

DRUGS COMMONLY ABUSED AROUND THE WORLD

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ABSTRACT

Drugs are actually meant to be used for medical purposes, in amounts and quantities that are harmless to the user, in methods and procedures that are harmless to the user. However, reverse is the case in different parts and countries of the world. The goal of this study is to find out the meaning of drug abuse, to investigate the theories of drug abuse and to examine the types of drugs that are commonly abused around the world. The data for this research were collected from books, journals, dictionaries and encyclopedias, among others which were sourced from the internet and libraries. The data were analyzed through the discussion and descriptive methods, among others. The study found out that the drugs that are commonly abused around the world include alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, heroin, opium, valium, methadone, morphine, percocet, amphetamines, vicodin, pemoline, sedatives, hallucinogens, crystal methamphetamine, xanax, oxycotin and inhalants. The study recommends that governments of different countries should have a way of checking to detect the abuse of drugs so as to prevent it, viable laws that would help to check mate the menace of drug abuse should be established and governments of different countries should punish culprits of drug abuse so as to deter them and discourage others from getting involved, among others.

Keywords: Drugs, Abuse, World

INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse has a long history around the world. Its origin in relations to man can be traced to the origin of man on earth and its origin in relations to the countries of the world can be traced to the establishment of the different countries. The problem of drug abuse is common to almost all parts and countries of the world. However, the problem varies from one part of the world to the other and from one country to the other. This problem can be found in developed countries, in developing countries and in underdeveloped countries. It is a common problem among African countries, Asian countries, European countries, North American countries and South American countries, among others (Peacock *et al* 2017; Oshodi, Aina and Onajole 2010; Abudu 2008; UNODC 2011; World Health Organization 2022; World Population Review 2022). The main focus of this study is to investigate the types of drugs commonly abused around the world.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

In this section, the following terms including drug, abuse and drug abuse are clarified.

Drug: Drug refers to an illegal substance such as Marijuana or Cocaine which is usually taken to bring happiness, relaxation and excitement or a medicine or a substance for making medicine or a substance that sports people take illegally to improve their performance (Summers 483). In addition, it refers to an illegal substance that people smoke and inject, among others in order to give them pleasure or exciting feelings or a substance use as medicine or use in medicine (Hornby 2000). Also, it refers to any chemical substance that has an effect on the body or mind, by modifying one or more of the terms (Onah 1982). Furthermore, it refers to any chemical substance which when taken into the body it affects the functions of the body (Matowo 3).

Abuse: Abuse refers to the use of something in a way it should not be used or the act of using something for wrong purpose (Summers 6). In addition, it is the act of misusing something or the act of using something improperly or injuriously (Read 7). Also, it refers to the use of something in a way that is wrong or harmful (Hornby 2000)

Drug Abuse: Drug abuse is the excessive or inappropriate use of a drug by a person where such use is considered or judged to be illegal by the culture and also resulting in harm to the person or society (Onah 1982). In addition, it refers to the drugs that are used mainly by self-medication in a manner that deviates from approved medical or social patterns (Aka and Akunyili 2003). Also, it refers to the excessive use of drugs or the use of drugs for non-medical purpose or the use of drugs in amounts that are harmful to the individual or others or the use of drugs in methods which are harmful to the individual or others (Samson 2022). Also, it refers to the usage of any drug for any other purpose other than the recommended one or the excessive illegal drug use and/ or legal drug use without a doctor's prescription or a state of reduced sensitivity of a drug to the body at given regular (normal) dose or a harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances including alcohol and other illicit drugs to stimulate behavior (Matowo 3).

THEORIES OF DRUG ABUSE

In this section, four theories of drug abuse will be discussed as seen below.

1. Socio-cultural Theory of Drug Abuse

The first theory on this list is the socio-cultural theory of drug abuse. The theory argues that drug abuse is usually influenced by socio-cultural values of the people. For example, in Nigeria today, there are cultures that permit the consumption of substances and drugs like alcohol and marijuana and on the other hand, there are still cultures that forbid them. For instance, the cultures of many ethnic groups in North-Central like Taroh, Goemai, Ngas and Berom, among others support the use of alcohol as part of daily food and as special drink in their cultural activities. Similarly, in the Southern, Eastern and Western part of the country, there are also

ethnic groups like Edo, Ijaw, Igbo, Ibibio, Urhobo, Itsekiri and Yoruba that use alcohol in cultural activities. On the other hand, most ethnic groups found in the North-East and North-West usually forbid the taking of alcohol on a personal basis and also during cultural activities (Anderson 1998; Begun 2000).

