



International Journal of Advanced Mass Communication and Journalism

E-ISSN: 2708-4469
P-ISSN: 2708-4450
IJAMCJ 2020; 1(2): 01-10
© 2020 IJAMCJ
www.masscomjournal.com
Received: 02-05-2020
Accepted: 07-06-2020

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Social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) strategies and the fight against drug abuse in calabar south local government area, cross river state

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Abstract

This research sought to show how SBCC strategies can be used in curbing drug abuse where conventional approaches have failed. The efforts of the Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in the fight was scrutinized. A qualitative research design was adopted where In-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions were adopted as data collection methods. Data gathered were analysed using the constant comparative technique. Findings revealed that the agency's efforts have not yielded the needed success owing to a number of challenges. Also, the research identified certain gaps in the agency's campaign activities occasioned by the absence of a suitable communication strategy that is participatory in nature. The researcher therefore recommended that communication activities must be designed using participatory processes while working with existing social and cultural platforms and networks.

Keywords: communication, strategies, SBCC, campaign, drug abuse, psychoactive drugs

Introduction

Drug abuse is an issue of global concern causing both social and public health havoc in many countries. Without doubt, drugs have been of tremendous benefit to man but inappropriate use of same does incalculable harm to individuals and society at large. Abudu (2008)^[1] notes that the impact of drug abuse among Nigerian youths is the hallmark of a morally bankrupt, decadent and wasted generation and loss of our societal values and ideals. Indeed, the import of his statement is re-echoed in this quote credited to the former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, who said that; "Drugs are tearing apart our societies, spawning crime, spreading diseases such as aids, and killing our youths and our future" (Awake, 2003, p2)^[2].

Drug abuse refers to a situation where a drug is used to produce an effect that the drug is not designed to produce (Charles, 2011)^[4]. Put differently, it is the use of drugs for purposes other than medicinal. This work is concerned with *psychoactive* drugs that have the potential to harm their users, who might in turn harm others, such as occurs when people drive while intoxicated or where youths become unruly and display acts of violence.

In Nigeria, both the young and the old, abuse drugs especially marijuana. It is common sight in both urban and rural areas like Calabar south to see joints where school children, motor park touts, bus drivers, supporters of political parties indulge in the use and abuse of drugs. Calabar South is one of the 18 Local Government Areas in Cross River State, South-eastern Nigeria. It was created out of former Calabar Municipality and together they constitute the state's capital city. Calabar South covers an area of 264 km² with a population of 291,638 (NPC, 2006)^[9]. Its head-quarters are in Anantigha. The indigenous population consists of the Efik, Qua and Efut and it is also the most densely inhabited of the state capital. The area is reputed to have had the earliest contact with Europeans particularly in the era of slave trade boom in the seventeenth century (Umoh, 2007)^[13].

To most residents of Calabar, capital of Cross River State, the mention of the name, Calabar South Local Government Area evokes an instant feeling of fear and if given an option, they would rather have nothing to do with the neighbourhood. *Vanguard Newspaper*, reports that knowing the time to move or otherwise in Calabar South is something that some residents have learned by heart like the 10 Commandments in the Bible. "Those who failed to acquaint themselves with the rules had paid dearly for it on many occasions in the past" (Vanguard 2014, p.6)^[14].

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This study seeks to assess the impact of the communication approach used by government in the fight against drug abuse and to show how Social and Behaviour Change Communication which is more strategic can be applied in this regard.

Statement of the Problem

Drugs and substance abuse by youths, has assumed a worrisome dimension in our society. Indeed, it was in appreciation of the enormity of the menace and the need to ensure a lasting solution that the United Nations set aside a day to commemorate the fight against this menace. There are many factors that contribute to the influence of drug abuse or addiction among the youths, namely peer groups, parental background (broken home), and emotional stress, among others. Its consequences among Nigerian youths gives a stigma of a morally bankrupt, decadent and wasted generation that must be revitalised and collectively salvaged (Abudu, 2008)^[1].

