



## Reflections on the adverse implications of drug abuse and illicit trafficking

T I Akomolede, Adetifa E K

Lecturers, Faculty of Law, Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

### Abstract

The popular saying that every person has the right to go to heavens the way he wants would seem to have ostensibly lent credence to the attitudinal disposition of drug abusers who speciously believe that their indulgence in illicit drug consumption are private affairs that ordinarily should not attract prohibitive government intervention. Preponderant majority of drug abusers cannot readily reconcile themselves with the reality that their indulgence is a crime and where it has been so declared to be a crime, to them, it is a genre of victimless crime. Notwithstanding the take of drug abusers on the consequences of their acts, evidence abounds as to the deleterious aftermaths of drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking not only on the abusers themselves but on the society at large. This paper seeks to examine some of such adverse effects.

**Keywords:** reflections on the advers, implications of drug, illicit trafficking

### Introduction

Drug abuse and illicit trafficking as a form of crime is caused by a variety of factors ranging from social, economic to political among other factors. Aside from the basic causal factors, some incidental factors which are promoting drug trafficking especially in developing countries include corruption, weak institutional enforcement mechanism, complicity by drug control officials with traffickers, inefficient justice delivery system, poor governance, lack of political will, ill equipped and inadequate manpower, porosity of borders among others. There is no doubt that the menace of drug abuse and illicit trafficking anywhere in the world is an ill wind that blows no one any good in terms of social, economic, health and political manifestations among others [1]. It has been observed that there are 21 million victims around the world who abuse cocaine and heroin and 30 million who abuse amphetamine type stimulants [2]. In any part of the world, cannabis is the most widely abused drugs as there are about 190 million users around the world [3]. Drug use has been increasing among the young people worldwide [4]. Most drug abusers are under the age of 30 [5]. The economic cost of drug abuse is roughly estimated at approximately \$70 billion annually [6]. The illicit drug industry is now estimated to be over \$650 billion per year [7]. No doubt, the drug trade industry is harmful to the society. The devastating effects of drug trafficking may manifest in various ways. Some of these adverse effects which are by no means exhaustive are here examined.

### Health Impact

Drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking can be harmful to health in a number of ways, through both immediate effects and damage to health over time. The health implications of drug abuse vary in degree and context depending on the type of the drug being abused. To drive home this point, the drugs to be considered in this paper and their peculiar effects are alcohol, methamphetamine, cocaine, hallucinogenic and marijuana respectively.

### Alcohol

Alcohol abuse is a pattern of problem drinking that result in health consequences, social, problems, or both. However,

alcohol dependence, or alcoholism, refers to a disease that is characterized by abnormal alcohol seeking behaviour that leads to impaired control over drinking. Short-term effects of alcohol use include distorted vision, hearing, and coordination impaired judgment, altered perceptions and emotions, bad breath; hangovers. Long-term effects of heavy alcohol use include loss of appetite, vitamin deficiencies, stomach ailments, liver damage, skin problems sexual impotence heart and central nervous system damage; memory loss among others [8].

### Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine is a stimulant drug chemically related to amphetamine but with stronger effects on the central nervous system. Street names for the drug include "speed," "meth," and "crank." Methamphetamine is used in pill form or in powdered form by snorting or injecting. Crystallized methamphetamine known as "ice," "crystal," or "glass," is a smokable and more powerful form of the drug. The effects of methamphetamine use include euphoria increased heart rate and blood pressure increased wakefulness; insomnia increased physical activity, decreased appetite; extreme anorexia respiratory problems hypothermia, convulsions, and cardiovascular problems, which can lead to death irritability, confusion, tremors anxiety, paranoia, or violent behaviour which can cause irreversible damage to blood vessels in the brain, producing strokes Methamphetamine users who inject the drug and share needles are at risk for acquiring HIV/AIDS [9].

### Cocaine

Cocaine is a white powder that comes from the leaves of the South American coca plant. Cocaine is either "snorted" through the nasal passages or injected intravenously. Cocaine belongs to a class of drugs known as stimulants, which tend to give a temporary illusion of limitless power and energy that leave the user feeling depressed, edgy, and craving more. Crack is a smokable form of cocaine that has been chemically altered [10]. Cocaine and crack are highly addictive. This addiction can erode physical and mental health and can become so strong that these drugs dominate

all aspects of an addict's life. Physical risks associated with using any amount of cocaine and crack are increase in blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate, and body temperature, heart attacks, strokes, and respiratory failure, hepatitis or AIDS through shared needles, brain seizures reduction of the body's ability to resist and combat infection. Psychological risks associated with cocaine consumption include violent, erratic, or paranoid behaviour hallucinations and "coke bugs"--a sensation of imaginary insects crawling over the skin, confusion, anxiety and depression, loss of interest in food or sex "cocaine psychosis"--losing touch with reality, loss of interest in friends, family, sports, hobbies, and other activities Some users spend hundreds or thousands of dollars on cocaine and crack each week and will do anything to support their habit. Many turn to drug selling, prostitution, or other crimes. Cocaine and crack use has been a contributing factor in a number of drowning, car crashes, falls, burns, and suicides. Cocaine and crack addicts often become unable to function sexually. Even first time users may experience seizures or heart attacks, which can be fatal.

