

**SUBSTANCES ABUSE AMONG COMMERCIAL  
TRICYCLE RIDERS IN KANO METROPOLIS, NIGERIA**

By

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**Abstract**

The study examined the nature, extent and patterns of substance intake by tricycle riders in Kano metropolis. The objectives of the study were to find out the most common substances abused, the reasons for the abuse, the socio-economic characteristics of the abusers, the patterns of substance abuse and the impact of substance abuse on the riders and Kano community. A total of 365 respondents were interviewed using the Snowball sampling technique. The Gateway and Availability proneness theories were used as guiding perspectives for the study. The study revealed that male youths between the ages of 24-29 years abuse substances more. The substances abused include marijuana, tobacco, Lizard droppings, Gadangi, Zagami, Rubber solution, Benelyn syrup, paint thinners, and nail polish removers to mention but a few. The reason for the intake of the substances range from to increase work performance, increase sexual performance, to suppress anxiety to being bold. It also revealed that substances abused by the tricycle riders affect their health and reduce level of productivity as well as increase in high accident risks on highways. There is significant relationship between age and substance abuse. The paper solicited for strict laws against abuse of psychoactive drugs by NDLEA and Law Enforcement Agencies as well as an increase in awareness campaigns by government against the upsurge in substance abuse.

**Keywords:** Psychoactive substances, gateway drugs, proneness, high health risks, drug dependence, youths, motivating factors.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse has become a major concern of health practitioners, social workers, criminologists and governments in many parts of the World today. This is because of the problems abusers have posed for the society. Substance abuse is the use of illegal drugs and other chemicals and fluids which cause psychological and physiological effects to individuals. The World Health Organization (WHO) (2006) defines substance abuse as excess use of chemical of normally prescribed dosage and frequently even with knowledge that they may cause serious problems and eventually lead to addiction. In the same vein, Cherly and Gert (2003) refers to substance abuse as the use of all chemical, drugs and industrial solvents that can produce dependence.

Drugs which exert their major effects on the brain and psychological functioning, resulting in such effects like sedation, stimulation, or change in mood or behaviour are called psychoactive substances (Burns, 1988). The maladaptive use of such substances such as when they are not medically necessary, when they are used against legal prohibition or when there is a maladaptive or excessive use of socially acceptable drugs, resulting in significant impairment in personal, social and occupational functioning constitute the phenomenon of drug abuse (Odejide and Morakinyo (2004). Haladu (2003) has identified causes of drug abuse to include experimental curiosity, peer group influence, lack of parental supervision, personality problems due to socio-economic conditions, the need for energy for long hours, availability of the drugs and the need to prevent the occurrence of withdrawal syndrome.

Substance abuse is on the increase among students, adolescent youths and adults in Nigeria who take these drugs for various reasons, (Nevadomsky, 1981; Adesina ,1975; Orubu ,1983; Odivwri, 2008). Kano State is no exception to high consumption of these psychoactive drugs. NDLEA (2009) release on National Drug Abuse Index put Kano State as topping the list, followed by Katsina State. Therefore, this study was focused on just the tricycle riders who consume psychoactive substances. The Kano State government banned on January 22, 2013 the use of motorcycles popularly known as “Achaba” for commercial purposes to curb its use by “Boko Haram” insurgents attack in the metropolis. This led to upsurge in the use of tricycles for commercial purposes.

## 2. The Study Area

Kano metropolis lies between Lat.  $11^{\circ}5'$  North to  $12^{\circ}7'$  North and Long.  $8^{\circ}23'$  East to  $8^{\circ}5'$  East. It consists of eight Local Government Areas. These are Dala, Fagge, Gwale, Kano Municipal, Tarauni, Kumbotso, Nassarawa and Ungogo. The area extent is about  $299\text{km}^2$  and according to 2006 population census the metropolis has 2.8 million people (NPC, 2006). Today, the area constitutes the second largest industrial and commercial nerve of Nigeria, Lagos being the first. Because of these characteristics, many people throng to the area for their daily livelihood hence rise in need for improved transportation and the tricycle has become the commonest means of transportation in the metropolis.

### **3. Methodology**

The study is a descriptive sample survey. A total of 365 respondents were interviewed using the Snowball sampling technique. Pre-coded questionnaires known as Substance Abuse Questionnaire (SAQ) were designed and personally distributed to the identified abusers and two Hausa interpreters helped the researcher in case of non-English speaker. The results were analysed using tables.

