

**ABUSE OF COUGH SYRUPS: A NEW TREND IN DRUG
ABUSE IN NORTHWESTERN NIGERIAN STATES OF
KANO, SOKOTO, KATSINA, ZAMFARA AND KEBBI**

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Abstract:

This paper examines abuse of cough syrup as a new trend in drug abuse among the youths in five (5) Northwestern States of Nigeria. The non medical consumption of cough syrups in Northern Nigeria has become a subject of public concern of recent, largely due to its potential danger to the society. About 11% of the youth in Nigeria are reliant on one form of drug or the other and this poses a serious threat to sustainable youth development in the Northern Region. Data for the study was collected via administration of questionnaire to 487 respondents selected via a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The study discovers that there is massive consumption of cough syrup as a means a getting high among the youths and peer influence and depression/anxiety are the major factors compelling the youth to consume the drug. The study concludes by recommending a holistic way of handling the menace.

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1.1: INTRODUCTION:

The Nigerian Nation particularly the Northern part is confronted with myriads of problems one of which is the new trend in the misuse of cough syrup "syndrome". Drug abuse is a global health and social problem with conditions and problems that vary locally (Whicstrom and Hegna, 2003). Drug abuse and addiction has a universal phenomenon that extends across socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic boundaries. Drug abuse may be defined as the "arbitrary" overdependence or mis-use of one particular drug with or without a prior medical diagnosis from qualified health practitioners (Maxwell, 1990). Majority of the Nigerian youths ignorantly depend on one form of drug or the other for their various daily activities - social, educational, political, moral, etc.

The non medical consumption of cough syrups in Northern Nigeria has become a subject of public concern of recent largely due its potential danger to the society. It is pertinent to differentiate between drug misuse and drug abuse at this juncture because so many people takes one for the other. Drug abuse according to Oshikoya and Alli (2006), is used to describe non-medical self administration of a substance to produce psychoactive effects, intoxication or altered body image, despite the knowledge of its potential adverse effects while drug misuse implies that a drug has a proper medical use and is being employed for an incorrect purpose. The most disturbing menace of drug abuse is addiction and dependence often characterized by compulsive drug craving seeking behaviours and use which persist even in the face of negative consequences. These changes are maladaptive and inappropriate to the social or environmental setting, therefore may place the individual at risk of harm (American Psychiatric Association Practice Guidelines 2006).

In the past the most commonly abused drugs in the Northern of this country are (except alcohol and tobacco) grouped into six classes: the opioids, sedative-hypnotics (Sedative), *stimulants*, hallucinogens, cannabis, and inhalants. The fact that Kano State is predominantly a Muslim state and coupled with the fact that public sale and consumption of alcohol is completely disallowed within the walled city compels young men to resort to taking drugs in order to get high. At the inception of this menace of abuse of cough syrups the society seems not to frown at it due to the ignorance of the negative consequences it might have on its children. The most commonly abused cough syrups are those containing Codeine. This Codeine is an opiate used for its analgesic, antitussive and antidiarrhoeal properties. It acts centrally to elicit its pharmacological

effects. Despite these clinical benefits, dependence to codeine when it is abused and or misused is a potential problem. Serious (including fatal) adverse drug reactions have been reported in patients abusing/misusing codeine globally. These fatal adverse reactions could be due to the respiratory depression which is associated with codeine especially in Northern Nigeria where it is used recreationally (NAFDAC, 2010).

A global database investigation by the National Pharmacovigilance Centre shows death in about 120 patients, drug toxicity with frequency of 165, pruritus 242, coma 31, suicide 97, hallucination 45, amongst others. Only two individual case safety reports where codeine was reported as a concomitant drug with erythromycin for the treatment of cough were reported in our national database. The reported ADRs include Steven Johnson Syndrome, coloured reddish eye ball, localised itching at the tip of the toes, fingers, palm and burning sensation under the toes and on the palms. The National Pharmacovigilance Centre also queried national authorities on regulatory actions taken with respect to codeine containing cough syrup. According to the Malaysian authority, cough syrup containing codeine are no longer allowed to be registered while the Canadian authority stated that codeine is included in both prescription and non-prescription cough syrup. In Canada, non-prescription codeine products are sold with limited access in the pharmacy and require the intervention of a pharmacist for sale.