### Hallucinogenic

Hallucinogenic drugs are substances that distort the perception of objective reality. The most well-known hallucinogens include phencyclidine, otherwise known as PCP, angel dust, or love boat; lysergic acid diethylamide, commonly known as LSD or acid; mescaline and peyote; and psilocybin, or "magic" mushrooms. Under the influence of hallucinogens, the senses of direction, distance, and time become disoriented. These drugs can produce unpredictable, erratic, and violent behaviour in users that sometimes leads to serious injuries and death<sup>[11]</sup>. The effect of hallucinogens can last for 12 hours. LSD produces tolerance, so that users who take the drug repeatedly must take higher and higher doses in order to achieve the same state of intoxication. This is extremely dangerous, given the unpredictability of the drug, and can result in increased risk of convulsions, coma, heart and lung failure, and even death. Physical risks associated with using hallucinogens include increased heart rate and blood pressure, sleeplessness and tremors act of muscular coordination, sparse, mangled, and incoherent speech decreased awareness of touch and pain that can result in self-inflicted injuries convulsions, coma; heart and lung failure.

Psychological risks associated with using hallucinogens flashbacks a sense of distance and estrangement depression, anxiety, and paranoia violent behaviour convulsion, suspicion, and loss of control behavior similar to schizophrenic psychosis, catatonic syndrome whereby the user becomes mute, lethargic, disoriented, and makes meaningless repeat sense of distance and estrangement depression, anxiety, and paranoia violent behaviour confusion, suspicion, and loss of control behaviour similar to schizophrenic psychosis catatonic syndrome whereby the user becomes mute, lethargic, disoriented, and makes meaningless repetitive movements.

### Marijuana

Marijuana is the most widely used illicit drug globally and tends to be the first illegal drug teens use. It can either be smoked or swallowed. Short-term effects of using marijuana include sleepiness, difficulty keeping track of time, impaired or reduced short-term memory reduced ability to perform

tasks requiring concentration and coordination, such as driving a car, increased heart rate, potential cardiac dangers for those with preexisting heart disease, bloodshot eyes, dry mouth and throat decreased social inhibitions paranoia, hallucinations<sup>[12]</sup>.

Long-term effects of using marijuana include enhanced cancer risk decrease in testosterone levels for men; also lower sperm counts and difficulty having children increase in testosterone levels for women; also increased risk of infertility diminished or extinguished sexual pleasure psychological dependence requiring more of the drug to get the same effect The physical effects of marijuana use, particularly on developing adolescents, can be acute. Marijuana blocks the messages going to your brain and alters your perceptions and emotions, vision, hearing, and coordination. A recent study of 1,023 trauma patients admitted to a shock trauma unit found that one-third had marijuana in their blood.

Globally, some 35 million people are estimated to suffer from drug use disorders and who require treatment services<sup>[13]</sup>. Perhaps the most evident problem caused by drug abuse is the role of drug injecting in the spread of HIV/AIDS through sharing injecting equipment<sup>[14]</sup>. By 2019, there were estimate of 38 million people living with HIV/AIDS<sup>[15]</sup>. The majority of these people live in sub-Saharan Africa<sup>[16]</sup>. The most common way of transmitting the virus is sex between men and women and the sharing of object- drug injecting which propel the virus in many. Once intoxicated, the users often let down their guard, engage in risky sexual behaviour and thus contract the virus.

Besides, some people indulge in prostitution to earn income as a means of financing drug consumption. Many commercial sex workers have in the process contracted HIV/AIDS among other sexually transmitted diseases which they keep spreading to their numerous unsuspecting customers. Women who inject drugs compared to their male counterparts have been found to have higher mortality rates, increased likelihood of injection-related problems, faster progression drug use dependency, higher levels of risky injection and/or sexual risk behaviour, and higher rates of HIV.

Drug addicts derive a 'high 'feeling from drugs consumption while some said it makes them feel very elated; it makes some have a sense of happiness and often times make them forget about their problems or challenges. For others, drug consumption inspires them to write, sing, draw and do so many other things. Meanwhile, human brain usually reward drug abusers by sending signal for more and when they do not get the drug supply, they are unable to cope or live a normal life.

While health problems primarily affect the drug abuser concerned and only indirectly affect society in general, by giving rise to higher health-care costs, the links between drug addiction, needle-sharing, prostitution, AIDS and other diseases are even more clearly demonstrable. This creates additional health dangers for society as a whole.

Problematic drug use is equally generally seen as a mental health issue and medical facilities are severely lacking in Nigeria and in Africa in general. In many countries, mental health units in hospitals are the only residential treatment options for drug users. Where mental homes are specifically established for the treatment of drug users, they constitute a huge financial drain on the government as such mental homes have to be maintained at the expense of government

whose resources could have been channeled towards provision of infrastructural and socio- amenities for the citizenry.

Unfortunately, there are no adequate treatment places for those who use substances. The few government Neuro-psychiatric Hospitals in Nigeria, can only take limited number of patients which is incredibly small compared to the hundreds of thousands of people that would require such treatment <sup>[17]</sup>. Most of the private rehabilitation houses springing up across Nigeria as in many other African countries do not have full-fledge and complete structure of professionals. This is because of the cost implication of hiring the line of professionals, psychiatrist, psychologists, social workers and other staff.

### **Educational Impact**

Students who use drugs often suffer from impairment of short-term memory and other intellectual faculties, impaired tracking ability in sensory and perceptual functions, preoccupation with acquiring drugs, adverse emotional and social development and thus generally impaired classroom performance. Reduced cognitive efficiency leads to poor academic performance and a resulting decrease in self-esteem. This contributes to instability in an individual's sense of identity which, in turn, is likely to contribute to further drug consumption, thus creating a vicious circle. Drug consumption can also negatively affect education and youth in another way. Hard drugs consumption by students in schools could result in lower school enrollment, attendance and non completion of course of studies. School attendance rates go down and already high dropout rates soar. Young people believe that they can get rich quick; they avoid school and end up as unskilled, unemployed and unproductive citizens and ultimately a burden to the society. They may even become drug traffickers. Once the "ride" is over, however, they do not have the necessary educational preparation or background to get proper jobs. Hence, they remain uneducated victims of their own illusions. Unemployable young men ultimately become angry, aggressive and violent. In the end, the circle of poverty continues unbroken through their own children.

