

## REVIEW

## IMPACT OF DRUG ABUSE ON THE YOUTHS: A DESK REVIEW STUDY

\*Bunu U.O.<sup>1</sup>, Isyaku M.U.<sup>2</sup>, Umar I.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kampala International University Teaching Hospital, Western Campus, Ishaka, Uganda.

<sup>2</sup>Human Anatomy Department, Faculty of Biomedical Sciences, Kampala International University, Western Campus, Ishaka, Uganda.

<sup>3</sup>Public Health Department, School of Allied Health Sciences, Kampala International University, Western Campus, Ishaka, Uganda

## ABSTRACT

*It appears that drug abused by the youth, seriously impact their lives in many forms, making it hard for them to cope with their expected life routine. The review aims to address these challenges, by identifying the types and degree of drug abuse impact on the youth, and also suggest policy brief areas, which will direct the development of interventions that could reduce it. The review adopts a desktop approach of literature search of published articles. The search was conducted through Google Scholar and other websites with stakes in drug abuse issues, using 'drug' and 'abuse' search words simultaneously. In all, 26 published records were selected and explored for the narrative. Four categories of drug abuse impact on the youth are identified, thus, health, economic, social, and environmental issues. The issues inhibit the youth's ability to strengthen and develop the needed skills for an ideal healthy lifestyle. Furthermore, the impact of drug use is difficult to quantified, as such, regional specific impact study should be conducted, for the development of a content specific drug abuse prevention program, grounded on principles of an all-inclusive approach irrespective of age, gender and cultural diversity.*

**Keywords:** Youth, Mental-Health, Drug-Abuse, Impact, Addiction

**\*Corresponding Author**

Umi Omar Bunu; Kampala International University Teaching Hospital, Western Campus, Ishaka, Uganda; bunuumi@gmail.com;  
Phone: +256751650808

## Citing this article

Bunu U.O., Isyaku M.U., Umar I. IMPACT OF DRUG ABUSE ON THE YOUTHS: A DESK REVIEW STUDY. KIU J. Health Sci, 2023 3(1);

Conflict of Interest: None is declared

## INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse has become a global phenomenon and its intensity varies depending on the country in question. World over, about 15.3 million individuals experience a minimum of one drug abused related disorder (1-4). In the year 2012, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimated that about 183,000 drug-related deaths occurred globally; with around 162-324 million people, aged between 15 and 64, reported using abusing drug at least once yearly (5, 6). There is an increased of about 26% in the burden of drug abuse among youth, compare to the past decade (7, 8).

Drug abuse is considered as a pattern that is maladaptive due to sustained use, despite awareness of developing a repeated or persistent social, professional, psychological, or physical challenge as a result of recurrent use in circumstances that are physically harmful (9, 10). The term “abuse” is often used informally to mean any utilization of illicit drugs. Due to its double standard, the name is used strictly on non-dependence drugs case. Drug abuse during adolescence and early adulthood has become a serious public health problem with several consequential impacts on them (11, 12).

The Impact of drug abuse on the youth is a global phenomenon. Drug abuse contributes to the rise in youth violence, poverty, unemployment, and crime among others (12). Youth abused drugs for a variety

of reasons, which includes fun, alertness, performance, satisfying hunger, and weight management among others, ignoring its consequential morbidity and mortality effects (13). In this regard, drug-related fatalities are estimated to be 187,100 people annually as of 2013, with an intolerable number of drug abusers dying before their time, with approximately 400, 000 deaths per year in the 2020s, worldwide (14).

It is difficult to combat the impact of drug abuse without political commitment. The needed commitment demand putting in place a strategic drug abuse management technique, with particular attention on the youth. Against this, background, the review was conducted to identify the types and degree of drug abuse impact on the youth and suggest policy brief areas, which will direct the development of interventions that would reduce the impact of drug abuse on the youth and other illegal drug use.

## METHODOLOGY

The study is a narrative review. It adopts a desktop search technique for literature and published reports. Desktop literature search enables a purposive selection of literature that best address the issues under discussion. The literature search was done through Google Scholar, non-academic, as well as industry-based websites with a stake in and drug abuse related issues. “Drugs” and “abuse” key words were used simultaneously to search for the published texts. Words like substance, addictions, and dependence without

being linked to drug abuse were not included in the search terms, as the focus of the study was specifically on drugs abuse impact. The search was further, restricted to the materials published in English language only. The literature search returns several records, which were validated individually for relevance and selection. The initial scrutiny picked 670 references, of which 26 references were identified as relevant and significant because they covered the impacts of drugs abuse issues. Studies that clearly not meet the inclusion criteria, were excluded. The authors independently checked each of the selected materials for relevance, and familiarization, before a critical review by the first author, through distillation and analysis of the themes for the narrative.