2. Personality Theory of Drug Abuse

The second theory on this list is the personal theory of drug abuse. The theory argues that drug abuse is usually promoted by certain qualities of characteristics as found in some individuals. Such personality characteristics include delaying satisfaction, low tolerance for frustration, poor coping ability and low self esteem, poor impulse control and high emotional dependence on other people. The people with these types of personality quality characteristics are usually vulnerable to drug abuse (Anderson 1998; Begun 2000).

3. Biological Theory of Drug Abuse

The third theory on this list is the biological theory of drug abuse. The theory argues that individuals that are usually vulnerable to drug abuse are usually influenced by their biological nature. By implication, the biological or genetic make-up of a person is usually responsible for his vulnerability to drug abuse and addiction (Anderson 1998; Begun 2000).

4. Learning Theory of Drug Abuse

The fourth theory on this list is the learning theory of drug abuse. The theory argues that individuals are usually influenced into drug abuse through learning. By implication, nobody is born with the attitude of drug abuse but the attitude is later learnt peers and friend who are already victims. The learning could be by the means of instrumental learning, conditional learning, or social learning (Anderson 1998; Begun 2000).

COMMONLY ABUSED DRUGS AROUND THE WORLD

In this section, the researcher will discuss the commonly abused drugs around the world including alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, heroin, opium, valium, methadone, morphine, percocet, amphetamines, vicodin, pemoline, sedatives, hallucinogens, crystal methamphetamine, xanax, oxycotin and inhalants.

1. Alcohol

Alcohol is one of the commonly abused substances or drugs in the society. It is a drug whose consumption is deemed to be legal by most societies, especially the African society. The drug is not considered to be very harmful or at least less dangerous. In view of this, it is consumed daily in Africa and even forming part of the African daily drinks and special drinks during traditional festivals. Examples of this drug on a general note include ethyl, methyl, prophyl, butyl and amyl. Alcohol is most often viewed as a depressant, although it can be a stimulant

and for some it is a hallucinogen. Alcoholism is usually considered to be a disease which can usually be treated as an illness. For example, in 1957, the American Medical Association (AMA) affirmed that alcoholism is a disease. It should be noted that alcoholism is a state of abusing alcohol or a state where drinking of alcohol becomes a priority and takes one's time and interest above and over almost everything. Alcoholism is usually promoted by a couple of factors including peer influence, death of a loved one, trouble, unemployment, dismissal from work, betrayal, retirement and family problem, among others (Chinedu 2007; Matowo 2013; Ongwae 2016; Brecher 1972; Brunn and Rexed 1975; Ebie and Pela 2000; Royce 1989; Volkow 2018).

2. Marijuana

Marijuana is a drug which is commonly referred to as cannabis. The scientific name for this drug is *tetrahydrocannabinol* (THC). This drug is gotten from a plant called "cannabis sativa". The plant has been used for centuries, primarily for its euphoric effects and is one of the leading drugs abused, especially by the youths. The origin of this drug in the United States of America (USA) can be traced to the 1920s. It is a dangerous and addictive drug which has devastating effects on its users. It is one of the most commonly used illicit drugs with about 14 million users who are 12 years and above. The reason for its wide usage is that the product is indigenous, cheap and effective mood changer (Chinedu 2007; Matowo 2013; Ongwae 2016; Brecher 1972; Brunn and Rexed 1975; Ebie and Pela 2000; Aka and Akunyili 2003; Nkonge 2017).

3. Cocaine

Cocaine is a tropane alkaloid and stimulant drug which is usually obtained primarily from the leaves of two coca species found in South America Countries including Peru, Chile, Columbia and Bolivia, among others. The two coca species include *Erythroxylum coca* and *Erythroxylum Novogranatense*. It is a drug usually used as a recreational drug and euphoriant. When the rug is extracted from coca leaves, it is then processed into cocaine hydrochloride (powdered cocaine). Cocaine powder is usually white in colour. In regards to its consumption, it is done by chewing the leaf of the cocoa plant, inhaling the power, smoking the rock and injecting the liquid. Cocaine is a byproduct of the resin of cocoa plant. Cocaine is abused when used in a wrong way. It is done by mixing the raw cocaine powder with sodium bicarbonate in a particular proportion. The mixture is poured into a conical flask with distilled water and heated over an unseen burner and the rock formed is then used by the addicts. They take it by combining it with other drugs. The powdery substance is injected or snorted by the addicts. Snorting is the process of inhaling cocaine powder through the nose, where it is absorbed into the bloodstream, smoking involves inhaling cocaine vapour or smoke into the lungs where absorption into the bloodstream is as rapid as by injection while injection, is the use of a needle to release the drug directly into the bloodstream. These three methods of cocaine usage can lead to addiction and other severe health problems (Chinedu 2007; Matowo 2013; Ongwae 2016; Brecher 1972; Brunn and Rexed 1975; Ebie and Pela 2000; Eze and Omeje 1999).