Every imaginable crime has been committed under the influence of hard drugs. A National Household Survey on Drug Abuse conducted in Washington, D.C., in 2001, showed that youths who engaged in violent behaviours during the past year were more likely to report past month alcohol and illicit drug use than were youths who did not engage in violent behaviours during the past year (National Household Survey, 2001)^[8]. The consensus is that drug use and abuse pose serious challenges for a society's security because of the significant relationship that exists between drugs and violent crimes. We sometimes read in Newspaper reports, stories of armed robbers who reveal in their confessional statements that they were under the influence of hard drugs before robbery operation was carried out. Ekiti State NDLEA commandant, Mr Bunmi Akingbade, is quoted in the Leadership Newspaper to have said that the increase in the menace was responsible for the high rate of criminality in the state, noting that cocaine and cannabis, which are more powerful than the common marijuana, are being consumed indiscriminately by youths in the state. The NDLEA boss said 1,200 drug suspects have been arrested in the state since 2004, when the agency came into existence in the state. He stated that 80 per cent of those arrested fell within the age range of 13 and 35 years, and were arrested in connection with illicit drug use and related offences (Leadership Sunday, 2015)^[7]. The relationship between drug abuse and crime needs continuous research especially by the government agencies charged with the role of maintaining law and order.

Today in Calabar south, it is common to find lunatics loitering in parks, abandoned and uncompleted buildings and street corners. This situation tends to exacerbate the society's health and security burdens, and calls for effective preventive mechanisms.

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) established in 1989 with the statutory responsibility to control and manage the growing menace of illicit drug activities in the country has recorded some successes in the fight. However, after over two decades of their existence, the incidents of illicit drug production, distribution are on the increase, their consumption is frequent, common, and wide. Udama (2013)^[12] opines that the efforts of the agency have not yielded the desired results in stemming the menace of the trend especially in its failure to arrest and convict major drug dealers. According to this author, "the agency's

efforts have been hindered by lack of clear understanding and inconsistent policy guidance, and lack of substantive government support through the necessary funding and provision of logistics" (p. 2).

This scenario therefore calls for an intervention that is both strategic and participatory in nature if indeed sustainable change is desired.

Social and Behaviour Change Communication offers that participatory element. The problem of drug use and abuse requires change which must be driven and sustained by several stakeholders including the individual who indulges in the behaviour. Therefore, this study focuses on finding answers to this question, how can Social and Behaviour Change Communication help in addressing the incidence of drug abuse among youths in Calabar South where other conventional approaches have failed?

Objectives of the study

This study seeks to do the following:

1. Examine the drug abuse situation in Calabar south.
2. Attempt to establish the nexus between drug use and crime in Calabar south.
3. Examine the NDLEA's efforts and existing campaign strategies, if any, used in the fight against drug abuse in Calabar south.

Research Questions

This study focuses on finding answers to the following questions:

1. What is the drug abuse situation like in Calabar south?
2. Is crime in Calabar south a consequence of drug abuse?
3. How effective has the NDLEA's efforts and campaign strategies been in the fight against drug abuse in Calabar south?

Historical Overview of Drug Abuse in Nigeria

At the turn of the 20th century, Nigeria became a colony of Britain and was awarded a commonwealth status as one of the British colonies. This position was largely responsible to the commercial flows of goods and services including trade in drugs from Britain and the Asian world. Nigeria aligned herself with other colonies of Britain in other continents and Indian subcontinents where drugs are produced and Anglo-Saxon countries where drugs are highly used and consumed (Charles, 2011)^[4].

Nnadi (2012)^[10] observes that Nigeria started as a transit point in the international trade of illicit drugs. However, recent events show that the nation has become a user country as the drug barons have found new customers in the youth, the most vulnerable group.

