SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN NIGERIAN ADOLESCENT GIRLS

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INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse has been identified as one of the most rapidly growing global problem (UNODC, 2007). This has continued to be the major risk behaviour among adolescents and youths in general with physical and Mental Health complications or tragedy to individuals families and the society at large.

The illicit use of drugs is not only restricted to men, there is a documented evidence of growing rate of drug and other substance abuse among female Nigerian youths, including married women from the Northern part of the country (Daily Trust Newspaper November 25, 2017).

According to the report peak consumption of such substances was recorded in the North Western part of the country (Kano, Kaduna, Katsina and Jigawa). The abuse has been traced to substance use as early as the age of 10 years among female adolescents

THE PROBLEM

While some of the these female adolescents may not be hooked up on hard drugs like cocaine, heroine and marijuana, they do indulge themselves in substance abuse like codeine syrup or other cough mixtures and other drugs that are on the prescription list which can be obtained from chemists or pharmacy stores.

Some were reportedly led to it by their boyfriends or daughters of some affluent individuals (peer pressure) while others engage in it just for fun.

This habit of such female adolescents are concealed from their parent/ guardians in most cases. In some cases, the parents or care givers may be living in self denial because of the social stigma that is attached to drug addiction.

These female adolescents use drugs for many reasons, including curiosity and desire to find out the effectiveness of a particular to feel good, reduce stress or to feel grown up.

Using alcohol and tobacco at a young age increase the risk of using other drugs later in life.

THEORIES OF DRUGSP ABUSE

- **Socio-cultural theory:** This state's that drug abuse is determined by socio-cultural values of the people.
- **Personality theory:** This theory maintains that there are some personality traits that precipitate or makes an individual more vulnerable to drug addiction.
- **Learning theory:** This theory maintains that addiction and exposure was as a result of instrumental learning, conditional learning and social learning.

CAUSES OF VULNERABILITY TO DRUG ABUSE IN FEMALE ADOLESCENTS

- Curiosity and desire to find out the effectiveness of a particular Drug
- Peer group influence
- Environment
- Promotion and availability
- Enjoyment
- Lack of parental supervision
- Socio-economic status of the parents
- Self medication
- Pathological family background
- Ignorance of the dangers of illegal drug use

COMPLICATIONS

The various consequences of drug addiction or drug abuse are so devastating and very shameful to the extent that both the nation and International organizations are worried about the scourge among the youths and adolescents especially the growing prevalence in females. The consequences of female adolescents and women:-

- Mental disorder
- Drop out activities from school and female cultism
- Female miscreants (Area girls)
- Disrespect for elder and disregard for the law
- Violence to boy and men
- Divorce
- Eventual death

THE WAY FORWARD

The government on its own has tried in Nigeria to curtail, eradicate or discourage the use sale, trafficking and recycling of illegal drugs by promulgating various decrees against such drug use.

THE WAY FORWARD

The National Drug laws enforcement agency (NDLEA) was established by the federal government in 1989 with the dual responsibility of reducing the supply and the demand of drugs at various levels in Nigeria.

This agency alone cannot curb the menace. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has been very supportive at national and community levels strengthening the activities on NDLEA AND Non Governmental organization working to combat this national and Global burden at all levels.

The UNODC too cannot continue this effort alone.

With the rocketing prevalence of FEMALE adolescents and young women engagement in substance abuse the federal ministry of women and social development should take the lead, working with the NDLEA and the Nigerian. Country office of UNODC to support various platforms and networks strengthened to curb this menace our communities, schools, worship centres etc.

This would intensity on the going activities of the NDLEA, UNODC, CSOs and other organizations working to combat this burden.

More efforts should be in place to involve women led interventions in areas of:

- Public awareness campaigns
- Treatment and rehabilitation

CONCLUSION

The abuse of substances constitutes one of the most important risk behaviour among adolescents and female adolescents are not spared.

The increasing prevalence of substance abuse among young women calls for a holistic strategy involving women-led interventions involving parents , religious institutions, educational institutions, all tiers of government, local and International agencies.

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