Another impact of drugs on education is in the area of promotion of cultism in the educational institutions. Illustratively, it has become an open secret that hard drugs have infiltrated the Nigerian educational sector even from primary school level to tertiary institution. The illicit consumption of drugs by students has promoted and still promoting culture of cultism which has become a worrisome trend in the nation's educational institutions. These cultists usually commit gruesome crimes threaten both academic and non-academic staff in the academic communities where they exist. Indeed, the activities of these cultists have wrecked and are still wrecking incalculable havoc on the academic community as evidenced in wanton killing of innocent student during rival cult clashes; sexual assault on female students and even reckless murder of innocent lecturers and non-academic staff. Besides, violent cult activities on the campus have led to incessant closure of educational institutions for several months thereby needlessly prolonging the duration of academic calendar in those institutions. Many students have equally lost their lives in road accidents while travelling back home during such forced closure of their institutions. Some female students are constrained to indulge in prostitution to while

away their time while at home; some male students have equally been found to indulge in armed robbery and other violent crimes out of dishonourable idleness. After all, an idle hand is a workshop for the devil.

### **Economic Impact**

When the drug trade is linked with violence, instability and weakened rule of law, economic growth may decline as a result of higher risks and lower investment. No doubt, instability and weakened rule of law deter investors as no reasonable investor will like to invest in an atmosphere devoid of stability and predictable rule of law. Even in the absence of instability caused by drug related violence, drug trafficking can destabilize the economy in several ways. First, inflows of illicit profits from drug trade may inflate the currency and make a legitimate export less competitive, which is known as the Dutch disease. Second, drug traffickers may evade customs excises at the same time that their containers evade inspection, which allows them to under-price their competitors and push them out of the market. Such unfair competition arising from drug trade once generated public uproar in the business community in Mozambique <sup>[18]</sup>. Third, to launder drug money, drug traffickers may invest in real estate or front operations such as hotels, which can contribute to disproportionately expand financial, real estate and construction industries and elevated real estate prices, increasing the costs of business across all sectors of the economy <sup>[19]</sup>.

The increased violence and crimes that persist in drug ravaging countries and the decline of a productive and reliable work force undermines the business and tourism sectors <sup>[20]</sup>. This discourages investment leading to a further dependency on drug trafficking and declining prospects of escaping that dependency. The economic weight of this flow could create a 'Dutch disease' effect, in which other forms of commercial activity become less attractive than drug trafficking and this inevitably has a negative effect on state revenue, rendering the Government unable to provide public goods and services facilitative of domestic development and economic growth.

While drug abuse affects labour markets by reducing productivity at work, it also generates some employment in the negative sense of it; particularly in the drug-producing countries <sup>[21]</sup>. The employment-generating effect of the drug industry has been best demonstrated in Bolivia <sup>[22]</sup>. Some jobs are also created in industries supplying the coca and cocaine producers, including industries that supply precursors. In the mid-1980s, more than half the total amount of toilet paper produced in Bolivia was used in the Chapare area as a filtering agent in coca paste and cocaine processing. Jobs were thus provided for some 2,000 people who produced, transported and sold the paper <sup>[23]</sup>.

The lucrative nature of drug trafficking creates the illusion that it is a short time root to economic prosperity. Hence, many farmers show preference to the cultivation or production of cannabis as opposed to conventional agricultural products that are of nutritional value to the general populace. In consequence therefore, most farmers divert their energy to planting cannabis thereby contributing to the economy in the negative sense of it. Paradoxically, the drug problem also generates unproductive employment in the enforcement, healthcare and social service sectors. Such employment would not have been necessary if the drug problem did not exist in the first place. The costs of



this type of employment have to be borne by the general public through tax payment and other means. This raises the tax burden and reduces overall competitiveness and thus cuts down on the number of "productive" jobs in the economy.

### Social Impact

Drug users constitute a lot of social nuisance to the society. Dangerous driving, disobedience of the law, erosion of infant-parent bonds are some of such damaging social malaise, emanating from drug addiction. Family and friends equally feel the effects of drug addiction. Drug users who are preoccupied with the drug usually have changeable mood, which is likely to cause marital problems or violence. Indeed, drug addiction can disrupt family life and create destructive patterns of co-dependency; this problem is enormous and can ultimately hinder development across board in the society as family represents the fulcrum of any society. Where a person is convicted and jailed for drug offence, time in jail takes such an individual away from his family, his personal freedom is jeopardized and this can negatively impact on his future opportunities [24].

The disintegration of the family appears to be related, in some way, to problems of substance abuse. Similarly, where social controls exercised by the family and the community had broken down, drugs consumption become prevalent among young men, women and children. The increasing use of heroin and psychotropic substances has been partly attributed to a breakdown in family cohesion [25]. The relationship could also work the other way, with substance abuse straining family relationships which may ultimately make families dysfunctional and rendering same to become a burden rather than an asset to the society.

Although families have a powerful influence on shaping the attitudes, values and behavioural patterns of children and thus preventing substance abuse, peer groups often prove to have an even stronger influence. The negative influence of peers appears to increase when parents abdicate their traditional supervisory roles. Family factors thought to lead to, or intensify, drug abuse include prolonged or traumatic parental absence, harsh discipline, failure to communicate on an emotional level and parental use of drugs. Lack of household stability triggered by low and irregular income and unemployment may increase the stress on the family and its vulnerability to drug abuse. Narcotics trading and the abuse thereof ultimately leads to the disintegration and disruption of family and society relations and a country dependent on narco-trafficking causes the unravelling of its own population and the attached value system required for its survival and cohesion. When the population of a state is weakened or compromised by drug abuse, it has the potential of rendering the population insecure as dependency, distress, poverty and crime sets in.