Many reasons could be adduced to this ugly trend. The NDLEA (n.d.) list the following as common predisposing factors of drug abuse in Nigeria:

- a. Social pathologies such as unemployment and parental deprivation;
- b. Emotional and psychological stress such as anxiety, frustration and economic deprivation;
- c. Peer pressure characterized by the desire to be accepted among friends or in social circles;
- d. The desire to achieve success in a competitive world;
- e. Warped (materialistic) value system in the society such as the cravings to get rich quickly.
- f. Availability of drugs: increased availability of drugs has been associated with increased usage.

- g. Personality defects which refers to low self esteem, low motivation arising from disturbed developmental and environmental factors such as broken homes,
- h. Advertisement: youth are sensitive to advertisement and copy quickly. The glamour in advertising alcohol and cigarette smoking make the youth want to be the way the advert depicts.

Concept of Social and Behaviour Change Communication

According to C – Change Module 0, “SBCC is the systematic application of interactive, theory-based, and research-driven communication processes and strategies to address *tippingpoints* for change at the individual, community, and social levels”. (C-Change, 2011, para. 2). SBCC approaches behaviour change from multiple levels by analyzing personal, societal, and environmental factors to find the most effective tipping points for sustainable change. There are 3 strategies employed by SBCC in addressing issues and problems, *viz*; Behaviour Change Communication (BCC), Social Mobilization, and Advocacy. Depending on the situation to be addressed, SBCC may employ one or more of the strategies or even a combination of all these strategies. In some situations, advocacy or social mobilization for policy change may support stronger and more immediate permanent change than campaigns that target individual behaviours.

“The addition of an ‘S’ to BCC aims to bring the field closer to the recognition of the need for systematic, socio-ecological thinking within communication initiatives” (Glantz 2008, p. 44) Individuals and their immediate social relationships are dependent on the larger structural and environmental systems: gender, power, culture, community, organization, political and economic environments.

SBCC looks at a problem from multiple sides by analyzing personal, societal, and environmental factors to find the most effective tipping points for sustainable change. While BCC can achieve individual empowerment, SBCC is also using strategies that influence the physical, socio-economic, and cultural environment to facilitate healthy norms and choices and remove barriers to them. In some situations, advocacy or social mobilization for policy change may support stronger and more immediate permanent change than campaigns that target individual behaviours. SBCC methods aim to improve advocacy or mobilization for social action, along with BCC for personal change. BCC is thus part of SBCC, while SBCC builds on BCC (C-Change Module 2012, p. 2)^[3].

According to the C- Change Module (2012)^[3], SBCC has three Characteristics:

1. SBCC is a process. This means that SBCC is interactive, researched, planned, and strategic. It also aims to change social conditions and individual behaviors.
2. SBCC applies a comprehensive, socio-ecological model to identify effective *tipping points* for change by examining: *individual knowledge, motivation*, and other behaviour change communication concepts *social, cultural, and gender norms, skills, physical and economic access*, and legislation that contribute to an enabling environment
3. SBCC uses three key strategies: *advocacy*—to raise resources as well as political and social leadership commitment to development actions and goals *social mobilization*—for wider participation, coalition building,

and ownership, including community mobilization *behaviour change communication*—for changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practices among specific audiences.

SBCC as a process includes five steps shown in the C-Planning graphic

1. Understanding the Situation
2. Focusing and Designing Your Strategy
3. Creating Interventions and Materials
4. Implementing and Monitoring
5. Evaluating and Replanning

All five steps of C-Planning draw on the previous step and prepare practitioners for subsequent steps

SBCC applies a socio-ecological model that examines several levels of influence to provide insight on the causes of problems and find *tipping points* for change. Sallis, Owen, and Fisher (2008) cited in C-Change Module (2012)^[3] observes that the shift from a focus on the individual to comprehensive approaches that consider social conditions resulted in a model that tries to consolidate conceptual thinking into an ecological perspective that looks at the relationships between individuals and their environments. C-Change’s Socio- Ecological Model for Change views social and behaviour change as a product of multiple, overlapping levels of influence—individual, interpersonal, community, and organizational—as well as political and environmental factors. This model helps to combine individual change with the aim to influence the social context in which the individual operates.