Similarly, while the specific physical and psychological effects of drug abuse and addiction tend to vary based on the particular substance involved, the general effects of abuse or addiction to any drug can be devastating. Psychologically, intoxication with or withdrawal from a substance can cause everything from euphoria as with alcohol, Ecstasy, or inhalant intoxication to paranoia with marijuana or steroid intoxication, to severe depression or suicidal thoughts with cocaine or amphetamine withdrawal.

Oshikoya and Alli (2006), stated that experimentation with drugs during adolescence (10-25 Years) is common. At this age the young generations try so many new things. They use drugs for so many reasons, including curiosity, because it feels good, to reduce stress, or to feel grown up. They further argued that using alcohol and tobacco at a young age increase the risk of using other drugs later. Like the majority of other mental-health problems, drug abuse and addiction have no single cause. However, there are a number of biological, psychological, and social factors, called risk factors that can increase a person's likelihood of developing a chemical-abuse or chemical-dependency disorder. The frequency to which substance-abuse disorders occur

within some families seems to be higher than could be explained by an addictive environment of the family. Therefore, most substance-abuse professionals recognize a genetic aspect to the risk of drug addiction. Psychological associations with substance abuse or addiction include mood disorders like depression, anxiety, or bipolar disorder, as well as personality disorders like antisocial personality disorder.

Abuse of cough syrups in Northern states has now surpassed all other forms of drug abuse due to the ease of access to the drugs and its relative cheapness. Similarly, chemists and pharmacies sale drugs to individual by mere request without necessarily showing any form of prescription from a specialist or doctor. More appalling is the fact that the abuse cut across gender, with female gender joining enmasse. There are few or no studies that seek to examine abuse of Cough syrup in Nigeria, majority of what exists focuses on Euro-Asian as well as American countries. This study seeks to bridge this gap as part of its contribution to knowledge as well as ensuring the sustainable development of the younger generation.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES:

This study examines the menace of cough syrup abuse as a new trend of drug abuse in some selected state in Northwestern Nigeria.

The following objectives are hereby pursued;

- i. To identify the Socio-economic characteristics of those consuming cough syrups for non medical use,
- ii. To identify the reasons behind the emergence of this form of drug abuse
- iii. To examine how the respondents gain access to the drugs
- iv. To examine the long term effect of this syndrome to the society
- v. To suggest ways to reduce drastically, access to this drugs on the basis of the findings of this study

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

It is commonly acknowledged that the youth are the pillars of every nation. They are the future leaders as such their wellbeing is of paramount importance to the stability of any nation. The strength and versatility of any society rest on its productive workforce which comprises mainly of youth. The surge in abuse of cough syrups poses serious cause for concern in Northern

Nigeria. This study seeks to contribute to the dialogue on Drug abuse in Nigeria in view of the massive consumption of cough syrups for non medical purpose. The study will be relevant to Drug regulatory agencies, Doctor, Psychiatric hospital, Government and all stakeholders particularly in their decision making processes. Similarly, it will serve as reference material to researchers and students interested in the issue of drug abuse in Nigeria. It is the contention of this paper that a healthy, responsible and drug free generation is the recipe for socio-economic development.

METHODOLOGY:

Data for the study was sought through Primary and Secondary sources. The primary source entails administration of structured questionnaire to the respondents. The questionnaire was both evaluative and analytical. The design was a mixture of straight forward fact collecting and attitude measurement. Secondary data was sought from published materials, Text books, Journals and any other vital document dealing with the subject matter.

Respondents for the study were selected via a combination of purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. Purposive sampling can be defined as a type of non-probability sampling where the investigator merely hand-picks those cases or population considered to be typical or which are likely to possess the desired set of information or characteristic for inclusion in the sample (Obikeze, 1986). The operation of the purposive sampling technique employed here involves the identification individuals abusing the consumption of cough syrups in Schools, Joints as well as the NDLEA offices and Psychiatric Hospitals. The names/Individuals collected and seen from the field in this way serves as the initial sample frame and the snowballing technique was employed on the basis of the list of names and contacts.