This insecurity is worsened by the impact drug trafficking and drug abuse have on the education of a population. The belief in the benefits of education is undermined by the 'get-rich-quick-mentality' that establishes itself among the youth. The lucrative prospects, power and high profit rates attached to drug trafficking becomes attractive to marginalized youth. However, it also produces unskilled, unemployed and unproductive citizens who are at risk of abusing the substance themselves, thereby amplifying the drug culture [26]. Consequently, economy of many nations is burdened with a declining and weakened labour force and a civil society divided and rendered powerless.

### Legal Impact

The legal impact of drug abuse and trafficking may manifest in diverse ways to include perversion of justice system and over-burdening of the criminal justice system among others. Drug trafficking has indisputably led to the perversion of justice system through the corruption of the administration of justice from investigation through to prosecution, trial, sentencing and imprisonment [27]. It is not uncommon for the drug trafficking interests to undermine police investigation by making case files and key witnesses "disappear"; induce justice officials to mishandle cases or arbitrarily declare *nolle prosequi* through the Attorney General.

Most often, wealthy drug traffickers engage the best legal minds who represent them to systematically abuse court procedures in order to frustrate the possibility of (successful) prosecution; procure sentences that are completely disproportionate to the gravity of crimes committed; and co-opt prison warders to facilitate jailbreaks for convicted drug offenders [28]. These perversions of the justice system in turn undermine the confidence of the public in the police, the judiciary, the legal profession and the prison system.

Another recognizable adverse effect of drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking is that it can lead to difficulty in obtaining a job. Many employers conduct background checks on potential employees to ensure that such would be employees are free of legal issues and liabilities where it is discovered that a potential employee has been convicted of a drug related crime, or someone who is likely going to exhibit addiction symptoms, an employer may be constrained to turn down such potential employee.

Besides, the cost of dealing with drug trade through the criminal justice system. The time of police officers, prosecuting counsel, the courts, the prison services especially the cost of imprisoning drug offenders can represent a significant proportion of the cost to the taxpayers arising from the drug problem. Due to series of drug related cases, the country's legal system has become overburdened with court cases in one way or another. Backlogs of cases increase thereby suffering severe delays in processing cases, prisons fill up, resources offering help and rehabilitation are insufficient or not up to par and the whole attitude of fear in society seeks retribution and punishment rather than rehabilitation and reintegration. Police forces cannot cope, judges cannot cope, re-education services cannot cope. Serious strife eventually makes life miserable for everyone. Apathy and violence become common phenomena.

### Political Impact

The political impact of drug abuse and trafficking cannot be over emphasized in any society especially in developing countries where the democratic process is still at an infancy stage. In most African countries, drug trafficking represents the most significant threat to stability arising from rivalries and links among illicit activities. For example, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia operated its own drug routes during the Liberian civil war [29] and the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance has long exchanged cannabis for weapons [30]. Another vital area where drug trafficking contributes to instability is when insurgent groups supply drugs to soldiers to improve their effectiveness in battle, as the Revolutionary United Front did in Sierra Leone [31].

Complicity among security actors can also pose a threat to

stability by corroding the very institutions designed to promote stability and protect against such threats. When drug money purchases complicity among law enforcement, it undermines their professionalism and erodes their credibility. Senior security and law enforcement officials have been implicated in drug trafficking across the continent<sup>[32]</sup>. Generally, drug traffickers do not use violence to conduct their operations, except in places where there has been resistance or stiff opposition to drug trafficking<sup>[33]</sup>. An increase in opposition to drug trafficking may result in an increase in violence and consequently instability. Breakdowns of law and order have become a common feature in the combative efforts on the account of violent encounter between drug traffickers and relevant law enforcement agencies especially at the point of interdiction of illicit drug. Plagued by lack of skill and support, competing security forces have resorted to intercepting suspected traffickers at special checkpoints. Extortion, excessive force and extra-judicial killings are common risks for citizens caught in these situations by law enforcement agencies.

The link between drug trafficking and terrorism is extremely difficult to quantify. It however remains an indisputable fact that terrorist groups need money to buy weapons, explosives and generally finance their operations. Much of this is sourced from drug trafficking activities often including actual drug production and trafficking. The finance of terrorist activities through drug money promotes instability. The instability has adverse impact on the economic and political lives of any nation Nigeria inclusive. For example, the lack of security and stability, anarchy and fear of serious crime occasioned by drug are major disincentives to companies considering investment and embarking on commercial activity.

In Nigeria, as well as in many countries in West Africa, drug barons often capture the political process through financing of political actors and the deployment of monetary and other material resources to such an extent that popular will of the people has been severally subverted<sup>[34]</sup>. The large profits associated with drug trafficking can pay contributions and political campaign in the case of traffickers running for elective office. Larger profits both in absolute terms and in comparison to alternative sources of wealth generation suggest greater potential for illicit influence. Local drug barons have also sought to assure the protection of their interests by assuming the role of political 'god fathers' sponsoring candidates with full financing into elective offices and exacting the loyalty of their political 'god sons' through a variety of control mechanisms.

Drug barons have also deployed their resources to recruit and retain armed thugs and militias who play important roles during elections in intimidating voters and after elections to keep their political clients in check<sup>[35]</sup>. Allegations have also been traded by politicians in other countries across West Africa such as Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia on the role of drugs and drug barons, particularly during elections<sup>[36]</sup>.