C-Change’s Socio-Ecological Model for Change, applied throughout the *C-Modules*, is a combination of ecological models and sociological and psychological factors that will assist programmes engaged in analysis and planning. It has two parts:

1. *Levels of analysis*, the rings of the model, represent both domains of influence as well as the people involved in each level.
2. *Cross-cutting factors* in the triangle influence each of the actors and structures in the rings. The *levels of analysis* (represented by the rings) are the individual most affected by the issue (or self), direct influencers on the individual (represented by two rings): the interpersonal: partners, family, and peers the community: organizations, service structures, providers, as well as products available.

Theoretical Framework

This work is hinged on Stages of Change Theoretical Model

The Stages of Change Model evolved from work with smoking cessation and the treatment of drug and alcohol addiction and has recently been applied to a variety of other health behaviours. The basic premise is that behaviour change is a process and not an event, and that individuals are at varying levels of motivation, or readiness, to change. People at different points in the process of change can benefit from different interventions, matched to their stage at that time.

As in any aspect of life that is difficult to approach, changing lifestyles, or habits, or beliefs or self-image can be a daunting task. Sometimes it may even seem impossible. And as in any aspect of life, of living, changing the way in which we do things takes a process. There are steps that we

must take in order to make lasting changes. To help make sense of this process, Carlo C. DiClemente and J. O. Prochaska, developed a model of change that they called "The Stages of Change." This model involves six stages that take a person from the beginning - learning to identify a problem - to the end - living without that problem. The Stages of Change model helps providers to understand addiction, and helps people with addiction learn to recognize their place in the change process as a means of striving towards recovery (Jones-Irwin, 2011, para. 6) [6].

The Stages of Change are

1. Precontemplation
2. Contemplation
3. Determination
4. Action
5. Maintenance, relapse, recycle
6. Termination

Precontemplation

In this stage, an individual may not even recognize that she or he has a problem. People are not yet thinking about changing their behavior directly, and may believe that other people are overreacting to them and their behaviors. Reasons to be in precontemplation can be broken down into four categories:

Reluctant: May not have enough information to identify the problem.

Rebellious: Are so habituated to their behaviors that they become hostile or resistant.

They do not perceive that they have choices and options and do perceive suggestions as "being told what to do."

Resigned: Believe in the inability to change and thus remain stuck.

Rationalizing: Take the time to think out their behaviors and justify their choices. The problems are someone else's.

Contemplation

This is the openness to consider that a problem exists, and that there may be a need to change one's behaviors in order to correct that problem. A commitment to change has not yet been made; there is not yet direct action although one may undertake to learn more about the nature of the problem.

Determination

The person has made a decision to stop using, to make a change. Sometimes this Stage is referred to as Preparation, as the person begins planning a course of action to initiate change in her life.

Action

The person recognizes and admits that a problem exists, and has developed a plan to make changes. He modifies his behaviors, environment, relationships, and experiences to overcome the problem. He puts the plan he made in the Determination stage into action.

Maintenance, Relapse and Recycling

Change has been achieved - a pattern of addictive behaviors has been replaced with sobriety and strides into recovery. In Maintenance, the person recognizes the benefits of successful change; however, work must still be done as the risks remain for returning to old behaviors.

It has been said that "Relapse is part of recovery" and as such, the person must be on guard against triggers to relapse. If a relapse does occur, the person must re-enter a Stage such as Contemplation or Determination. In some cases, the person returns back to Precontemplation.

This does not equal failure, but merely the need to re-engage the process of change from the beginning.

Termination

At some point in the Maintenance Stage, the threat of relapse truly is reduced. When triggers arise, such as personal crisis or financial hardship, the person has a support system in place and resources available to maintain sobriety in a recovery lifestyle. Substances no longer emerge as the first, second, third or tenth response to crisis.