### **4. Theoretical Framework**

Two theories underpinned this study. These are the Gateway Theory and the Availability Proneness Theory. The Gateway theory was put forward by Kandel(1975) to explain the stages that individuals pass through in the process of becoming a drug addict. According to him, people start using alcohol, tobacco or both before progressing to marijuana and other possibly hard drugs like cocaine and heroin. These initial drugs mentioned are referred to as “gateway drugs”. Gateway drugs are drugs that apparently lead to the abuse of other substances. (Firshein, 2003). The theory suggests that all things being equal, an adolescent who uses or experiments with one drug is likely to use other drugs in later life. In this connection, alcohol, tobacco and marijuana are often considered gateway drugs. The gateway theory of drug abuse holds that abusable drugs occupy distinct ranks in a hierarchy as well as a definite position in a temporal sequence. According to Ralph et al (2006) drug abuse is theorized to progress through a sequence of stages, beginning with legally and socially acceptable compounds that are low in hierarchy, followed by the use of illegal “soft” and later “hard” drugs ranked higher in the hierarchy. However, while it is possible that some drug abusers may follow this progress, it is not true that all drug abusers may have used the so called gateway drugs before using harder drugs.

On the other hand, the Availability proneness theory holds that individuals tend to abuse drugs because the drugs are readily available in the environment and so they have easy access to it. The availability proneness theory of drug abuse involves the proposition that drug abuse occurs when a prone individual is exposed to a high level of availability. (Smith, 1974). The concept of availability refers to the set of physical, social and economic circumstances surrounding the ease or difficulty of obtaining drugs, especially with reference to their costs and the amount of physical efforts required to obtain them. The availability theory is relevant to the study because there can be no abuse of any substance if they are not available in the environment where they are consumed.

### **5. Results**

A total of 365 respondents were interviewed. Table 1 showed that majority of the tricycle riders who abuse substances fall within the age range of 24-29 years constituting 35.6% of the respondents and most of the abusers are single. While the married

constitute 18%, the single abusers constitute 45.6%, Most of the tricycle riders substance abusers are of the Hausa-Fulani extraction, followed by Igbo and Yoruba.

Table 2 revealed that the commonest substances abused were marijuana (29%), Alcohol (17%) and two local intoxicants known as Gadangi (14.8%) and Zagami (10.4%). Other substances abused include Chinese capsule, rubber solution, Beneylin syrup, lizard droppings, paint thinner and Nail polish. The methodology of intake of the psychoactive drugs varies from individual to individual. Table 3 indicated that 29.3% of the respondents take substances by smoking; 24.4% by drinking while 10.7 of the respondents consume the substances through food and 8.7% through other forms of concoctions prepared. Table 4 shows the reasons for abuse of substances and other motivating factors behind the abuse. The result showed that 29.6% of the respondents take substance in order to increase performance in their work. 19.5% and 17.3% of the respondents engage in substance abuse for boldness and just for group acceptance respectively. However, 13.7% of the respondent indicated the reason being for enjoyment while 8.2% indicated that it enhances their sexual performance. The motivating factors for substance abuse by the riders were benefits derived (28.5%), availability (23.2%), low cost of purchase (27.1%) and poor law enforcement (3.7%).

Table 5 showed that 135 respondents representing 37% abuse substances on daily basis while 124 of the respondents constituting 34% abuse substance always. 9.3% of the respondents abuse substances occasionally and 7.4% abuse substances on monthly basis. Some of the tricycle riders combine substances on consumption. Although 52.9% of the respondents do not combine substances, 27.9% of the respondents combine two substances; 11.5% of the respondents combine three substances while 7.7% of the respondents combine more than three substances. The study also revealed that consumption of psychoactive substances has adverse effects on the commercial tricycle riders. 43.8% of the respondents suffer from ill-health, 17% lost their job of riding the cycles while 13.4% and 12% of the respondents agreed that it leads to low productivity by consumers and exposure to frequent accidents on city roads respectively.

## 6. Discussions

The study revealed that most tricycle riders in Kano metropolis abuse different types of substances. The common substances abused were marijuana, alcohol, zagami, Gadangi, Benelyn Syrup, solution. The substances are easily available to the abusers. For example, marijuana are transported from southern part of Nigeria, particularly Ondo and Edo States while lizard droppings, Zagami and Gadangi concoctions are prepared locally. Therefore, the availability theory is quite apposite in the causation of consumption of psychoactive substances in Kano. This confirms the assertions by Anumonye (1980) and Odivwri (2008) that commonly abused drugs among youths in Nigeria are alcohol, tobacco and marijuana.