The incursion of drug money into the political system exacerbates existing governance challenges and weakens nascent democratic cultures<sup>[37]</sup>. Drug money, backed up with intimidation and violence, invokes deviations from rules and regulations and corrodes public institutions thereby generating inconsistent administration, perverse incentives and inefficiencies<sup>[38]</sup>. Drug money also skews

political competition, giving advantage to capital and the narrow interests of drug traffickers over formal state institutions and the broader public. The distribution of drug money within and across political parties is an important corrosive impact of illicit drug traffic regardless of whether drug profits accrue to one or multiple parties. However, these resources skew electoral competition by pricing out individuals not complicit in the trade. Over time, skewed electoral competition could lead those disadvantaged by the corrupt system to either disengage from the political process or to push for change outside the system and possibly resort to violence out of political frustration.

Another noticeable area of infiltration of governance through drug trafficking arises from the gifts or services that drug traffickers commonly provide to local populations to counter resistance. Gifts or services can increase the popular acceptance of illicit trafficking and thereby undermine good governance and rule of law<sup>[39]</sup>. In Kenya and Ghana, for example, some politicians linked with drug trafficking invest in community projects and hand out cash during community visits in order to maintain the support of their constituents<sup>[40]</sup>. In Nigeria and in some other Africa countries, politicians routinely provide money, goods and services to community members, particularly around elections. The general acceptance of this practice makes it difficult to address the issue of drug money financing politics through development efforts.

The drug traffickers target different levels of government, from lower-level officials such as customs agents or police officers, to mid-level officials such as judges, to other high-level officials by buying their services for a handsome fee or offering them shareholders stakes in the proceed of the criminal trade in drugs. In this way, drug trafficking and high-level corruption becomes two sides of the same coin. Instances abound where security officials were being bribed at different stages of the drugs trade in order to buy their silence, acquiescence and or complicity<sup>[41]</sup>.

Even as traffickers target higher-level officials, they continue to direct corruption efforts at lower levels of government so as to facilitate the logistics necessary to transport the drugs without detection. Drug trade induced corruption at lower levels usually targets the immediate application of laws and procedures within an office<sup>[42]</sup>. This may involve the interference in the application of substantive laws and procedures by distortion of the laws and procedures themselves. While corruption occurs at different levels of government and can involve the application as well as the formulation of laws, corruption can also vary by the role of the corrupt officials. Most often, corruption entails principal-agent transactions in which drug traffickers are the principals and government officials are their agents, misusing government offices in exchange for money. The extent of the corruption and implication of government officials can go so deep as to be considered infiltration. In this case, government officials' involvement usually reaches such a high level that they themselves are considered to be drug traffickers<sup>[43]</sup>.

In addition to top ranking government being implicated in drug trafficking, it has been found that often close relatives of senior officials are involved in drug trafficking<sup>[44]</sup>. Although cases of corrupted government officials complicit in drug trafficking abound in most countries, it is however difficult to understand how widespread such corruption is in a given country. This makes it particularly challenging to

combat drug trafficking through corruption controlled measures. Nevertheless, in many instances, addressing narco-corruption may best be done as part of larger efforts designed to broadly address issues of corruption and impunity throughout the government.

Unraveling the governance implications of drug trafficking in Nigeria, as elsewhere in the world, is fraught with methodological challenges<sup>[45]</sup>. These challenges centre on the type and quality of the evidence that is available as to permit a meaningful quantification and measurement of the problem and its impact. Precisely because of the illegal nature of the drug business and the secrecy that surrounds it, most of the evidence that has been marshalled can only be partial, frequently comprising an admixture of publicly available or published information, security intelligence material—which is not readily available in the public domain—and the best guesses and extrapolations that the circumstances permit.

### **Adverse Image and Strained Diplomatic Relations**

One of the major issues dampening the image of Nigeria abroad is its citizens' involvement in hard drug trafficking. The image of a nation to a large extent determines the destiny of the nation. Nigeria's disfigured image in the global village has become an insignia of dishonesty, dishonour and disrespect, leading to outright humiliation of its innocent citizens abroad<sup>[46]</sup>.

The involvement of Nigerians in hard drug trafficking has a lot of negative international image implications on the nation and her citizens. Nigeria generally are treated as drug suspects at most international airports in the world, continued mistreatment and maltreatment of Nigerians living abroad or in other nations of the world, continued execution of Nigerian youths involved in illicit narcotic trades in some strict countries that prescribe death penalty for drug trafficking. Besides, there is the psychological depression of Nigerians of high social, economic and political classes including other innocent citizens, who are mistreated, maltreated and dehumanized at other country's international airports, due to the 'sins' of a few of her citizens involved in drug trafficking<sup>[47]</sup>.

The incidence of international drug trafficking has on several occasions caused and it is still causing diplomatic rows between countries. Complicated flight plans and multiple passports are standard tools for traffickers so as to disguise their identity for the purpose of evading detection and possible arrest by the relevant law enforcement agents. More often than not, strained diplomatic or international relations have almost always accompanied the increased numbers of traffickers arrested and executed in other countries<sup>[48]</sup>.

Other nations impose more drastic measures against drug trafficking, such as Saudi Arabia, where traffickers are routinely beheaded. The beheading of several Nigerians by Saudi Authorities had in the time past generated some sort of diplomatic row between the two countries on the allegation that some of the Nigerians beheaded by Saudi authorities were not either given right of hearing at all or were not given fair hearing before execution<sup>[49]</sup>.