### **Findings**

Following the materials synthesis, several themes emerged. The themes revealed a multi-level drug abuse related impact, with several repercussions on individual, family, community, and the society at large. The narrative was presented under four broad headings, thus, Health Impact, Economic Impact, Social Impact and Environmental Impacts, with several accompanying subheadings, as highlighted below:

#### **Health Impact**

Drug abuse impact on health is enormous. The impact affects the brain's ability to function correctly; the brain function is crucial for the overall

health of body and mind (11). Drug abuse by youth impacts their health in different forms and ways, by limiting one's capacity to enjoy life, distort memory, missed opportunities for skills development among others (2). The findings here revealed that drugs constitute a risk to youth physical and mental health in addition to the dangers of developing infectious and non-infectious diseases. The following are examples of the drug abuse impact on health.

#### **Physical Health**

Drug abuse has a number of negative impacts on youths' physical health. Continuous drug abuse poses a risk of encountering suicides, domestic, industrial and road traffic accidents, homicide, and needle stick injuries among others (15, 16).

#### **Morbidity Issues**

Drug abuse by the youth resulted in the development of related illnesses. Use of certain drugs like opioid, amphetamine, and cocaine among others leads to morbidity rates among the users at the ratio of 3–14 times, and estimated death of around 211,000 from drug-related ailments (17, 18). Moreover, correlations between some drugs of abuse and corresponding morbidity were established. For example, heroin is associated with the risk of physical injuries due to accidents, violence and/or early death (19). Amphetamine is linked to cerebral vascular accidents, and heart failure-related fatalities (13). Cocaine is linked to risks of both deliberate and unintentional accidents, with potential effects on cardiovascular

tissues, brain hemorrhage, stroke, and kidney failure (6). Cannabis use is linked to brain impairment and psychosis (19).

### **Infectious Diseases**

According to Degenhardt et al. (20), injectable drug abuse increases the risk of contracting HIV infection. HIV epidemics in the global south were fueled significantly through injectable drug abuse (19). Also, non-injecting drug abusers are more likely to contract HIV by engaging in riskier sexual behavior (21). In this regard, the use of Amphetamines by males who have sex with men increases the risk of HIV infection through unprotected anal contact (21). These few examples highlight the devastating impact of drug abuse-related infectious diseases on youth's health.

### **Non-infectious Diseases**

The leading non-infectious disease related to drug abuse is mental health. Drug abuse by youth usually impact their mental health capacity, with an associated ailment like depression, developmental delays, apathy, and withdrawal from reality, among other psychosocial disorders. Youth who abuse drugs are more likely to experience depression, personality disorders, and suicidal thoughts, than nonusers. It has been demonstrated that marijuana use, which is common among young people, interferes with memory, learning, and psychomotor abilities (22).

The following features, depression, withdrawal syndromes, developmental retardation, apathy, bipolar, dementia, amnesia, and psychosis among others are mental health conditions associated with youth drug abusers (10)

### **Economic Impact**

There is a noticeable economic impact on youth who abused drugs. The youth experience economic challenges as they grow because their brains cannot function efficiently, due to the effect of the abused drugs on it, as such, their ability to create wealth through the production of goods and services is trimmed. The situation poses a significant financial repercussion on the youth drug abusers with all the resultant consequences of non-compliance with increased costs of medical treatment, lack of self-service support, and financial losses among others (23). The economic impact associated with drug abuse is that the cost of production, distribution, and use of the illegal drugs are borne by the abusers, which in turn unleashed the burden of the financial loss on self, families, societies, and governments among others.

Consequently, there is a significant association between drug abuse and unemployment. Drug abuse reduces an individual's chances of securing employment, and/or continue working due to susceptibility to accidents and the associated poor performance and productivity among other negative factors. Youth who abuse drugs are often absent from work more frequently and are

three to four times more likely to experience a workplace mishap, with almost five times more chances of submitting compensation claims than non-drug abuse colleagues (8). Also, the money spent on treating drug abuse, crime prevention, law enforcement, and drug abuse-related offences, constitutes significant financial loss to both abusers, donor agencies, relatives, and the government as well (23).

