in Nigeria. It therefore makes sense to allude to the popular saying that 'if a man is not informed, he will be deformed and if he is deformed, he will not perform'. Implicitly, most of the adolescents that abused drugs do so as a result of ignorance, lack of knowledge. People can inadvertently abuse drugs, but cannot be spared of their harmful effects. Ifidon and Ahiazu (2006) suggest that information is structured data that cause human mind to change its opinion about the current state of real world and contribute to a reduction in the uncertainty of the state of the system. No wonder Sokari (2006) argues that information is necessary for people to be free from the shackles of ignorance, misconceptions, economic stagnation, social unrest, political instability (and substance abuse).

Conclusion

From the foregoing theoretical examination, the role of libraries in curbing drug/substance abuse among adolescent boys in Nigeria has been critically examined. The study made insightful findings in relation to the basic assumptions of the social learning theory which formed the theoretical framework. For instance, the social learning theory stressed that adolescents often learn how to use and abuse drugs under the sway and influence of friends, elders and parents who they see as 'role models' and the significant others as well as submitting totally to media advertisements on drugs. It is on this premise that the study concludes that human behaviour, delinquent and non-delinquent, is learned, imitated, perfected on 'emulation', and acted out when it is rewarded/reinforced or abandoned when it is punished/sanctioned. In other words, drug abuse is structured or patterned along the same psycho-social processes all non-delinquent behaviour assumes.

The role of libraries in curbing drug abuse is legion; it cannot be articulated in a single document. Libraries are repositories of detail information that can lower adolescents' chances of falling prey to drug abuse, pave way for sobriety, and even encourage total abstinence. The use of libraries at regular interval can insulate adolescent boys from the negative influence of peers, and indeed, broaden their horizons on ideal measures for coping with stress, frustration, and stresses and strains of social life.

Recommendations

In the light of the forging, the study made the following recommendations:

- Stakeholders on youth development and empowerment as well as counsellors should organise regular intervention programmes and interactive sessions with adolescents in their various schools and communities with a view to sensitizing them on the dangers of substance abuse, and how to avoid falling prey.
- Adolescents should be properly guided and encouraged to spend a great deal of their time in libraries studying to enable them keep abreast of current trend in the vexed issue of substance abuse.

- Like in many Western countries of the world, libraries should be officially recognised in the criminal justice system (the police, court, prisons, etc) of Nigeria as one of the veritable security measures or arrangements with regard to crime prevention and control.
- Parents and guardians should keep their children/wards fully informed about the pros and cons of media advertisements propagated by alcohol and tobacco companies using celebrities, models and notable world leaders.
- From the foregoing, it is established that adolescents also learn how to abuse drugs by capitulating to media information and observational learning. The study therefore recommends that the government and its relevant agencies should, as a matter of urgency and necessity, regulate and scrutinise jingles on mood-altering substances (illicit drugs) before it is aired, for public safety.

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