The execution of some Nigerians by Indonesia government generated some heated diplomatic rows between the Nigerian government and Indonesia authorities for ignoring the plea for clemency by the Nigerian government to spare the life of the Nigerian drug convicts. Following the verdict

of death sentence passed on the Nigerians drug convicts, the Nigerian Government through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the Indonesia Ambassador to Nigeria, Harry Paul Purwato over the development.<sup>[50]</sup>

However, the plea for clemency by the Nigerian government could not save the Nigerians drug convicts as the Indonesian government eventually carried out the execution of the convicted Nigerians. The Nigerian government was patently embittered that her plea for clemency was bluffed by the Indonesian government.

In the same vein, the rejection of pleas for clemency and eventual execution of some nationals of Australia, Brazil, France, Philippine and Netherlands recently generated diplomatic rows with Indonesia government as some of these countries not only recalled their Ambassadors from Indonesia but equally abruptly severed diplomatic ties with the Indonesia government. The Indonesia President, Joko Widodo was bitterly criticized by these countries for ignoring their pleas for clemency despite a sustained diplomatic pressure to spare the lives of their nationals sentenced to death in Indonesia for drug trafficking. Indeed, efforts by Australia's legal team to appeal against the refusal of pleas of clemency by the Indonesia President met a brick wall as the Indonesia Supreme Court ruled that it was the prerogative of the president to accede to or reject clemency which prerogative cannot be challenged<sup>[51]</sup>. It needs be stressed here that it is not only in Indonesia that death penalty is applied against drug traffickers; however, there is a stiff opposition in some quarters against the use of death penalty to address drug trafficking. The United Nation Human Rights Office<sup>[52]</sup> has strenuously argued that death penalty would not stop narcotics trafficking as there is no evidence that death penalty deters drug crimes.

The Commission of Missing Persons and Victims of Violence has joined forces with Human Rights NGOs to oppose the execution of drug convicts stressing that executing drug dealers and couriers will not be able to stop the global production of narcotics. Haris Azhar, a coordinator with the Commission of Missing Persons and Victims of Violence opined that execution of drug offender would add to the list of inconsistent Human Rights policies under Indonesia President<sup>[53]</sup>.

### **Environmental Impact**

Environmental damage related to illicit drugs is caused in producing countries by clearing of forests, growing of crops as monocultures, processing of harvested plants into drugs and the use of environmentally dangerous chemicals without the necessary precautions being taken<sup>[54]</sup>. Although environmental damage due to illicit drug production has, to some extent, been documented, there appears to have been little effort, to date, to compare illicit drug-related damage to that resulting from licit agriculture and industry. The type of environmental damage found in any one country will depend on the specific role that country plays in the operations of the illicit drug industry<sup>[55]</sup>.

In South-East Asia, most opium poppy cultivation takes place in the rain forests. The traditional slash-and-burn system used by the hill tribes has cleared enormous amounts of rain forest in recent years and much of the cleared land has come under poppy cultivation. Such forests could have been used much more productively. Slash-and-burn agriculture, in any case, damages the environment by denuding the land, destroying top-soil and silting up rivers



[56]. Similarly, in the tropical and high mountain forest regions of Latin America, opium poppy cultivation is beginning to emerge on fragile, isolated land and is thus difficult to detect. Given the illegality of cultivation, growers of opium poppy, coca and cannabis do not usually put much effort into preserving the soil from erosion or caring for the land. Unlike indigenous farmers, cultivators of drug crops have fewer ties to the land and have less respect for it. Consequently, their practices are far more wasteful, depleting the soil and not giving it a chance to recover between crops. In an effort to raise productivity, illicit cultivators frequently use herbicides and insecticides in larger amounts than would normally be considered acceptable. The intense use of pesticides by coca cultivators in the Chapare area has already seriously contaminated the groundwater [57]. Another type of damage to the environment from coca and opium is caused by the improper disposal of toxic wastes created during the processing of plant material into a form of consumable drug [58].

### Promotion of Corruption

Apart from associated violence created by drug trafficking and abuse the menace has also worsened the corruption situation in the society. Drug gangs could only bring their product into the country with the cooperation of law enforcement. To do this, police officers, customs officials and other authorities are heavily bribed. In fact, it is alleged that senior members of the Nigerian police force, military and customs authority are not just accessories to the entry of drugs into Nigeria, but are some of the main traffickers of illegal drugs in the country. Such corruption, which is well known to even the youthful observer, serves to further erode the moral fiber of society. In every sense of the word, corruption compromises the future of any country. In the case of poor and vulnerable states, it is even more damaging. Corruption is by far the greatest enemy of development in Nigeria as in many other developing countries. No investors would like to do business where there is additional tax in the form of bribes, nor would they be attracted to where there is a high level of crime.

### Erosion of Cultural Value

Drug abuse and trafficking in Nigeria have also contributed to problems relating to culture of respect. Nigeria is a traditional society where the young ones are expected to respect their elders. However, drug abusers and peddlers, with their power and wealth, have little problem ignoring cultural expectations [59]. There is also the fact that drug abuse inhibits self-control, thus resulting in risky sexual behaviour for users. This is not unexpected as a drug abuser cannot be reasonably expected to be in possession of his right senses to accord traditional respect to the elderly as drug consumption constitutes an inhibition.

### Conclusion

From the general consideration of the negative manifestations of drug trafficking and abuse considered in this work, it is evident that the effects essentially overlap or serve as causal factors to other causes in some instances. The work also showcases the fact that the dangers inherent in drug abuse and illicit trafficking are not only numerous but scary and are of such a nature that every person is a potential victim (including unborn child) one way or the

other. To the drug liberalization policy school of thought, the drug war has not achieved the desired result. Hence, focus of attention should be shifted to other measures to address the drug menace. One of the measures opined by this school of thought is to reckon with illicit drug consumption as a health related issue rather than an act of criminality only deserving of punitive measure.