The 'Snowball' technique entails asking the first interviewee to name other drug addict known to him who could be included in the sample. The same applies to subsequent drug abusers. The essence of this was to ensure that sizeable numbers of respondents are obtained for the study.

"Snowball" technique was also employed here, because of the fact that it is one of the best ways of reaching those drug addicts who usually prefer to operate without much publicity (Abrahamson, 1983). It also provides a way of introducing the researcher to other drugs abusers by fellow abusers.

A total of four hundred and eighty seven (487) respondents were selected from the five states through the methods stipulated above. The breakdown of the sampled respondents shows that,

Kano State	– 183
Katsina	– 86

Zamfara	– 41
Kebbi	– 65
Sokoto	- 112

The research employed the services of educated abusers and research assistants to administer the questionnaire in the various states (See, Figure 1).

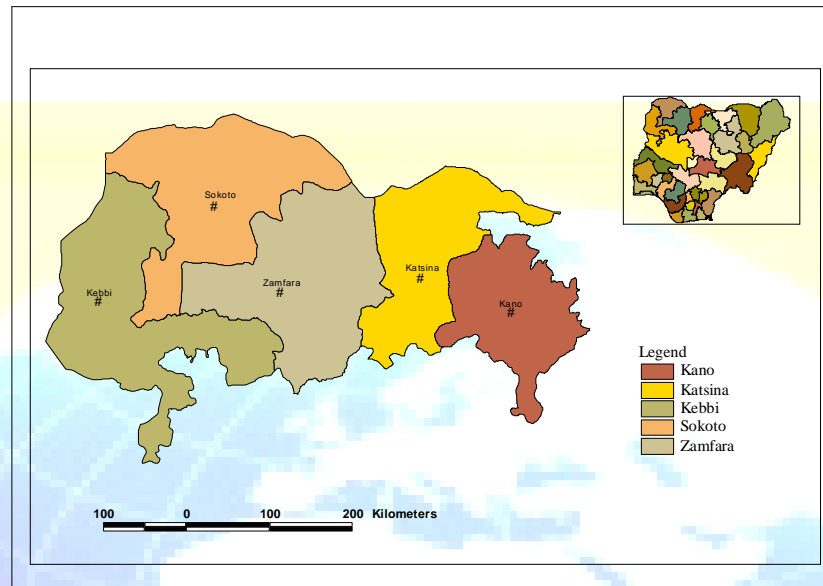


Figure 1: Study Area

Tools of Analysis and Techniques of Data Presentation

In analysing the responses to the questionnaire statistical tables showing frequency and percentages were used. Tables were followed with the descriptive analysis of our findings. Figures such as line graphs, histograms, bar chart, pie chart were used to depict the flow of phenomena.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

This section discusses the responses obtained from the sampled respondents. Discussions of the findings were presented in two sections. The first section looks at the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents while the second examine the issue of misuse of cough syrups and factors responsible for the surge in cough syrups abuse

Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents:**Table 1: Socio economic characteristics of respondents**

Characteristics	Response	Frequency	%
Sex	Male	358	73
	Female	129	27
Age	Less than 10	-	-
	10-20	86	18
	21-30	327	67
	31-40	71	14
	41-50	03	01
	Above 50	-	-
Educational background	Islamic	53	11
	Primary	61	12
	Secondary	93	20
	Tertiary	280	27
Marital status	Married	51	10
	Single	408	84
	Widow	02	01
	Divorced	26	05
Employment Status	Student	289	59
	Employed	72	15
	Unemployed	126	26

Source: *Author's Fieldwork, 2011*

Data in Table 1 depicts the socio-economic characteristics of the sampled respondents. Investigation into the sex of the respondents reveals that 73% are males while female constitutes the remaining 27%. Similarly, with respect to the age structure of the respondents, Majority (67%) are between the ages of 21-30 and 18% and 14% are between the age brackets of 10-20 years and 31-40 years respectively. Further analysis reveals that majority of the respondents acquired one form of education or the other. For instance, 27% have or are attending tertiary

institutions, 20% attended Secondary Schools while 11% have or are attending Islamic schools. With respect to the marital status of the respondents, majority (80%) are single while others are widows, divorcees and married. Information in the Table also shows that 59% of the respondents are students and 26% and 15% are unemployed and employed.