4. Heroin

Heroin which can also be referred to as diacetylmorphine, diamorphine, acetomorphine, morphine diacetate and acetylated morphine is an *opioid* drug made from morphine. Its popular street names include China White, Smack, Big H, Balck Tar, Chiva, Skag, Junk, Brown Sugar, Skunk, White Horse and Thunder. Morphine is a natural substance taken from the seed pod of various opium poppy plants commonly grown in Asia, Mexico and Colombia, among others. Heroin can be found in white, brown and black colours. In regards to its consumption, it is done through injection, sniffing, snorting, swallowing, licking and smoking. Sometimes, Heroin is mixed with crack cocaine which is a practice commonly refers to as “speedballing”. It is the misuse of the prescription of *opioid* that usually leads to Heroin. This drug is generally considered to be illegal. Heroin can be white or brown in colour. The brown heroin is obtained through the purification of opium and that brown substance is due to the dirt contained in the substance. At the end of the purification, the white heroin is gotten. The brown powder can be mixed with cigarette. Heroin is one of the worst drugs as it causes damages severely more than other drugs both physically and mentally (Chinedu 2007; Matowo 2013; Ongwae 2016; Brecher 1972; Brunn and Rexed 1975; Ebie and Pela 2000; Eze and Omeje 1999).

5. Opium

Opium is a dried latex obtained from the seed capsules of opium poppy or from the juice of opium poppy (*Papaver Somniferum*). It should be noted that about 12% of opium are made up of the alnagetic alkaloid morphine which is usually processed chemically to produce Heroine and other synthetic opioids for medical use and for illegal drug trade. The origin of this drug can be traced to Asia Minor, Spain, France and Africa, among others. Similarly, the main producers today include Afganistan, Myanmar, Colombia, Laos, Mexico, India, Paksitan, Thailand, Turkey, China and Australia, among others. The retailing price as at 2002 is \$16,000 per kilogram. In regards to its consumption, it is done through licking, swallowing and drinking in tea. Opium is usually abuse on the grounds that it is good for pain relief. The abuse begins when the patient starts taking the medication on his own term, more frequently than what his doctor has recommended. In addition, the abuse is also done for recreational purposes (Chinedu 2007; Matowo 2013; Ongwae 2016; Brecher 1972; Brunn and Rexed 1975; Ebie and Pela 2000; Eze and Omeje 1999; Eunice 2009).

6. Valium

Valium is a drug that is commonly referred to as Diazepam. It is a drug that belongs to the family of drugs called “Benzodiazepine” which serves as an anxiolytic. The drug is usually taken orally by mixed with small liquid or soft food and measured with a special measuring instrument or spoon. This drug can be abused when it is used indiscriminately without the advice or prescription of the doctor (Chinedu 2007; Matowo 2013; Ongwae 2016; Brecher 1972; Brunn and Rexed 1975; Ebie and Pela 2000; Hollister 1995).

7. Methadone

Methadone can also be referred to as Dolophine and Methadose. It is synthetic opioid agonist used for chronic pain and also for opioid dependence. Although, it is a legal drug that has been legalized since in 1947 but it has been highly abused. The abuse comes when it is taken incorrectly or against the prescribed directives of doctors. In view of this, the drug should be administered by a specialist or an expert. However, because the drug is rampant, it becomes one of the fastest addiction drugs in world (Chinedu 2007; Matowo 2013; Ongwae 2016; Brecher 1972; Brunn and Rexed 1975; Ebie and Pela 2000; Barber 1967).