### **Social Impact**

Youth who abuse drugs experience a wide range of social life issues. The youth's social concerns in relation to drug abuse include disruptions in their social network, such as academic challenges, distorted career paths and avoidable contact with the juvenile justice system among others (24). The following explains some of the frequently encountered social issues faced by the youth in relation to drug abuse.

- **Academics:** Drug abuse is linked to issues like declining grades, absence from school and other activities, and a high likelihood of dropping out of school, lack of dedication to study, increased truancy rates, causing cognitive and behavioral issues that can impact their academic performance as well as their peers' ability to learn (7, 25). This is not where it ends, more to it, the impact can frequently extend to their families, towns, and even the entire society.

### **Drug Abuse Impact on Career**

Drug abuse has constituted a career risk to the youth's potential. The situation could follow the youth into their adult life stage, in addition to the physical challenges, it also presents physiological and psychological issues due to its ability to cloud judgment and promote hasty decisions. Specific issues with career distortion attributes include non-erasable criminal records, assaults, sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancies, career cut-off, family and friends' disconnections and missed opportunities to mend fences among others (23, 26).

### **Social and Criminal Justice**

The connection between drug abuse and crime is apparent. Several youths who abused drugs, the justice systems for the minors' responses include arrest, rulings, and rehabilitation among other interventions. Not all drug abuse leads to criminality and/or troublemaking, but the two actions often result into issues with impact on school attendance, family life, joining negative peers (27). In several societies, youth are prohibited from having illicit drugs in their possession and/or using them, despite that, there is compelling evidence linking youth delinquency with drug abuse. Drug abuse by the youth is linked to both violent and profit-making crimes. Residents of the community become more fearful as a result of the increase youth delinquencies, which increases demand for the establishment of criminal justice services for youth (6). Therefore, social, and criminal justice issues

that are frequently connected to drug abuse by youth include gangs, drug trafficking, prostitution, and an increase in the number of youth homicides, and the associated stigma.

### **Drug Abuse and Stigma**

Similar to the majority of chronic illnesses like diabetes, asthma, or heart disease, treating drug abuse typically does not result in a full recovery. Drug abuse can, however, be effectively treated and controlled. Abusers who are in recovery run the risk of relapsing for several years, if not their entire life. According to research, individuals have the best chance of success when using a combination of behavioral therapy and medications for addiction. Continued recovery may result from treatment strategies that are adapted to each patient's drug use habits and any co-occurring medical, mental, and social issues. It is possible to minimize or reduce damaging stigma and hostility around with minor stigma modifications.

The stigma associated with addiction may stem from out-of-date notions or a dread of the unfamiliar or misunderstood. Stigma is a chronic social issue that can be managed through awareness creation that is capable of promoting health and normal lives (28). Most professionals agree that anyone can develop drug abuse habit, due to the abused drugs highly addictive components (29).

### **Environmental Impact**

Drug abuse is consistently influence by external

surroundings. Abusers' environment contributes to drug abuse in a considerable percentage, making it difficult to predict the trends of environmental impact of drug abuse. Environmental impact evaluations of drug abuse rely on indirect indications, such as law enforcement data on arrest and drug seizures, overdose, treatment demand, and eventual deaths among others (30). Environmental impact of drug abuse may occur in several forms and ways.

- **Peers.** Youth who abuse drugs frequently feel isolated and stigmatized by their peers. Drug abusers frequently skip out school attendance and community events, robbing their peers and communities of the beneficial contributions they may have otherwise made (31).
- **Families.** In addition to personal hardships, drug abuse by youth can put many elements of family life in danger and cause family crises, sometimes leading to disintegration. Drugs abuse by youth have a significant impact on both parents and siblings (32). The financial and emotional resources of a family can be deeply depleted by drug abusers (7).
- **Criminal Behavior.** The comparatively small number of youths who abused heroin have a disproportionately negative impact on crime in their neighborhoods (19). Drug abuse by youth and crimes are the most often committed offences by heroin users, who spend 40–60% of their free time committing crimes (22).
- **Purchase Trends.** The consumption of illicit drugs

has reportedly increased globally. This trend is affirmed by data on the area used for drug cultivation, manufacturing, and seizures, imply that consumption has remained largely consistent since 2010 (5). With global increases in drugs seizures, particularly in Africa and Mexico, the illicit market for illicit drugs appears to be expanding (8).