The consumption of the substances is done individually or in groups, particularly pap drinking joints in the morning as food or in the afternoon when the riders park to consume prepared drink containing the intoxicants (Zagami or Gadangi). All the ethnic groups involved in commercial tricycle riding in the metropolis engage in substance abuse. The major reason for consumption is to increase performance and to be energetic at work. But it was discovered that the reverse is usually the case because by noon most of the youngsters park their tricycles to sleep due to weak effects of the substances consumed thus leading to low productivity or loss of jobs.

Evidence in the study showed that youngsters between the ages of 18 and 29 years are fully engaged in substance abuse and it is a bad indication as this category of the population forms the cream of the society and if the trend continues, it has negative impact for future leaders. There is a direct relationship between age and substance abuse by the riders. Though it is difficult to judge the relative effects of the abuse on the riders, it is clear that most abusers suffer from health problems on the long run; they constitute high accident risks to other road users and loss of man power due to body weakness or absence from work.

## **7. Conclusion**

The study has shown that there is high prevalence rate of substance abuse by commercial tricycle riders in Kano metropolis. The common substances abused like marijuana, tobacco, lizard dropping, Zagami and Gadangi among others are readily available and openly consumed without condemnation by the local community. Poverty did not play a major role as despite level of poverty affecting many of the abuser, they still have money to spend on them. The emerging patterns now include using the substance as part of drinks or soup or food as in the case of “Monkey Tail” or sprinkling on handkerchief to inhale.

Therefore, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), National Agency for Food and Drug Administration (NAFDAC), Kano Road Transport Agency (KAROTA) and the police should monitor the activities of the tricycle riders. Mass drug education should be embarked upon on the dangers of consumption of these psychoactive substances. Tricycle Registration Authority in the metropolis should properly educate potential riders on expected behaviour before granting of licences to operators.

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**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Age, Marital Status and Ethnic Affiliations**

<b>Age group</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
18-23	90	24.6
24-29	130	35.6
30-34	63	17.2
35-40	53	14.5
41 and above	29	7.9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Single	166	45.6
Married	66	18
Divorced	71	19.4
Separated	37	10.1
Widowed	18	4.8
Cohabiting	7	1.9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Ethnic Affiliations</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Hausa – Fulani	163	44.7
Igbo	69	18.9
Yoruba	66	18.1
Others	67	18.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2: Substances Abused by Respondents**

Type of substance	N	%
Alcohol	61	17
Marijuana	106	29
Tobacco	37	10
Chinese Capsule	13	3.5
Solution	9	2.5
Lizard droppings	12	3.3
Galangi	54	14.8
Zagami	38	10.4
Benelyn Syrup	14	3.8
Paint Thinner	8	2.2
Nail polish	5	1.4
Other stimulants	8	2.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3: Methods of Substance Abuse by Respondents**

Method	N	%
Drinking	89	24.4
Smoking	107	29.3
Sniffing	55	15
Injecting	5	1.4
Mixed with food	39	10.7
Concoctions	32	8.8
Others	38	10.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100</b>



**Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Reasons for abuse and motivating factors**

<b>Reasons for Abuse</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
For boldness	71	19.5
To increase performance at work	108	29.6
to increase sexual performance	30	8.2
To enjoy myself	50	13.7
For group acceptance	63	17.3
To reduce emotion or anxiety	26	7.1
Others	17	4.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Motivating factors</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Availability	85	23.2
Poor law enforcement	15	3.7
Law cost	99	27.1
Benefits derived	104	28.5
Poverty	48	13.1
Others	16	4.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 5: Frequency of substance Abuse by Respondents**

<b>Frequency of use</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Always	124	34.1
Occasionally	34	9.3
Weekly	20	5.5
Daily	135	37
Monthly	27	7.4
Unspecific	25	6.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 6: The extent of substance combination by Respondents**

<b>Nature of combination</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Two substances	102	27.9
Three substances	42	11.5
More than three substances	28	7.7
No combination	193	52.9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 7: Effects of substances Abuse on Respondents**

<b>Effects</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Ill-health	160	43.8
Reduction in productivity	49	13.4
Fighting	40	11
Exposure to accident risks	44	12
Loss of job	62	17
Others	10	2.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>100</b>