8. Morphine

Morphine is a pain relieving drug of the opiate family which is naturally found in opium. It is actually a dark brown resin found in *Papaver Somniferum* or poppies. The drug is usually administered through injection, inhalation and drinking. By implication, this drug can be found in liquid form, tablet form and rock form. However, taken the drug is supposed to be prescribed and administered by a doctor. On the contrary, when it is taken indiscriminately for habitual purpose and recreational purpose without the prescription of the doctor, it amounts to abuse (Chinedu 2007; Matowo 2013; Ongwae 2016; Brecher 1972; Brunn and Rexed 1975; Ebie and Pela 2000; Walter 1974).

9. Percocet

Percocet can also be referred to as Oxycodone/Paracetamol, this drug is primarily used for relieving pains. This drug is actually a combination of the opioid oxycodone with paracetamol. It is a narcotic drug prescribed to patients by doctors for the management of mild to moderate post-operative pain. The drug can be found in liquid form, tablet form or powder form. This drug was ranked as the 59th most commonly prescribed and used drug in the United States of America in 2019 with over 11 million prescriptions and users. The medication which is a mixture of oxycodone and acetaminophen is part of the opioid family of drugs and as such it is highly addictive. Percocet is supposed to be taken under the strict prescription of a doctor. However, when a patient takes it indiscriminately without following the directives of a doctor, it amounts to abuse. The drug can be chewed, sniffed, drank or swallowed (Chinedu 2007; Matowo 2013; Ongwae 2016; Brecher 1972; Brunn and Rexed 1975; Ebie and Pela 2000; Laver 1978).

10. Amphetamines

Amphetamines are synthetic stimulant drugs which help the brain to work actively. They can be taken orally in form of tablets and in form of injection through the vein. The injection is effective than the tablet because tablet takes time to dissolve. They can both be legal and illegal depending on who prescribes them and how they are used. Under normal condition, their use is supposed to be under the strict prescription of a doctor. However, when they are indiscriminately used without the directives and prescription of a doctor, they amount to abuse

(Chinedu 2007; Matowo 2013; Ongwae 2016; Brecher 1972; Brunn and Rexed 1975; Ebie and Pela 2000).

11. Vicodin

Vicodin is a narcotic drug that can also be referred to as hydrocodone or acetaminophen. The drug is actually a combination of hydrocodone and paracetamol. It is used in treating moderate to severe pains. In regards to its consumption, it is basically taken through the mouth. Vicodin is abused when it is taken without the prescription from a doctor. It is also abused when the problem for which it was initially taken is no longer there. Sometimes, people abuse it intentionally while in other times, people abuse it unintentionally. The drug is initially take for pain relieve as prescribed by a doctor. When the sickness is gone, they start to have craving for the vicodin even when the sickness has been cured. This causes the addict to go to any length in order to get the drug without the prescription from the doctor. Although, the drug is very costly but addicts usually look for it to satisfy their desires by all means and at all cost (Chinedu 2007; Matowo 2013; Ongwae 2016; Brecher 1972; Brunn and Rexed 1975; Ebie and Pela 2000).

12. Pemoline

Pemoline is a stimulant drug basically used in the treatment of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and narcolepsy. In regards to its consumption, it is basically taken through the mouth. The drug is usually coated in white colour and it has the same size with panadol and paracetamol. It is not costly and because of its cheapness, it is being abused by many people. The abuse comes when it is indiscriminately taken without the directives and prescription of a doctor (Chinedu 2007; Matowo 2013; Machinaab 2018; Ongwae 2016; Brecher 1972; Brunn and Rexed 1975; Ebie and Pela 2000).

13. Sedatives

Sedative can also be referred to as tranquilizer. It is a substance that induces sedation by reducing irritability or excitement or anxiety. This group of drugs is related to hypnotics. Its workings are mostly in the Central Nervous System. These are drugs that are used to induce sleep or to cause relaxation. They are barbiturate, capable of producing psychological and physical dependence. The drug is supposed to be taken under the strict prescription of the doctor. However, when they are indiscriminately taken without the prescription and directives of a doctor, they amount to an abuse. It is being abused when taken more than what is prescribed or without the prescription of a doctor (Chinedu 2007; Matowo 2013; Ongwae 2016; Brecher 1972; Brunn and Rexed 1975; Ebie and Pela 2000).

