

A STUDY OF DRUG USE PATTERN AMONG INMATES OF JOS PRISON, NIGERIA

Kelvin Abuchi Ugwuoke¹, Otodo Ifeanyichukwu²

¹Psychological Services Unit, Maximum Security Prison, Jos, Plateau state

²Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Uyo, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This study investigated drug use pattern among inmates of Jos prison between 2010 and 2014. The study used a longitudinal design. Secondary data from the records unit of the Prison was employed for this study. The social disorganization theory was adopted for the understanding of drug abuse among prison inmates. A total of 3134 inmates who were admitted for drug use treatment in the Psychological Services Unit of Jos prison were used for this study, while simple percentage was used for analysis. Permission to use data from the unit for this study was obtained from the appropriate authorities of the Nigerian Prisons Service. Results show that inmates mostly used caffeine, alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana. Results also show that more youths use drugs, and that more inmates were admitted for treatment in 2010. The study recommended that the Nigerian Prisons Service should recruit more psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers to manage the rising cases of psychoactive drug use among prison inmates, and that parents whose children have been identified to abuse drugs should be co-opted into the rehabilitation process.

Key words: Drug use, prison inmates, Nigeria, LONGITUDINAL STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Drug use among prisoners in Nigeria has become a recurrent problem which presents a security concern. Even with the security apparatus on ground in the various prisons nationwide, prohibited substances still find their ways into the prisons. The prevalence of drug use

among prisoners is high. Different classes of drugs are consumed by prison inmates and this poses a great security risk to the immediate prison environment. Apart from posing serious security risk, drug use among inmates also degrades their physical and mental health, and defeats the essence of imprisonment which is for reformation and rehabilitation. Most prisoners

who use illicit substances had learned the habit before imprisonment, and when they come into prison, they tend to continue with the habit (Perlman, 2015).

Nwoli (1975) defined drug as any substance that by its chemical nature affects the structure or function of the organism. Obot (2013) defined drug use as all forms of drug self-administration for the purpose of getting "high", including use of banned and controlled substances. He also posits that drug abuse is used as a technical term to refer to dysfunctional drug use as defined in the WHO International Classification of Diseases (10th Edition).

The use of substance of abuse worldwide has become a major public health concern (Owoaje and Bello, 2010). It is estimated that between 155 and 250 million people or 3.5% to 5.7% of the world's population aged 15-64 have used one or more psychoactive substances at least once in the last one year (UNODC, 2010). In Africa, it has been discovered that the major drugs of abuse are cannabis, nicotine and alcohol (WHO, 2004). Industrialization, urbanization and increased exposure to western life style have been noted to contribute to the increasing trend of substance use in Africa (Abiodun, Adelekan, Ogunremi, Oni and Obayan, 1994). In Nigeria, the most commonly abused drugs are cannabinoids, depressants, dissociative anesthetics, hallucinogens, stimulants and anabolic steroids (National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, 2009).

Substance use among prison inmates has become a problem, and it is increasingly acknowledged on an international level. Many prisoners had used drugs before imprisonment, and continue to do so while in custody. A considerable number of prisoners not only continue drug use

in prison but practice high-risk behaviour such as injecting and needle sharing. Although there are limited data on the drug problem in prisons, studies indicate that up to 50-60% of drug users still use drugs in prison with about one third of them injecting drugs (Zurhold, 2004).

Imprisonment has been found to impact on an individual's pattern of drug use. O'Mahony (1997) found that 42% of prison inmates in an Irish prison had used heroin while in prison serving their current sentences. Studies have also found that a significant proportion of the Irish prison population has a history of illicit drug use, and continue to use drugs while in prison (O'Mahony, 1997; Allwright, Barry, Bradley, Long and Thornton, 1999). However, little is known about the nature of this use and how individuals organise it within the prison setting (Dillion, 2001).

Of the 2.3 million inmates in the United States of America, more than half have a history of substance abuse and addiction (Perlman, 2015). Not all those inmates are imprisoned on drug-related charges, although drug arrests have been rising steadily since the early 1990s in the US. In many cases of non-drug related arrests such as burglary and robbery, it was found out that they were committed in the service of feeding their addiction (Perlman, 2015).