Methodology

The qualitative research method was employed – involving a range of research techniques that use unstructured forms of data collection, both interviewing and observation, and employing verbal description and explanations rather than quantitative measurement and statistical analysis.

In view of this, the researcher established face-to-face contacts with those who form the population of the study in two ways – through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews.

The researcher personally conducted unstructured open-ended in-depth interviews with three operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, for the purpose of examining what was done in terms of the fight against drug abuse and how it was done, particularly if successes were recorded in the campaign against drug abuse.

Similarly, FGDs were organized with members of the various neighborhoods with records of high drug abuse who form the sample for this study. Two FGDs were organized, one for each of the constituencies made up of a number of wards. Participants for the discussions were recruited on the basis that they have used one form of psychoactive substance or other or may have had experience with users and abusers of drugs in their environment. It must be added at this point that the process of recruiting participants for the discussion was quite challenging, but the researcher's assurances of confidentiality and non-disclosure was effective in securing consent.

Results

Coding Categories/Themes

The FGDs and In-depth Interviews were designed to gather data from participants and respondents with regards to the following categories/themes:

- A. Awareness of the NDLEA and the Drug War;
- B. Prevalence of illicit drug activities in the area
- C. Knowledge of the consequences in using certain psychoactive substances
- D. Effectiveness of the campaign against drug abuse.

A. Awareness of the NDLEA and the Drug War

Most of the participants at the FGDs demonstrated a good knowledge of the NDLEA and the drug war. Most of the participants identify The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) as a Federal agency in Nigeria charged with the responsibility of eliminating the growing, processing, manufacturing, selling, exporting, and trafficking of hard drugs. All (100%) of the participants in

all the FGDs agreed that the NDLEA is the body responsible for ensuring a drug free society. "NDLEA are the drug police of Nigeria. Their duty is to ensure that there is a drug free society." (FGD Participant).

Some participants also noted that anti-drug agencies exist in other countries of the world, example; Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) in the United States of America whose duties are the same with the NDLEA.

With regards to the drug war, most participants noted that the NDLEA have recently been in the news because of their frequent raids on drug dens and arrests of drug users as well as seizures of illicit drugs and items.

I heard of a man who was recently caught dealing on illegal drugs. He was later sentenced to jail. I would say the NDLEA are doing a great job tackling drug abuse. Most people before this time don't know there's a drug agency in Nigeria, because you see people doing this illegal drug business and getting away with it freely. But today we see the NDLEA taking a step further to tackle this situation so these people are hiding. (FGD Participant).

One participant however disagreed with the popular views of the group regarding the war against illicit drugs. In his opinion, the NDLEA as a body were merely trying to deceive Nigerians that they are working, whereas the trade and activities of drug users and abusers was still thriving in the "ghettos" as he called it. He added that the so called arrests and seizures shown on the television were merely acted or dramatized so as to discourage others who may be considering the business of illegal drugs. To this, other participants argued that it was nonetheless a useful initiative in their efforts to fight against the trade and use of illegal drugs.

The in-depth interviews held with operatives of the NDLEA had some interesting view points with regards to the drug war. All three operatives interviewed confirmed that the agency usually carry out raids on suspected black spots. More so, the agency makes every effort at cutting off supply of hard drugs and reducing demand for same. The agency's assistant state commander had this to say; "our raids on suspected black spots usually come from intelligence gathering". This he said while explaining the agency's presence in the communities where illicit drug activities thrive.

B. Prevalence of illicit drug activities in the area

On the issue of the prevalence of illicit drug activities in Calabar south, most participants observed that the area is like every other ghetto where life is relatively easy and the cost of living is cheap. Illegal drug activities usually thrive in the ghetto, as such Calabar south was no exception with all the trappings and posture of a ghetto environment. A ghetto in this sense is defined as a slum area usually occupied by a deprived minority. Indeed as one participant puts it; "Calabar south is a ghetto. Life in a ghetto is cheap. For instance, I wake up in the morning; with my one thousand naira I can afford several shots of dry gin to take for me and my friends just to be high. That amount cannot buy us enough alcoholic drinks in the other parts of the city". (FGD Participant).