14. Hallucinogens

Hallucinogen is a group of drugs that alter perception, thoughts and feelings. The drug can basically be subdivided into two categories including classic hallucinogens and dissociative drugs. In regards to its consumption, it is taken through smoking, snorting and drinking. This drug affects people's minds and makes them see things that are not real as if they are real. The

name of the drug “Hallucinogen” is derived from the word “hallucination” which basically means “figment of imagination”. Therefore, Hallucination is the fact of seeming to see or hear somebody or something that is not really there, especially because of illness or drugs. This drug makes one to hallucinate. Examples of the drug are mescaline, psilocybin, lysergic acid and diethylamide, among others (Chinedu 2007; Matowo 2013; Ongwae 2016; Brecher 1972; Brunn and Rexed 1975; Ebie and Pela 2000).

15. Crystal Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine can also be referred to as “Crystal meth”. It is basically a potent crystal nervous system stimulant that is essentially used as a recreational drug and also as a second-line treatment for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and obesity. It is a strong and highly addictive drug that usually affects the Central Nervous System. It is popularly known to be a party drug. The drug usually comes in crystal chunks or shiny blue-white rocks. In regards to its consumption, it is taken through smoking, snorting, swallowing and injecting. The abuse of this drug comes when it is not taken under the prescription and directives of doctors (Chinedu 2007; Matowo 2013; Machinaab 2018; Ongwae 2016; Brecher 1972; Ebie and Pela 2000; Erikson 1980).

16. Xanax

Xanax can also be referred to as “Alprazolam”. It is a fast-acting tranquilizer of medium duration in the triazolobenzodiazepine class. This is actually a fusion between benzodiazepine and triazole-ring. The family class of this drug includes benzodiazepine, diazepam (Valium), Clonazepam (Klonopin), Lorazepam (Ativan), Oxazepam (Serax) and Flurazepam (Dalmane), among others. In regards to its consumption, it is basically done orally or by injection. This drug works by decreasing abnormal excitement in the brain and Central Nervous System. It was approved in the United States of America in October 1981. The possibility of being xanax addict is extremely high, especially after two months of use as tolerance to the drug builds over this period of time (Chinedu 2007; Matowo 2013; Machinaab 2018; Ongwae 2016; Brecher 1972; Brunn and Rexed 1975; Okafo 2000).

17. Oxycotin

Oxycotin can also be referred to as “Oxycodone or Roxicodone”. It is a semi-synthetic opioid drug used for the treatment of severe pain. This drug belongs to a family of drugs called “opioid analgesics”. It basically works in the brain to change how the body feels and respond to pains. In regards to its consumption, it is taken by swallowing the tablet as a whole and not breaking, crushing, chewing or dissolving it so as not to release the power of the drug at ones. However, the addicts do the contrary by crushing the tablet and injecting them with needle or snorting them to increase the effectiveness and to reduce the time taken to feel the hit of the drug and hence, the abuse. This drug is commonly used in the medical field to treat chronic and other ailments of patients like cancer (Chinedu 2007; Matowo 2013; Machinaab 2018; Ongwae 2016; Brecher 1972; Brunn and Rexed 1975; Ebie and Pela 2000).

18. Inhalants

Inhalants are substances that people inhale to get high. Although, there are many substances that people inhaled but not all of these substances can be referred to as “inhalant”. Example of substances that people inhaled that cannot be said to be inhalant include alcohol because they can also be used in other ways. This implies that inhalants are substances that can only be abused by inhaling. Some of the commonly abused inhaling substances include ammonia, bleach and glue, among others. These substances are basically inhaled by pouring or spraying into a plastic bag or a cloth etc and the fumes are inhaled. Intoxication starts after two or three deep breaths. With prolonged use, tolerance will increase and the addict will start to require more of these substances for use (Chinedu 2007; Matowo 2013; Machinaab 2018; Ongwae 2016; Agha 2003).

CONCLUSION

Drug abuse is really a problem in different parts and countries of the world. The types, nature and quantity of drugs abused vary from one country to the other. However, the drugs and substances that are commonly abused in different parts and countries of the world include alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, heroin, opium, valium, methadone, morphine, percocet, amphetamines, vicodin, pemoline, sedatives, hallucinogens, crystal methamphetamine, xanax, oxycotin and inhalants. Some of these drugs are illegally produced, sold and consume while others are legally produced, sold but consume illegally.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Governments of different countries should have a way of checking to detect the early use of drugs so as to prevent it.
2. Viable laws that would help to check mate the menace of drug abuse should be established.
3. Governments of different countries should punish culprits of drug abuse so as to deter them and discourage others from getting involved.
4. Religious and moral seminars, conferences and awareness should be created to teach in order to build good character in students by parents, guardians and religious leaders.

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