In Iran, it has been discovered that a disproportionate number of prison inmates use drugs. It is estimated that a little less than half of the prison population in Iran are convicted of drug-related charges, with the majority of them related to illicit drug use (Zamani, Farnia, Tor-knejad and Alaei, 2010). Despite attempts to prevent the entry of drugs into Iranian prisons, majority of prisoners who had been convicted of drug-related offenses

continued using illicit drugs inside prison. High levels of drug use among prisoners have also been reported from other countries. In the United Kingdom, it is reported that just less than half of male sentenced prisoners used drugs during their current prison term (Singleton, Farrell and Meltzer, 2003). It is estimated that at least half of the prison population in Europe has a history of drug use, with many of them being affected by severe drug related problems (Griffiths, Nilson, Carpenter and Merino, 2003).

Despite the rigorous security checks on ground in the various prisons nationwide to unravel the trafficking of illicit drugs into the prisons, it has been observed that there has been a consistent increase of drug use among inmates. As there have been no recent reviews of substance use in prisons in Nigeria, the researcher conducted a longitudinal review of the prevalence of substance abuse and dependence among prisoners in Jos prison. This study furthermore highlights the different drugs which inmates use, and exposes the trend of usage. These are the onus of this research.

Theoretical framework

Based on the foregoing this study adopts the social disorganization theory (Shaw and McKay, 1942) as a suitable theoretical underpinning for understanding the use and abuse of psychotropic substances among prison inmates.

The Social Disorganization Theory (SDT) is a widely used social-structural theory of substance abuse. It emphasizes the effects of an individual's position in society and the constraints that the person's status puts on his or her perceptions and behavior. According to this theory, all members of society subscribe to the same moral

code but some people – because of their position in society – are more able than others to follow that code. Conversely, the social status of prisoners makes them susceptible to abuse psychoactive drugs. The theory highlights that drug use is an adaptation to the limitations that social position and environment places on individual behavior. Nigerian prisons are faced with challenges such as poor feeding, poor hygiene, congestion and dehumanizing conditions (Ugwuoke and Otodo, 2015) which affect the psyche of the inmates and pose as stress to them. These stressful conditions and unhygienic environment cause them to dwell in psychoactive drugs use.

METHOD

Jos prison is a convict prison in North-Central Nigeria which accommodates all classes of inmates: condemned convicts, lifers, short and long-term convicts, awaiting trial inmates, debtors, lunatics, lodgers and so on. It has a capacity for 1149 inmates. As at 31st December 2014, the inmate population of the prison was 698. The study used secondary data which were gathered from the records of admission into the Psychological Services Unit of Jos prison, spanning a period of five years from January 2010 to December 2014. Inmates who use drugs are usually identified in the admission board. Thereafter, they are admitted for drug detoxification and rehabilitation programmes in the unit. At the point of admission into the psychological services unit, their bio-data are taken, and thereafter, they are clerked, in which their drug use, medical, family, educational and social histories are taken.

In the period under study, a total of 3,134 inmates were admitted into the unit and undergone treatment and interventions for drug addiction and dependence. Out of the 3134 inmates that were admitted, 22 were females while 3112 were males. Their ages ranged from 19 to 60 years, with a mean age of 34.4 years. Of the total number of inmates under study, 2027 were imprisoned for drug related offences, while 1107 were imprisoned for non-drug related offence such as conspiracy, stealing, court contempt, house-breaking, rape, armed-robbery, culpable homicide, traffic offences and so on. The data collected were analysed using simple percentages.

RESULTS

The details of the inmates' demographic data are summarized in table 1 below.

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of inmates who were used for the study. There were 3112 males and 22 females. About 82 % of the inmates were youth who were between the age range of 18 and 48. In terms of religious affiliation, 1243 of the inmates representing 39.7% are Christians, while 1712 (54.6%) are Muslims. 179 of them (5.7%) are of the African traditional religion.

Table 2 shows that in 2010, 1026 inmates (32.7%) were admitted. This high prevalence may be attributed to the

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample of inmates

Characteristics	Sub-Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	3112	99.3
	Female	22	0.7
Age	18-28	1102	35.2
	29-38	523	16.7
	39-48	943	30.1
	49-58	487	15.5
	58-above	79	2.5
Religion	Christianity	1243	39.7
	Islam	1712	54.6
	Others	179	5.7

Source: Jos Prison Records, 2010-2015

Table 2. Frequency distribution of the inmates who reported use of drugs admitted from January 2010 to December 2014

Year	No. of Admissions	Percentage
2010	1026	32.7
2011	534	17.1
2012	655	20.9
2013	673	21.5
2014	246	7.8
Total	3134	100

sectarian crisis that engulfed the city of Jos in 2010. 534 (17.1%), 655 (20.9%), 673 (21.5%) and 246 (7.8%) inmates were admitted in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively.