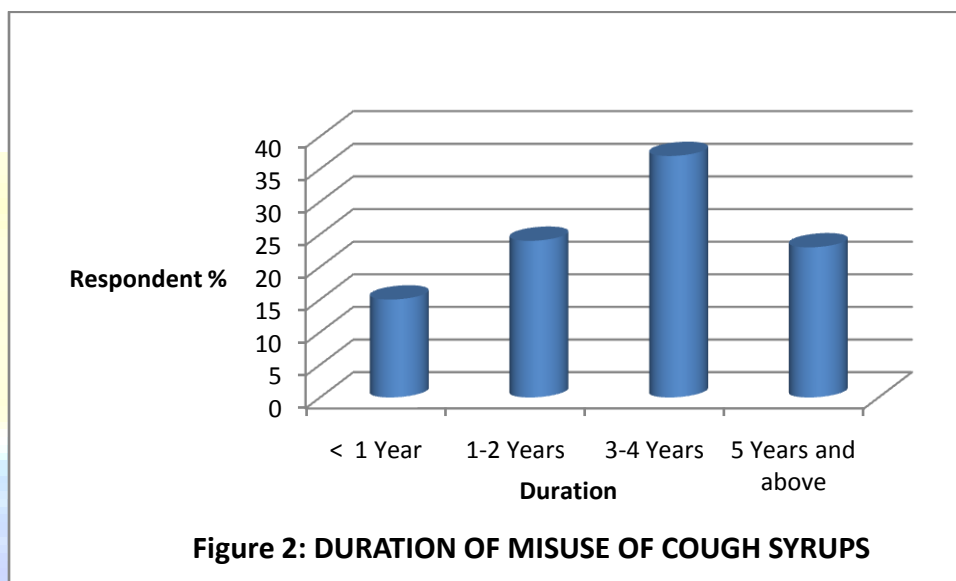


Figure 2: DURATION OF MISUSE OF COUGH SYRUPS

Source: *Author's Fieldwork, 2011*

Analysis of data in Figure 2 shows the span of period that respondents engage in the misuse of cough syrup. Majority of the respondents (37%) have been taking the cough syrup for a period of 3-4 years, 23% and 24% for a period between 5 years and above and 1-2 years respectively. The trend in the misuse of cough syrups begins during the late 1990's and early 2000. It was during these periods that this menace becomes prominent means of getting high among youth as well as a substitute to Alcoholic drinks that the society particularly in the Northern part of Nigeria frowns at.

Table 2: HOW RESPONDENTS WERE INITIATED

RESPONSE	Frequency	%
Peer pressure/influence	279	57
Experimentation and rebellion	43	9
Boredom	28	6
Absentee parents	05	1
Depression and anxiety	85	17
Personality/feel among	47	10
Total	487	100