It is acknowledged that law is by no means the only measure for controlling deviant behaviour in the society. However, given the hydra-headed nature of drug orchestrated vices, a monolithic approach anchored on health care may be akin to a futile attempt to clap with one hand. Hence, just as causes of drug trafficking and abuse are multifarious; any efforts aimed at effectively and holistically stemming the drug menace must be multidimensional as well. To this end, prohibitionist approach to combating the misuse of drug which is penal inclined, still commands significant appeal and relevance in the fight against drug abusers; more so, as some individuals can only hear the hard way.

Besides, preponderant majority of drug traffickers especially in developing countries are constrained to join the drug trade due to poverty or economic frustration. Pecuniary consideration as a push factor for indulgence in drug trafficking and abuse should therefore be addressed with all seriousness by the government through good governance as the fear of sanction takes the back seat in the hands of desperate, unemployed and poverty stricken individuals who would rather accord primacy of attention to keeping the body and soul together by whatever means including crime of drug trafficking as against obeying any drug consumption regulatory mechanisms.

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2. Ibid.
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4. <http://www.youthnet.org> A very interesting page with useful information for young people on drugs.
5. In 2009, the number of countries reporting injecting drug use was 156, up from 92 in 2000. Of these figures, 93 countries also identified HIV among drug injectors.
6. <http://www.nida.nih.gov/NIDAHome.html>
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19. Christopher, C. (2011): "A Vast Lebanese Network for Drug Trafficking and Money Laundering with Ramifications for Africa in the Crosshairs of the United States", *RFI blogs*, January, 28. Moreover, the illicit gains from drug trafficking may result in investment in non-productive sectors, encourage "conspicuous consumption at the expense of long-term development," and exacerbate unequal income distribution<sup>1</sup>. The cost of law enforcement, incarceration, treatments, traffic injuries and the resultant lost time in the work place are yet another economic impact of drug trafficking. Huge financial commitments attend government efforts to enforce narcotic legislation, prosecution of drug offenders, incarceration of drug offenders, treatment of drug users in health and mental homes. While drug offenders are in the custody of the law enforcement agency, remand home or receiving medical attention, they abandon their workplace which in turns affects productivity and economic growth..
20. Shehu, A. (2009): "Drug Trafficking and its Impact on West Africa," *paper presented at meeting of the Joint Committee on Political Affairs, Peace and Security/ New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and Africa Peer Review Mechanism of the ECOWAS Parliament, Katsina, Nigeria*.
21. It is only in the two major opium-producing countries, Afghanistan and Myanmar, that the percentage might be expected to be higher. Information available on coca suggests that the percentage is small in Colombia (0.4 per cent of the economically active population), rather high in Peru and particularly high in Bolivia. In Peru, between 2.4 and 4.5 per cent of the economically active population are involved in activities related to the coca industry. In Bolivia, estimates range from 120,000 to 460,000 people, if the thousands of people involved at least once a year in harvesting, transporting and distributing the coca paste are taken into account. One source estimates that 150,000 people (8.2 per cent of the economically active population in 1990) and another that 300,000 people (16.7 per cent of the economically active population in 1990) are directly involved in the coca industry, of which some 85 per cent work on the cultivation of coca leaves, 13 per cent on processing them and only 2 per cent on trafficking in them.
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32. Jackie, S. (2012): "South Africa's Ex-Police Chief Be Freed" *BBC News Africa*, July 20. In Mali, an army officer with close ties to then head of state security, Lieutenant Colonel Lamana Ould Bou, arranged the movement of a large shipment of cocaine in exchange for payment. Most notably, Jackie Selebi, former South African police chief and International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) head, was convicted of narco-corruption in 2010 after taking bribes from drug traffickers to ignore their activities.
33. Loro, H. (2008): "The Bite of Mamba: Mozambique's Bloody War against Crime", *Center for Strategic International Studies*. For example, drug traffickers have attacked security sector officials who are not complicit in the trade as witnessed by the rise in killings of police officers in Mozambique in the past few years, the murder of a non-complicit police officer in Kenya and reported intimidation of police in Benin. Similarly, in Ghana late President Atta Mills made linkages between a spate of murders and drug trafficking and stated that, "the magnitude of wealth derived from the trade allows drug barons to buy almost anything they desire, including 'contract killers.'" Drug traffickers have also struck out at journalists exposing their operations and civil society members advocating a crackdown on trafficking. In Kenya, for example, traffickers issued death threats against journalists investigating cocaine trafficking and threw acid in the face of an activist working to keep drug money out of politics.
34. Kwadwo, A. (2008): "Drug Money 'Tainting Ghana Poll'", *BBC News*, October 28; 'Sorgho Urges NACOB Boss Not to Bow to Public Pressure', Ghana MPS and. See also, Kwesi Aning, "Comprehending West Africa's Security Dilemmas: State Fragility, Narco-Terrorism and Oil Politics," Forthcoming and Moisés Naím, *Illicit*, New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2005, 84-5. For example, West Africa's leading academic researchers on the drug trade, Kwesi Aning and the Ghanaian Narcotics Control Board (NACOB) Director Yaw Akraasi have both spoken out publicly on the issue of drug profits financing election campaigns As *Illicit* author Moisés Naím notes, "it is virtually guaranteed that where there are substantial drug profits, there will be corruption and official complicity very often at the highest levels.
35. See such dedicated websites as [www.naijapoint.com](http://www.naijapoint.com), [www.nigerianbestforum.com](http://www.nigerianbestforum.com), [www.nairland.com](http://www.nairland.com) and occasional news reports in [www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com) for