Table 3 shows that 453 inmates (14.5%) used only one drug, 873 (27.8%) used two drugs only, and 1808 inmates representing 57.7% used more than two drugs.

Table 4 shows the frequency distribution of the various classes of drugs used by the inmates who were admitted in the prison between January 2010 and December 2014. It should be noted that many of the inmates were poly drug users. Hence, some of them reported use of two or more classes of drugs; 2108 inmates (67.3%) used cannabinoids, 1754 inmates (56%) used depressants, while 53 of them (1.7%) used hallucinogens. Again, 2754 representing 87.9% used stimulants, 3 (or 0.1%) used anabolic steroid/

performance enhancers, 2 (0.1%) used dissociative anesthetics, 2643 or 84.3% used opioids, and 43 (1.4%) used solvents and inhalants.

DISCUSSION

Substance use is a major problem among prisoners and it may have serious consequences on their physical, psychological, health and social wellbeing. Not only is drug use detrimental to the personal wellbeing of the inmates, but also to the security of the prison, and by extension, the nation at large. Results from this research have shown a high level of psychoactive substance use among prisoners in Jos prison, Nigeria. This is an indication that drug use is assuming a serious problem, not only in prisons, but in the general society, since the prison is a

Table 3. Frequency distribution of the inmates according to the reported number of drugs used in the years under study

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Inmates who used only one drug	453	14.5
Inmates who used two drugs only	873	27.8
Inmates who used more than two drugs	1808	57.7
Total	3134	100

Table 4. Frequency distribution of the various classes of drugs used by the inmates

Class of Drugs Used by Inmates	Frequency	Percentage
Cannabinoids (Hashish and Marijuana)	2108	67.3
Depressants (Alcohol, Barbiturates, benzodiazepines, Flunitrazepam, GHB, etc)	1754	56.0
Hallucinogens (LSD, Mescaline, Psilocybin etc)	53	1.7
Stimulants (Amphetamine, cocaine, ecstasy, methamphetamine, Ritalin, nicotine, caffeine, etc)	2754	87.9
Anabolic steroids and performance enhancers (Dianabol, Anadrol, Oxandrin etc)	3	0.1
Dissociative Anesthetics (Ketamine and PCP)	2	0.1
Opioids (Tramadol, Codeine, Heroin, Morphine, Opium)	2643	84.3
Solvents and inhalants (Gas, Paint thinner, aerosol, plastic cement, butane, petrol etc)	43	1.4

miniature of the larger society. Therefore, urgent measures need to be put in place to curtail this trend.

Table 1 shows that more males were admitted for drug treatment and rehabilitation than females; 3112 males representing 99.3% were admitted for drug rehabilitation. Only 22 females (0.7%) were admitted. This is in tandem with NIDA (2000) which posits that men are more likely than women to have opportunities to use drugs, but men and women given an opportunity to use drugs for the first time are equally likely to do so and to progress from initial use to addiction. However, women and men appear to differ in their vulnerability to some drugs (NIDA, 2000). This study also confirms the study of Becker and Hu (2008) which found out that the rates of drug abuse are currently lower in women than in men. The study also shows that nevertheless, the number of women using and abusing drugs is on the rise. Adult men are 2 to 3 times more likely than women to have drug abuse/dependence disorder (Becker and Hu, 2008), but this current gender difference may reflect the disparity in the number of males and females that are admitted in prison, than the difference in opportunity and vulnerability of drug use. Table 1 also shows that 98% of the inmates used for this study were in the age range of 18 and 38 years. This supports AlcoholRehab (2015) which posits that illicit drug use rises with age until it peaks at around 18 to 20 years old. After this, it decreases steadily as people get older.

The present result also shows that more Muslims use drugs. Although there has been an increase in the number of studies on the relationship between religion and substance use in recent years, much of the literature that recognizes religion as

an important correlate of substance use focuses on the "lack" of religion as a risk factor for increased use (Hawkins, Catalano, and Miller, 1992).