- **Legal.** Youths in illegal possession of illicit drugs end up in court. A person may potentially receive a prison sentence if they are found to be distributing or selling drugs. A youth's future existence may be quite challenging if their criminal records are established. A criminal record may result in ongoing legal problems such as: Receiving financial aid for education; returning to school; becoming eligible for public housing; finding employment; and joining the military among others (17, 19).

### Recommendations

To curtail the menace of drug abuse impact on the youth, there is a need.

- To design a comprehensive prevention package in the contexts of health education, guidance, and counselling topic, to be implemented by the public, civil society, and private sectors with stake in drug abuse control.
- To encourage political commitment by the public sector through the provision of sustainable

funding mechanisms that would support the prevention economic, social and environmental impact of drug abuse on the affected youth.

- To Create and develop parent/guardian orientation and sensitization programs, on effective parents-to-ward/child communication skills, to fortify family bonds, that will stop their kids from patronizing drugs.

### CONCLUSION

The review has thus, identify four range of harmful impacts, thus health, economic, social, and environmental, resulting from drug abuse by the youth. The youth who abused drugs struggle in a variety of ways, which includes academic, physical, and mental health issues, and cordial relationship with their peers, among others. That being said, drug abused by the youth have consequential impact on their health, and behaviors in general, due to its influence on the brain growth during the teenage and early twenties. To address the raised issues, enhanced policies, and behavioral change programs among other interventions are required.

### References

1. World Health Organization. 2012. 'WHO, UNODC, UNAIDS technical guide for countries to set targets for universal access to HIV prevention, treatment and care for injecting drug users–2012 revision'.

2. Dalal, PK %J Indian Journal of Psychiatry. 2020. 'Changing scenario of addiction psychiatry: challenges and opportunities', 62: 235.
3. WHO/UNODC. 2018. "Substance use disorder treatment facility survey, World Health Organization & United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. ." In.
4. Horyniak, Danielle, Jason S Melo, Risa M Farrell, Victoria D Ojeda, and Steffanie A %J PLoS one Strathdee. 2016. 'Epidemiology of substance use among forced migrants: a global systematic review', 11: e0159134.
5. UNODC. 2014. 'World Drug Report - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)'.  
[http://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/2014/World\\_Drug\\_Report\\_2014\\_web.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/2014/World_Drug_Report_2014_web.pdf).
6. Kalema, David, Wouter Vanderplasschen, Sofie Vindevogel, Peter K Baguma, Ilse %J International Journal of Alcohol Derluyn, and Drug Research. 2017. 'Treatment challenges for alcohol service users in Kampala, Uganda', 6: 27-35.
7. UBS. 2011. 'Uganda bureau of statistics: Uganda demographic and health survey. Measure DHS-ICF International Calverton. Maryland, USA'.
8. UNODC 2022. 'World Drug Report: highlights trends on cannabis post-legalization, environmental impacts of illicit drugs, and drug use among women and youth. Vienna 2022'.  
<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/unodc-world-drug-report-2022>.
9. UNESCO. 2015. 'United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Substance use prevention in educational settings in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. A review of policies and practices. Moscow, 2015.'.
10. WHO. 2014. 'Global status report on alcohol and health. World Health Organization, Geneva. 2014.'.
11. Weitzman, Elissa R, Parissa K Salimian, Lily Rabinow, and Sharon %J Plos one Levy. 2019. 'Perspectives on substance use among youth with chronic medical conditions and implications for clinical guidance and prevention: A qualitative study', 14: e0209963.
12. Beach, Steven RH, Allen W Barton, Man Kit Lei, Jelani Mandara, Ashley C Wells, Steven M Kogan, and Gene H %J Prevention Science Brody. 2016. 'Decreasing substance use risk among

