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## **Editorial Note**

In this issue, we continue to engage in how social and economic dynamics influence the family. The irrefutable point that the family is the basic unit of every society is made with the fervent belief that it nurtures its members and releases them to society. The failure or success of a society is intricately connected to how the family grooms its members. The inevitable conclusion is that the stronger the family in contemporary society, the better for all. In this light, Ayantayo blazed the trail by arguing that the traditional roles played by members of the family in the past have been affected by the ever-changing socio-economic factors in contemporary society. This dynamic and forward-looking social reality immediately suggests that members of the family must assume new roles that align with the demand and expectations of society. However, he argued that we must holistically develop a family based on blending treasured traditional values with contemporary dynamic values.

Alawode and Aderele examine the causes, effects, and solutions to substance abuse by members of the family. According to them, the rate at which the youth use or abuse substances has become so alarming that it requires deft musicological intervention. They argued that musicologists must take it as a point of duty to engage and minister to youth involved in substance use to restore them to fellowship with their families and Christ. Asaolu argued that although conflict is natural, marital conflict is complex and has serious implications for the family and society. Since conflict is human-made, Asaolu identified natural and potential causes of conflict in marriage and suggested that there are irreducible ethical prescriptions whose adoption and application can help to minimize conflict in the family. Salifu and Hammans's empirical exploration of drug abuse among the youth in the Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria, clearly shows that it has assumed a dangerous trend that requires urgent intervention by government institutions and the family. They suggest that ethical principles are required to address this trend through socialisation as well as the spiritual exercise of

faith. Adeola's article centers on how flexibility is a virtue that couples should cultivate to navigate traditional impositions that might negatively affect the family. He adopts a theological standpoint that argues that consistent and mutual fellowship together in the family helps prevent external infiltration into the family.

Odeleye and Adeyanju examine the necessity of resolving conflict among young couples. As part of the mandate of pastoral care ministry, pastors should ensure that their ministry intentionally cares about the health of young people's marriages. As a result of the potential consequences of failure in early marriages, the moral burden to guide and guard against unnecessary conflict in young homes must be borne by pastors by deploying their spiritual and moral training and authority. Oyedele specifically examines the roles of pastoral care in infidelity in Christian homes. He argues that one of the causes of conflict in the family is sexual infidelity by a spouse. This, he argues, can lead to the breakdown of marriage if pastoral care is not given in such a way as to ensure forgiveness. Still, on pastoral care, Adeyanju unfurls the complexities that COVID-19 imposed on communal coexistence. Social distancing affected the communal setting in that members of the community had to deliberately keep some reasonable distance to be safe. At such a moment, Adeyanju thinks that pastoral care ministry is critical in mitigating the consequences of social distancing and keeping healthy by all.

Kelechi and Oderinus's interest is in unhealthy rivalry among siblings in the family. The adverse effects rivalry has on the family call for critical attention to be paid to it. They suggest that parents must conduct themselves do not suggest that they love one child more than the other. Ogundipe returns to the role of the pastoral care unit in fostering unity and resolving marital conflict. To correctly resolve conflict, each issue that causes conflict must be examined on its own rather than deploy one solution fits all approach. This is where the dexterity of pastoral care comes in. Oluwaronke believes that Christian parenting is a critical means of mitigating social vices that

have continued to plague contemporary society. Oluwaronke itemizes and also proffers solutions to the causes of social vices that require good parenting and counseling to resolve. Victor re-examines the concept of one flesh marital bond as a quintessential measure couples need to take to resolve their conflict. The one flesh approach argues that conflict inflicts self-pain on the couples, and they should see each other as one. And finally, Ayinde explores the impacts of social media on Christian youth couples. She argues that time is essential in developing relationships in marriage. Consequently, when more time is spent on social media to neglect the spouse, conflict is bound to arise. Christian principles are thus recommended to ensure a balanced use of social media for the family's health.

I, therefore, welcome you to explore in detail the arguments and issues raised in this issue.