Seventy – five (75%) percent of the group averred that illicit drug activities was prevalent in the area and that drug use

and abuse was a routine behaviour in Calabar south. One reason adduced to this situation was the fact that most youths in the area are unemployed, as such they indulge in this behaviour as a way of escape from their imminent life of misery. Other reasons for using drugs according to some of the participants include: motivation, reducing stress, building self-esteem, need to increase performance, and relaxation prior to social events.

Some participants also described Calabar south as an area plagued by illiteracy. To them, most youths in the area are uneducated and care less about the fact that their peers were in school. To cover up for their misery, they derive joy in drug abuse.

The existence of drug dens and spots in the area was also in focus as most of the participants revealed. Some participants stated that there were not less than nine (9) spots where people gather to consume these substances in Calabar south. "I can count about nine places in this town where people usually go to take hard drugs. It is interesting to know that in spite of the NDLEA's raid and arrest on these places, the issue has remained." (FGD Participant).

One participant mentioned that some of the seeming 'big boys' in Calabar south make their living by selling cannabis and other substances that intoxicate. "You will not believe the caliber of people who enter some of these spots to get hard drugs, soldiers, politicians, students, and even those who wear corporate". (FGD Participant)

The in –depth interview with the assistant commandant (admin/logistics) of the NDLEA appears to corroborate this view.

As soon as a black spot is identified, there is difficulty in cleaning it up. The reason is because users have over time come to identify it as a place where they can always have drugs for consumption. Sometimes also the boss of the trade assures them that he has settled the law enforcement officials, so no shaking. Relax and take your thing. In fact, 7 out of every 10 arrests come from Calabar south. So the area is notorious" (In-depth Interview with NDLEA Operative).

Both the results from the FGDs and the In-depth Interviews sufficiently provide ample evidences that there is a high prevalence of illicit drug activities in Calabar south.

C. Knowledge of the Consequences in Using Certain Psychoactive Substances

Here participants demonstrated a good knowledge of the consequences of using 'effect' drugs. "Using psychoactive drugs, be it to find pleasure or to avoid pain, can harm health and cause social problems both in the short and longer term". (FGD Participant). Most participants were of the opinion that some social problems are the direct results of using illegal drugs. Issues of rape, burglary, phone snatching, assault and other vices that are peculiar to Calabar south residents were said to be caused by addiction to hard drugs. Three (3) of the participants recalled their ugly experiences with criminal elements in Calabar south. "I have been a victim of phone snatching once. That day God saved me because they were ready to die or I die. And from the way they spoke, you could smell the odour of alcohol in their breath". (FGD Participant).

Also, the in-depth interview with two operatives of the

NDLEA confirmed this view point. The operatives interviewed revealed that drug abuse has physical, psychological, and social consequences.

At the physical level, it was determined that drug abuse often leads to cases of impaired visual ability, cancer, HIV/AIDS, and other life threatening conditions. While memory loss, depression, anxiety, impaired judgment, hallucination, and craving desire were said to be the psychological consequences also requiring intervention, the interviewees were most concerned with the social consequences.

The social consequences of abusing drugs in Calabar south assumed a worrisome dimension. Nowadays it is common sight to find most youths roaming the streets mentally ill causing what may be termed public eyesore. The other dimension is criminal activities. Take prostitution for instance, you think any woman would love to abuse herself like they do? It is drugs that cause all these things. Whether is rape, armed robbery, violence, burglary, etc. Even these suicide attackers, they are not normal. They do this as a result of the in-take of hard drugs. Nobody will strap bomb to him and blow up so as to make heaven or for any other religious conviction, it is drugs, simple! Majorly, drugs are a way to crime. (In-depth Interview with NDLEA Operative)

D. Effectiveness of the Campaign against Drug Abuse

All the participants expressed awareness of the NDLEA's campaign against drug abuse using traditional communication media such as radio and television jingles, programmes as well as public service messages on flyers/handbills.