- African American youth: Parent-based mechanisms of change', 17: 572-83.
13. Lei, Man-Kit, Gene H Brody, and Steven RH %J Family process Beach. 2022. 'Intervention effects on self-control decrease speed of biological aging mediated by changes in substance use: A longitudinal study of African American youth', 61: 659-73.
  14. Mohammadnezhad, Masoud, Anjali Thomas, and Russell %J Oman medical journal Kabir. 2020. 'Determinants and prevention strategies of substance abuse in pacific countries: A systematic review', 35: e187.
  15. Sujan, Md Safaet Hossain, Rafia Tasnim, Sahadat Hossain, Md Tajuddin Sikder, and M Tasdik %J Journal of Public Health Hasan. 2021. 'Impact of drug abuse on academic performance and physical health: a cross-sectional comparative study among university students in Bangladesh': 1-7.
  16. Folk, Johanna B, Lili Ramos, Eraka P Bath, Brooke Rosen, Brandon DL Marshall, Kathleen Kemp, Larry Brown, Selby Conrad, Marina %J Journal of consulting Tolou-Shams, and clinical psychology. 2021. 'The prospective impact of adverse childhood experiences on justice-involved youth's psychiatric symptoms and substance use', 89: 483.
  17. Degenhardt, Louisa, Lisa Dierker, Wai Tat Chiu, Maria Elena Medina-Mora, Yehuda Neumark, Nancy Sampson, Jordi Alonso, Matthias Angermeyer, James C Anthony, Ronny %J Drug Bruffaerts, and alcohol dependence. 2010. 'Evaluating the drug use "gateway" theory using cross-national data: consistency and associations of the order of initiation of drug use among participants in the WHO World Mental Health Surveys', 108: 84-97.
  18. Patel, Vikram, Dan Chisholm, Tarun Dua, Ramanan Laxminarayan, and María Elena Medina-Mora. 2016. 'Mental, Neurological, and Substance Use Disorders: Disease Control Priorities, (Volume 4)'. 20.
  19. Degenhardt, Louisa, Sarah Larney, Jo Kimber, Natasa Gisev, Michael Farrell, Timothy Dobbins, Don J Weatherburn, Amy Gibson, Richard Mattick, and Tony %J Addiction Butler. 2014. 'The impact of opioid substitution therapy on mortality post-release from prison: retrospective data linkage study', 109: 1306-17.

21. Estrada, Antonio L %J Public Health Reports. 2002. 'Epidemiology of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and tuberculosis among minority injection drug users', 117: S126
22. Nguyen-Louie, Tam T, Norma Castro, Georg E Matt, Lindsay M Squeglia, Ty Brumback, Susan F %J Journal of studies on alcohol Tapert, and drugs. 2015. 'Effects of emerging alcohol and marijuana use behaviors on adolescents' neuropsychological functioning over four years', 76: 738-48.
23. Sahu, Kamlesh Kumar, and Soma %J Bangabasi Academic Journal Sahu. 2012. 'Substance abuse causes and consequences', 9: 52-59.
24. Potapchik, Elena, and Larisa %J Value in Health Regional Issues Popovich. 2014. 'Social cost of substance abuse in Russia', 4: 1-5.
25. Medline Plus. 2019. 'What is drug use.'. <https://medlineplus.gov/drugsandyoungpeople.html>.
26. Tulu, Shimelis Keno, and Wosen %J American Journal of Applied Psychology Keskis. 2015. 'Assessment of causes, prevalence and consequences of alcohol and drug abuse among Mekelle University, CSSL 2nd year students', 3: 47-56.
27. Ferguson, Kristin M, Kimberly Bender, Sanna J Thompson, Elaine M Maccio, Bin Xie, David %J Violence Pollio, and Victims. 2011. 'Social control correlates of arrest behavior among homeless youth in five US cities', 26: 648-68.
28. NIDA. 2019. 'Genetics and Epigenetics of Addiction Drug Facts'. <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugfacts/genetics-epigenetics-addiction>
29. Drug Free 2022. 'Risk Factors for Addiction.'. <https://drugfree.org/article/risk-factors-problem-use-addiction/>.
30. Scheim, Ayden I, Nazlee Maghsoudi, Zack Marshall, Siobhan Churchill, Carolyn Ziegler, and Dan %J BMJ open Werb. 2020. 'Impact evaluations of drug decriminalisation and legal regulation on drug use, health and social harms: a systematic review', 10: e035148.
31. Moses, Tally %J Social science, and medicine. 2010. 'Being treated differently: Stigma experiences with family, peers, and school staff among adolescents with mental health disorders', 70: 985-93.
32. Dykes, Glynnis, Riefqah %J International Journal of Adolescence

Casker, and Youth. 2021.  
'Adolescents and substance abuse:  
the effects of substance abuse on  
parents and siblings', 26: 224-37.