Prof. Benson Ohihon Igboin  
Editor in Chief

## **MISSIOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO THE IMPACT OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE ON FAMILY AND SOCIETY**

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### **Abstract**

Substance abuse is a global phenomenon with associated hazards to families and society. It has taken diverse forms from one family and society to another; it is, therefore, necessary for all stakeholders to approach it diversely. Conventional treatment through medical sciences is fundamental; however, the complex socio-economic factors have rendered it ineffective in some regions of the world. The response of God through the activities of the Church has become imperative in tackling this global neurological illness ravaging families and societies across continents. This report provides a concise missiological response to substance abuse in family and society. In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, no singular method can help resolve the menace of substance abuse in families and society. The combination of conventional and spiritual methods in combating substance abuse is a necessary step to be taken by all stakeholders in the fight against substance abuse. Spiritual input of the Church of God has proven effective in some regions of the world, and it is applicable in any society where there is humankind with this problem. Therefore, through the descriptive research method, the writer elucidates the concept of substance abuse in the 21st century, the causes of substance abuse, missiological response to substance abuse and draws a logical conclusion.

Keywords: Drug abuse, Church, Missions, Impact and Society.

## **Introduction**

Generically, 'substance' is a philosophical term corresponding to the Greek word *ousia*, which means "something that stands underground" (Hoard, 2018:1) but connotes drugs or prescription medications and chemicals in social and medical sciences. A substance is any drug that changes the human body's function mentally, physically, or emotionally (Abriel, 2018:7). This drug description does not differentiate between tobacco, illicit drugs, prescription medications, solvent, alcohol, and over-the-counter drugs. When taken into the body, it includes anything that positively or negatively affects it and encompasses both licit and illicit drugs (Abriel, 2018:7). On the other hand, abuse is the excessive use or misuse of licit and illicit substances.

Substance abuse, therefore, represents a wide-ranging spectrum of the use of therapeutic and non-therapeutic drugs or substances with physiological and psychoactive effects on the body and mind. As stated earlier, it refers to the excessive use or misuse of licit and illicit drugs. It is the loss of control over drug use or compulsively seeking and taking the drugs despite adverse consequences (Nestler, 2017:119). It is a neuropsychiatric disorder characterised by a recurring desire to continue taking the drugs despite harmful consequences (Mukesh, Sanyaaders & Kumari, 2021:17). It is illicit and non-medical drug usage.

Substance abuse has an intense psychosomatic effect across all areas of society. Given the paucity of substance use surveys in many families and the larger society, it often goes undetected for months or even years until the users' damages occur through neuropsychiatric manifestations; because of limited research data, and insufficient knowledge, many family members and societies often overlook substance abuse and its damaging effects. Substance abuse amongst youth and the elderly is a global phenomenon affecting every race, tribe, community, and nation.

## **Substance abuse in the 21st century**

United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime in 2018 revealed that 29.5 million substance users globally suffer from substance abuse disorder and other substance-related crises (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018:6); this is worrisome because no part of the global society is free from the menace of this neurological sickness. Medical prescriptions like codeine, tramadol, and raphrol, as well as non-medical substances like cocaine, ketamine, methamphetamine, tobacco, alcohol, cannabis (marijuana), "hard-coke" (a mixture of Coca-Cola, Codeine and Tramadol), and substances like paint thinner, and glue have become abused substances in virtually all human society. Although the damage varies from one society and family to another, the negative impact is similar.

Family and society rules and laws, and efforts from other stakeholders in the fight against substance abuse globally, have not been able to reduce the impacts as statistics have shown that the extent of drug use amongst younger people remains higher than before (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018:6) with cannabis on top of the preference list. There are no race or people to which licit or illicit substance has engaged in vain once it is apprehended. All who embrace its allures are not free from its negative consequences.

Before examining the impacts of substance abuse, it is imperative to know the causes of such abuses in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Causes of Substance Abuse**

**Recreational Settings:** Recreation settings are places for relaxation. Traditionally, these places include college bars, community or street bars, house parties and concert centres. However, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, creational settings have become availability centres through which people access and abuse substances of all kinds. Substances have filtered into recreational centres, and it has become a relaxation "drink" of a kind in this century, and abuse has become inevitable. The mere fact that a substance is available at a reduced price is a platform for abuse (Ezinnen & Nweze, 2011: 148-149). The view of Ongwae

supports the fact that a neighbourhood where substances are available and accessible increases the involvement of youth in substance abuse (Ongwae, 2016:20). The relative ease with which substances are available to a person will ultimately increase their abuse.