The present study shows that 2010 recorded more admission of inmates that used drugs. In Table 2, a total of 1026 inmates representing 32.7% were admitted in the psychological services unit for drug use. This can be attributed to the sectarian crisis that took place in Jos and environs which claimed lives and property. According to available records, about 1700 people were arrested and imprisoned during the period of the crisis, with many of them suspected to use psychoactive drugs (Records Unit of Jos Prison, 2015). Again, the result may be as the build-up to the 2011 general elections, which had begun in earnest with political campaigns and other electoral activities in 2010. Also, it is obvious from Table 2 that 2014 had the least number of admissions in the period under study. A total of 246 inmates representing 7.8% were admitted who used drugs. This can be attributed to the tranquil nature of that year, with less political activities, and also incidence of political and sectarian crisis.

The present study also shows that majority of the inmates used more than two drugs. In table 3, a total of 1808 inmates (57.7%) reported using more than two drugs, while 873 (27.8%) used only two drugs. This study shows that the majority of polydrug use involves alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and Opioids. This study found out that a significant number of polydrug users used alcohol and tobacco. This is in line with Hogan-Murphy (2014) who found out in a survey that 68% of drug users in Ireland use gateway drugs (alcohol and tobacco). This current result also supports the findings of Afolabi, Ayilara, Akinyemi

and Ola-Olorun (2012) who found out that most students use cigarettes. In the present study, many of the inmates who were reviewed used cigarettes, alcohol, and one other drugs. However, those that use only one drug reported using one of cigarette, alcohol, caffeine or marijuana. While a significant number of those that use two drugs reported using alcohol and cigarette. The bottomline is that most of the participants used cigarette and alcohol.

The study also found out that about 2754 inmates representing 87.9% used stimulants such as caffeine, nicotine and cocaine. According to the result, this is the class of drug that is abused the most. A significant number of the respondents were found to use cigarette and caffeine. Again, 2643 inmates representing 84.3% were found to use Opioids such as codeine, Tramadol, heroine, morphine and opium. A total of 2108 inmates (67%) used cannabinoids such as marijuana and hashish, while 1754 (56%) used depressants such as alcohol and other downers. The present result is in conformity with the findings of Afolabi et al. (2012) who found out that the most widely used drugs are caffeine, alcohol, cigarette and marijuana. This result also supports the findings of Dillion (2001) who found out that opiates, heroine, cannabis and alcohol are the most abused drugs in Irish prisons. Again, the present result supports the findings of Abasiubong, Udobang, Idung, Udoh and Jombo (2014) who found out that the most abused drugs in northern Nigeria are cocaine, heroin and nicotine.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the pattern of drug use among admitted inmates in Jos

prison between 2010 and 2014. It is obvious from the data analysed that the use of psychoactive substances among admitted inmates in prison is on the rise. This translates to the fact that the use of drugs in the larger society is assuming a pandemic dimension. From the result of the study, it is obvious that youths are neck deep into the use of psychoactive substance, and if appropriate measures are not taken to curb this trend, it may lead to dire consequences for the nation. Therefore, it is concluded that the use of psychoactive substances among prison inmates is assuming a dangerous dimension and hence, the need for immediate intervention to produce ex-offenders who will lead responsible lives and contribute to national development.

The study unravels that there is a high rate of drug abuse among prison inmates; hence, it is recommended that the Nigerian Prisons Service should recruit more clinical psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers to manage the rising cases of psychoactive drug use among prison inmates. With the engagement of more of these professionals, inmates who are dependent on drugs will be availed to professional counselling and therapeutic help. This will lead to a better society as the inmates will lead drug free lives after imprisonment, thereby reducing recidivism and the pressure on the prison facilities.

The dangers of psychotropic drug use should be incorporated in our schools curricula so that students can be privy of it from the cradle. The Federal Ministry of Education should introduce subjects in primary and secondary schools curriculum to that effect. At present, there is no provision in our schools curricula on the dangers of drug abuse. This cause our youths to be more vulnerable and easily

enticed to use psychoactive drugs; hence making them susceptible to imprisonment. Also, effective reorientation of the youths should be carried out by the National Orientation Agency (NOA) in collaboration with the NDLEA on the dangers of psychotropic drug use. This can be done through traditional and religious leaders who will in turn sensitize their followers.

There should also be proper funding of the Nigerian Prisons Service for effective reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration of prison inmates. The prisons are faced with poor structures and lack of provision of tools for rehabilitation, reformation and resettlement. This has translated in churning out ex-offenders who are more hardened than they were before imprisonment. The main cause of prisoners' indulgence in drug abuse is that their minds are not occupied. They lazy around with nothing to keep them busy while serving their terms, leading them to find solace in using drugs. With sufficient funding, the prisons will be provided with adequate tools for the reformation of inmates in custody, thereby making them responsible citizens after their release.

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