Source: *Author's Fieldwork, 2011*

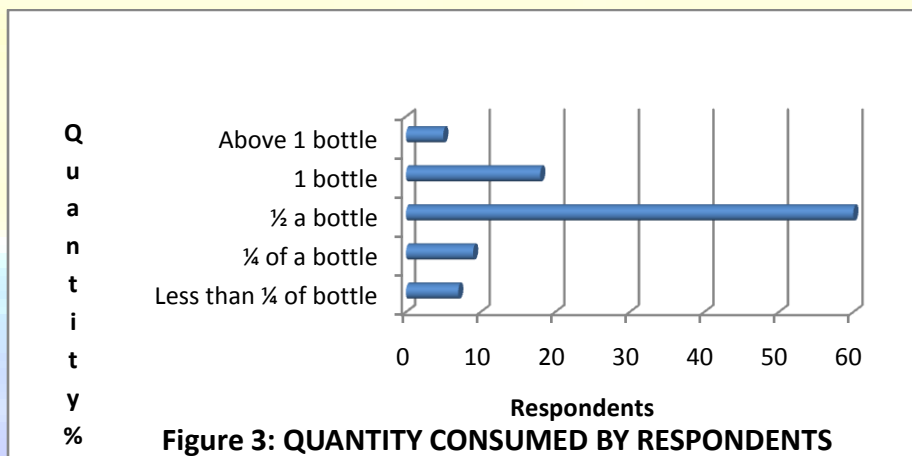
From Table 2 it is obvious respondents were initiated into misuse of cough syrups through several means. 57% of the respondents were initiated as a result of peer influence/pressure. Similarly another 17% claimed depression and anxiety is responsible for their misuse of cough syrups. Another 6% and 9% attributed the misuse to boredom and experimentation/rebellion. Anumonye,1980 (cited in Abudu, 2008), conducted a similar study though he focuses on general drug abuse. He asserts that studies have revealed that most of the drug addicts started smoking from their youths. As they grow older they seek new thrills and gradually go into hard drug abuse. A nationwide survey of high school students reported that 65% used drugs to have good time with their friends 54% wanted to experiment to see what it is like, 20% to 40% used it to alter their moods, to feel good, to relax, to relive tension and to overcome boredom and problems. He further states that no single factor could be defined as solely responsible for the abuse of drugs but listed the following factors as frequently found among both Nigerians and other nationalities.

1. Defective personality, including chronic inadequacy, poor frustration tolerance, insensitivity and egocentricity.
2. Widespread belief in the magic of medicines
3. Enjoyment of induced euphoria and excitement
4. Dissatisfaction and disillusionment of young persons
5. Search for sharpened perception, especially by music lovers
6. Self – medication of primary psychological disorders.
7. Lack of alternatives for various cultural changes.

Apart from these findings by anumonye,(1980), Other studies have also shown the followings as responsible factors:

1. Parental neglects of their children
2. The prevalence of drugs in the community
3. Pathological family background – broken homes, illegitimate relationships, alcoholic parents or parent's involvement in antisocial and illegal activities.
4. Peer influence

5. Imitation of film stars and teenage idols
6. Media adverts – Radio, TV, Billboard inter
7. Ambition
8. Urbanization and unemployment
9. Ignorance of the dangers of illegal drug use
10. Alienation – they feel isolated and want to belong etc (Abudu 2006).



Source: *Author's Fieldwork, 2011*

Investigation into the quantity of the cough syrup consume by respondents daily reveals that Majority of the respondents (60%) claimed to consume half a bottle of the syrup daily. Furthermore 18% and 5% of the respondents claimed to consume equivalent of one bottle and above daily respectively. The implication of this finding is that there is massive abuse of the cough syrups. The manufacturers stipulated dosage for adult is 1-2 table spoon and consumers are advised to avoid driving and operating machineries after intake. This shows that consuming more than the specified dosage can cause serious mental and health problems. A report by Daily Trust Newspaper of 3rd March, 2012 stated that in Northern Nigeria alone over 6 million bottles of cough syrups are consumed daily by the youths.

Table 3: How Respondents source the syrup

RESPONSE	Frequency	%
Chemists and Pharmacies	437	33
Drug dealers (wholesale)	309	23
Drug dealers (retail)	487	36
Fellow drug abusers	103	8
Total	1336	100