**Unethical-family Values:** Modernism in the 21st century arrived with a dark side. Although there is no perfect index to measure the impacts of the dark side of modernity on family values globally, nevertheless the words of Jeff Alexander capture it vividly:

To say that modernity has been a disappointment would be understanding horrors that continue to endanger the very existence of humankind. Nevertheless, to say modernity has been only a nightmare would be telling a one-sided story. Modernity has also been liberating, providing ideas, movements, and institutions that can repair some of its self-inflicted injuries and cultural and structural disorders that have plagued social life from its beginning (Alexander, 2013:1).

Modernity has reformulated all facets of humankind, which has subjected family structure to new strains. Complex factors influence substance abuse by any person affected, one of which is unethical family values. This factor is often beyond the control of the person. The home has been the first human environment where children relate with other family members. The family is the building block and smallest unit of society and the support base for growth, and this is the first line of defence against any problematic attitude (Tsang & Leung 2005:77-89). The possibilities are high when a family with corrupt values raises a child; such can render the child vulnerable to substance abuse later in life (Spooner & Hetherington 2014 456). Many victims of substance abuse are products of 21st -century families with unhealthy lifestyles like substance abuse.

### **Negative Human Relationships**

At the micro level, the family influences a person on substance abuse, but at the macro level, the larger society equally contributes to the

substance abuse vulnerability of a person. At the societal level, peer group influence is a major contributing factor to substance abuse. Findings have revealed that interactions with a peer group member who engages in substance use influence all the group members because of the socio-cultural process in which experienced users essentially teach new users (Abdalla, 2003:17). Generally, the urge to socialise is a norm for all humans. However, where the peer group is hooked on substance use, the pressure from such a group dictates behavioural patterns of a new person who seeks to secure the group's approval (Lutomia & Sikolia 2009:61). The risk factor is high for anyone who is part of a substance-abusing group not to be partaker with them.

### **Reverse Psychology**

Reverse psychology is the principle of subtly encouraging a behaviour or belief by advocating its opposite. That is, it is a technique that involves asserting a belief or behaviour contrary to the one anticipated, with the expectation that this approach will encourage the subject of the persuasion to do what is desired (Ibid). The adventure by people to experiment with new things like substance intake leads to extensive exploratory behaviour. Initially, this behaviour promises excitement (thrills), but the reverse is the case later. Substance abuse is a neuropsychiatric disorder characterised by a recurring desire to continue taking a substance despite harmful consequences. Abuse is first experimental, then occasional use and finally, increase to heavy usage and sometimes to a substance use disorder (Mukesh, Sanyaaders, & Priyanka2021:73). The exciting reward promised initially when a person is experimenting with a substance will sooner or later become an addiction that adversely affects the nervous system.

### **The Impacts of Substance Abuse**

Substance abuse has multiple direct effects on a person, his or her family, and indirect effects on society. The following are the impacts of substance abuse, amongst others:

The Possibility of Lower Life Expectancy and Mental Health Disorderliness.

Various actions can lead to mortality, and substance abuse has been identified as one of them. According to the research conducted by Kendler, the excess mortality rate results directly or indirectly from substance abuse (Kendler, 2017: 886). Likewise, mental health disorderliness is sometimes traceable to substance abuse (Kim, 2020:1).

Suicide Tendencies and Dysfunctional Social Relationships.

Substance abuse brings about the dysfunctional social relationship, which may lead to suicide tendencies, especially among children that are involved in alcohol abuse (Wu, 200:08)

Destructive Behavioural Patterns/Risky sexual Behaviour (like rape).

Destructive behavioural patterns like cutting oneself, driving while drunk, using unsterilised needles, unprotected/weird sexual practices, and a few others can be observed among individuals involved in substance abuse (Moonajilin, 2021:3).

Unemployment and Physical health challenges

Substance abuse results in psychotic disorders, which can lead to physical health challenges. Such an individual with a psychotic disorder has little to offer to the community and lacks employment (Fiorentini, 2021: 5).