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  40. Interviews conducted for Dininio and Stearns Lawson, 2011 and Stephen Ellis, Will Reno and Brooke Stearns Lawson, "Narcotics and Development Assistance in Ghana Field Assessment," prepared by Management Systems International for USAID, September 2012. Although the practice of providing money or gifts to voters around elections is common practice in many places in Africa, interviewees indicated that the politicians involved in drug trafficking may give constituents these gifts more often and/or in larger sums.
  41. In Nigeria, for example, in 2005, Mr. Bello Lafiaji, the head of the country's drug law enforcement agency was dismissed by the then President, Olusegun Obasanjo, along with one of his closest aides on account of allegations of corruption and abuse of office. Also in Nigeria, a cartel of drug law enforcement officials reportedly facilitated the release of some 197 drug convicts from prison between 2005 and 2006. Similar reports of corruption among drug law enforcement officials have been made in several other countries including Ghana, Guinea (Conakry) and Sierra Leone, with the Gambia being the most recent.
  42. Mary, M. (2011): "NACOB Chairman Confirms Arrest of 12", *Daily Graphic*, August 24, 2011. For example, twelve members of Ghana's Narcotics Control Board were arrested for assisting drug traffickers in transporting drugs through the country. They admitted to charging traffickers \$1,500 per kilogram of cocaine that passed through the Kokota International Airport.
  43. Agence, F. P. (2013): "Gambia Jails Ex-Police Chief for Drug Trafficking", *The Daily Nation*, January 21. In the Gambia for example, the former police Chief, Ensa Badjie and two former senior army officers were convicted of drug trafficking. And in Mali, the 2009 "Air Cocaine" episode in which a large shipment of cocaine was transported across the desert from a Boeing 727 that landed in the northern village of Tarkint implicated the mayor of Tarkint and close advisor to the President, Bab Ould Cheickh. In Nigeria several highly placed government officials have been arrested for drug trafficking.
  44. For example, Ousmane Conte, the son of the late Guinean President Lansana Conte, publicly confessed on television to his involvement in the cocaine trade and was designated a presidentially-designated drug kingpin in 2010. Similarly, in Sierra Leone, the Aviation Minister's brother was one of the masterminds behind a shipment of 700 kilograms of cocaine at Lungi airport and convicted of drug trafficking. In Mauritania, a former president's nephew and the son of another former president were arrested in connection with a 2007 cocaine trafficking incident. Similarly, according to Ghana media reports, Raymond Amankwa, the brother-in-law of Ghana's former attorney general and New Patriotic Party presidential candidate Nano Akufo-Addo, was arrested in Brazil for drug trafficking. In Nigeria family members of senior government officials were also involved in drug trafficking.
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  48. For instance, the United States cut off direct air travel to Nigeria in 1993 and also blocked economic aid to the country following incessant involvement of Nigerians in drug trafficking in the United States. It was the held belief of the United States that the Nigerian Government was not doing enough in the area of combating drug trafficking which development accounted for the arrest of many Nigerians in the United States for drug related offences.
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  53. According to him Chapter 28 of the amended 1945 Constitution of Indonesia provided that all citizens had the right to live and defend their living which provision he stressed was consistent with chapter 6 of the International Covenant on Civilian and Political Rights which has already been ratified by Indonesia with passage Law No. 12/2005. Defending the tough anti-drugs laws in Indonesia, President Joko Widodo remarked that the war against the drug mafia should not be half-hearted measures, because drugs have really ruined the good life of the drug users and their families. There is no happiness in life to be gained from drug abuse. Therefore, no stone deserved to be spared in fighting drug syndicate head-on regardless of whose horse is gored. There may be merit in the argument that death penalty may not be able to permanently stop the global production of narcotics today, but if the government continues to give death penalty to drug convicts, I am very sure that it will ultimately reduce the global production of narcotics step by step.
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55. In the Andean countries, for example, coca farmers cut down forests on steep hillsides which are prone to erosion, instead of expanding cultivation of the rich alluvial soil on the valley floors. It is feared that coca cultivation may have resulted in the deforestation of 700,000 hectares in the Amazon region in Peru. An estimated 2 to 6 hectares of forest land are cleared by farmers in Chapare (Bolivia) for each hectare of coca production. This means that between 260,000 and 780,000 hectares have been cleared as a result of the boom in coca production, compared to the 250,000 hectares of forest estimated to have been lost annually in recent years to timber extraction, colonization and cattle ranching.
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58. In Bolivia, some 30,000 tonnes of toxic chemicals used in the processing of illicit drugs are flushed down the waterways each year without any proper waste water treatment being carried out. These chemicals, which range from moderately toxic to extremely destructive in environmental terms, include lime, sodium carbonate, sulphuric acid, kerosene, acetone and hydrochloric acid. Moreover, some 200,000 tonnes of discarded coca leaves are left to leach into the soil every year. In Peru, the extensive use of chemicals to process drugs and the practice of disposing of them by the quickest means possible have been responsible for killing whole species of fish and aquatic plants in the Huallaga River. According to United States Government studies, cocaine processors in the Andean region each year dump into the water some 10 million litres of sulphuric acid, 16 million litres of ethyl ether, 8 million litres of acetone and from 40 to 770 million litres of kerosene (depending on how much is recycled). The chemical wastes alter water pH values, reduce oxygen, lead to acute poisoning of fish and plants and even to possible genetic mutations in some species.
59. Drug trafficking has greatly promoted and it is still promoting the culture of get rich quick mentality to such an extent that many people now despise hard work, honest effort and challenge. This mentality is further strengthened in Nigeria by the wrong societal value which celebrates success regardless of how it is acquired. To make matter worse, good jobs are hard to come by<sup>1</sup>. Hence, many young people are totally demotivated as regards schooling or do-it-right mentality but rather resort to fast way of life offered them by illicit drug trade.  
<http://www.punchng.com/editorial/drug-trafficking-on-the-rise/>