Source: *Author's Fieldwork, 2011*

Analysis of data in Table 3 indicates how the sampled respondents sourced the cough syrup. 33% claimed to source the syrup from chemists and pharmacies, 36% claimed to acquire the syrup from Drug dealers (retails) while 23% claimed they source the product from Drug dealers (Wholesale). It is noteworthy to state here that drugs are easily accessible to the populace in Nigeria. Any person can walk into a chemist or pharmacy and demand for any drugs he or she wishes. Hardly would the chemist or pharmacy ask for prescription. Similarly, the fact that cough syrups are massively purchased makes the chemist or pharmacies reluctant on stopping the sale of such drug. Some of the operators of chemists and pharmacies interviewed stated that they use to sale up to 8-10 cartons of 100ml of the cough syrups daily and in each carton there are 60 bottles of cough syrups. Furthermore, because of the high demand for such cough syrups the price of it has risen tremendously from N150 in the past to almost N900 presently. There is dire need to expressed concern over the alarming rate at which codeine-based therapeutics are abused with impunity in Nigeria. The fact that codeine-based preparation enjoys Over-The-Counter (OTC) status in Nigeria, it also has been discovered to be a veritable source of drug abuse by some exuberant youths and fun seekers who know full well of its morphine content. A scenario whereby some fun adventurers gulped substantial amount of codeine-based cough preparations in attempt to get HIGH is utterly despicable and incomprehensible (NBF, News, 2011). The source stressed. It is disheartening to see how some manufacturers and dealers alike succeeded in catching into consumers erroneous believe that Codeine-Based cough remedies are more efficacious than their counterparts, the Non-Codeine Cough Preparations.

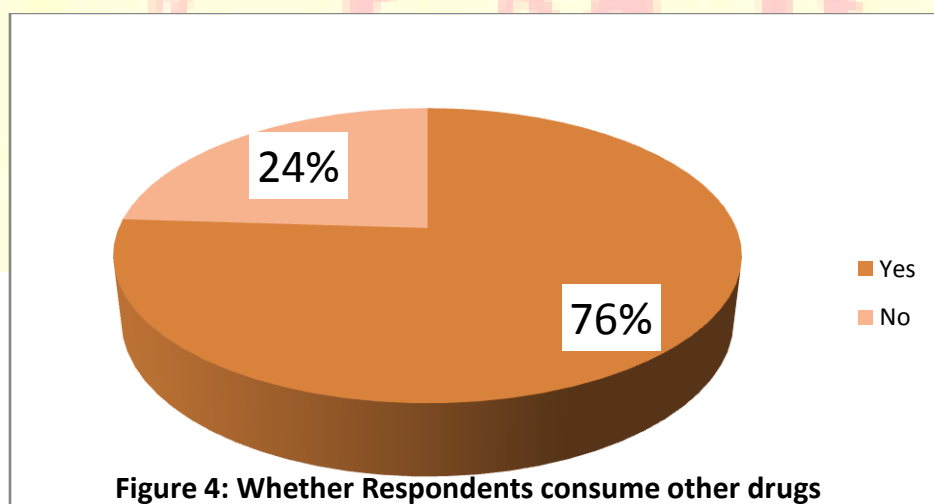


Figure 4: Whether Respondents consume other drugs

Source: *Author's Fieldwork, 2011*

When respondents were asked whether they take another drugs apart from cough syrups, 76% answers to the affirmative (yes) and 24% stated no. Such drugs includes Tobacco, Indian hemp, cocaine, morphine, Heroin, Alcohol, ephedrine, Madras, Caffeine, Glue, Barbiturates, Amphetamines, etc.