### **Missiological Response**

Research showed that family religiosity helps prevent substance use and brings recovery for substance-dependent people. Emerging reports emanating from Latin America suggest that religious groups like the Evangelicals involve in the recuperation of drug addicts within the religious setting, using only the faith of their adherents as a means of treatment without recourse to any medications (Saude 2008: 42). Although Pardini et al point out that while few scientific studies analyse the impact of religiosity in treating people who abuse substances, many researchers theorise about the potential factor (Pardini, Plante, Herman, &Stump

2000:19). However, there is strong evidence that religiosity reduces drug consumption which is better for recovering patients receiving medical treatment for drug addictions (Hodge, Cardenas & Montoya 2001:25).

The import of the above assertion may be described in words borrowed from two ex-substance users from Latin America:

I know that I had to find God. As I was hearing things about the Evangelicals everywhere and thought to myself, if God did heal blind men and including lepers, He can as well cure the drug addict. "The solution is to have faith in God, and you will see that God is powerful (Sanchez 2006:3-4)

These testimonies prove the effectiveness of God's power in curing illnesses, including substance abuse.

The Missiological Response shall be discussed through three offers:

Faith in God through Prayers.

Bible Study.

Accountability Group Support (cell fellowship)

### **Faith in God through prayers.**

Historically, faith in God and religious confessions have served as 'religious treatments' among the Evangelicals for all offenders, including drug addicts (Mark 2:5, Luke 17:37). Moreover, the treatment is free and easily accessible. Medical practitioners have often advised that medical treatment should be sought simultaneously with spiritual assistance. Faith can heal, promote a person's mental health, and save them from any form of sin, including substance abuse (drug addiction) (Romans 10:9-13). The Christian missionary should employ the place and importance of prayers as an anxiolytic method to 'treat substance abusers in families and society.

In the form of conversion, religious confessions and pardons allow substance users to rid themselves of the blame for the mistakes of their past life, thus open up the possibility of a new future starting from scratch (Sanchez 2006:17). Confessions through prayer calm a substance user by placing him in a meditative and mind-altering state and help the 'recuperant' develop faith in God by sharing the responsibility for the 'treatment' with God.

Additionally, the role of Christian missionaries in helping those addicted to substance abuse is to use faith in the living God through the proclamation of the morality of the Gospel to deal with the emotional state of the addict and improve their self-esteem, thus, helping them to face up to any future difficulties relying on the power the Gospel provides for all who believe. The Christian missionary is better equipped with the Gospel prayer tool at his disposal to help families of drug addicts because prayers deal with both the spiritual and psychological effects of drug addiction.

### **Bible Study**

Christian missionaries have deployed the tool of missionary education to exercise a decisive influence on their target groups' moral and religious future. All the students who attended Christian mission schools received daily instruction in the Christian scriptures (Charles 1915:128). Bible study is part of a Christian missionary to influence the life of one damaged through substance abuse. Bible teachings that emphasise the purpose of living using arguments that focus on God's plan in that person's life will undoubtedly help anyone who has been out-raised socially due to substance abuse to reintegrate the person into God's family and society at large.

### **Accountability group support (cell fellowship)**

Accountability group support or cell fellowship is one common element of religious treatment for drug addicts. The essence of this cell fellowship is to create a spiritual micro-family or society for persons undergoing religious treatment from substance abuse to find recovery support. Dermatis et al noted that the cohesion in the cell fellowship provides friendships that are important in drug addicts' recovery as the cell begins to form a new micro-society in which they feel accepted and valued (Dermatis, Salke, Galanter & Bunt, 2006).

A hopeful symptom from cell fellowship is the confession made by one recovery patient who affirms: "I worshipped every day at the meetings; it was there I found freedom and God began to bless

us, and I no longer wanted to carry on with my old life (Publica, 2008:42)." The Christian missionary must realise the strategic place of cell fellowship in treating persons suffering substance abuse and effectively utilise it as a response to substance abuse in this century.

## **Conclusion**

Substance abuse is a critical combination of many risk factors in a person's socio-cultural environment. The protective factors absent at a particular stage of development in a person's life make a difference in people's susceptibility to substance abuse. Poverty, negative peer pressure, lack of opportunities for socio and economic advancements, and lack of family protection have contributed significantly to those who fall victim to substance abuse and those who do not. The response of the Church in dealing with this new social phenomenon is to effectively apply the spiritual tools of prayers, Bible teaching and cell fellowship in the recovery process of patients under her care.

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