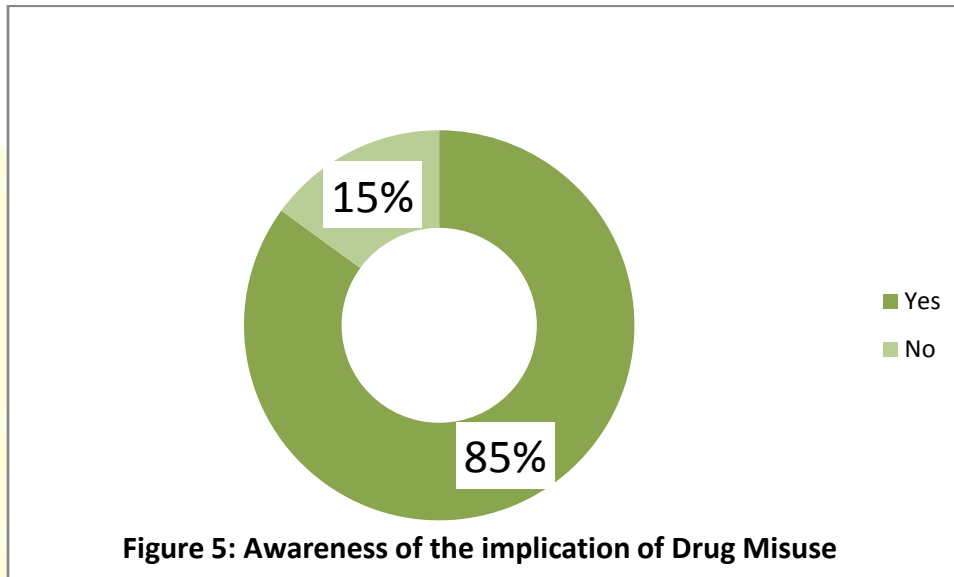


Figure 5: Awareness of the implication of Drug Misuse

Source: *Author's Fieldwork, 2011*

Investigation into whether respondents are aware of the implication of drug addiction shows that 85% of them are aware of the negative implication of misuse of drugs while 15% claimed they are not aware. It is a common knowledge that non medical uses of any drug most have a negative effect. The various consequences of drug addiction or drug abuse are so devastating and very shameful to the extent that both the nation and international organizations all over the world are also worried about the spread of this scourge among the youths. They are as follows: Mental disorder, social violence, gang formation, cultism, armed robbery, 419 syndrome, internet frauds, social miscreants (area boys and girls) lawlessness among youths, lack of respect for elders, rape, loss of senses, instant death and wasting of precious and innocent lives and many more. Similarly, In addition to aggravate Codeine side effects (listed below), other indicators of Codeine overuse involve:

- Loss of pleasure in favorite activities and hobbies.
- Lack of will in doing simple things in life.
- Indifference toward family, events, or loved ones
- Decreased interest in sex and affection

- Loss of professional or personal drive
- Unawareness of how behavior and emotions distress others
- Additional signs of clinical depression, including:
 - Anger, emptiness, irritability, sadness, or self-criticism
 - Loss of appetite
 - Fitful sleep
 - Lack of sexual drive
 - Increased erectile dysfunction

Apart from the aggravated side effect there is also the Common adverse Codeine side effects include:

- Constipation
- Dizziness (orthostatic hypotension)
- Drowsiness
- Dry mouth
- Erectile dysfunction
- Euphoria
- Headache
- Sleeplessness (insomnia)
- Itching, rash
- Lack of sexual drive
- Nausea, vomiting
- Pinpoint pupils (miosis)
- Sweating
- Urinary retention

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper recognizes the fact that misuse of cough syrups is one of the major problems bedeviling the youth of Nigeria particularly the Northern part of the country. Report from Daily trust Newspaper of 3rd March, 2012 indicates that 11% of the youth in Northern Nigeria use one form of drug or the other. Going by this figure it is obvious that something urgent needs to be

done to curtail this menace before it destroy the lives of the youths in the country. The consequences of drug addiction or drug abuse are so devastating and very shameful to the extent that both the nation and international organizations all over the world are also worried about the spread of this scourge among the youths. The growth and sustainable development of any country is dependent upon the youth, the healthy their mental and physical psyche the better for the country. Curbing the menace of cough syrup as well as other forms of drug abuse needs a holistic approach and efforts from the Government, community and family members. This study therefore wishes to recommend as follows;

- i. Parent should be vigilant on the type of company their ward keeps as well as the attitudes and behaviours of their children.
- ii. The fact that majority of drug abusers are found in educational institution effort should be made to educate the youth about the danger of drug abuse. This could be achieved by introduction of Drug education just as it's the case with issue of HIV and AIDS.
- iii. The NDLEA should as a matter of urgency intensify its efforts by monitoring drug distribution within the country as well as dealing with chemists and pharmacies that disregard its directives on controlled drugs.
- iv. Considering the magnitude of the problem Government should establish special Drug Rehabilitation Centers so as to attend to victims of drug abuse.
- v. NAFDAC and NDLEA should embark on grassroots awareness creation and sensitization campaign to warn the public of the risks of abuse/misuse of codeine containing medicinal products.

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