Drug Free Clubs was also known to most of the participants who also indicated that they joined such clubs during their secondary school days. They also said they had attended lectures and seminars organized by the agency within the same time.

The operatives of the agency described their successes in terms of the records of arrests made, convictions and jail terms secured, counseling and rehabilitation of some addicts who voluntarily show up or are volunteered by their parents or guardians. "Most times when we visit schools for lectures and seminars, students who are users usually come out to ask for help". (Assistant Superintendent of narcotics).

Although the awareness on the anti -drug campaign of the NDLEA had been well established, sixty percent (60%) of the participants expressed worries over the effectiveness of the campaign against drug abuse. Some of the participants opined that the agency has not achieved remarkable success in the fight against drug abuse owing to the issue of corruption in Nigeria. This is largely due to lack of sufficient financial motivation from the government. As one participant puts it;

Any agency in Nigeria today is prone to bribery and corruption due to the fact that they are not well paid. The Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency is usually compromised as a result of this issue of bribery and corruption making them ineffective in the fight against illicit drugs and substances". (FGD Participant).

Another participant who also expressed dissatisfaction with the agency's campaign efforts said "Nigeria is a country where we talk more than we do". He observed that there has been wide spread campaigns, but without any positive action on the part of the government.

"We see these things on television, don't do this! And so on. The Nigerian broadcasting commission had to shift the time for advertising alcohol to 10pm. good! But look at the people we idolize today in their music videos, smoking weed and drinking. It feels cool. We have Wizkid, Davido, Burna Boy, Olamide, name them. These guys model this behaviour that we are talking about. The government must match words with action". (FGD Participant).

To some of the participants, the programme content of most television stations were seen to encourage this behaviour. Most participants queried how and why the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission should allow some music videos to air, when clearly some of them encouraged deviant behaviour. One participant remarked that the government was merely paying lip service to the fight against illicit drugs, a situation he described as "do what I say, not what I do". To drive home his point, he narrated his personal experience as a secondary student where he attended one of the NDLEA sponsored anti-drug lectures. At the said seminar, he recounted how the facilitator, a lady kept harping on the dangers of tobacco smoking. To his utter amazement, few weeks later, he met this same 'teacher' at a joint smoking, who upon seeing him showed no sign of remorse but rather said; "my job is my job, my life is my life".

Most of the participants averred that the campaign of the NDLEA has not really been successful owing to the fact that the number of drug related crimes keep increasing in the area. Corruption in the agency resulting to the release of arrested offenders was also considered a huge issue impeding the success of the fight against drug abuse.

On their part, the NDLEA operatives revealed during the in-depth interview that a number of challenges mitigated the agency's efforts in combating drug abuse in the area in particular and Nigeria in general.

Logistics and adequate funding was identified as the major problem faced by the agency. The Assistant Commandant (Admin/Logistics) lamented the plight of the agency having to cope with one vehicle for operations in the whole state. "The federal government has not really appreciated drug problem. Maybe it's because most of the politicians are involved in the trade". (In-depth Interview with NDLEA operative).

The other challenge was that occasioned by the legal framework as well as the judicial system. The agency complained of their inability to secure prompt convictions and jail terms for those charged to court. In the event where judgment is given, the punishment does not match the crime committed. He narrated a case where a particular drug baron was arrested somewhere in Ikom and charged to court. Delivering judgment on the case, the presiding judge sentenced the accused to 6 months imprisonment with an option of two hundred thousand naira fine. He noted that this accused person, a lady, had offered his men a bribe of two million naira which they turned down. He described the sentence as a "slap on the wrist". Scenarios like this usually

do not serve as deterrent to other people in the trade. Resistance from the communities harbouring drug users and abusers was also seen as another challenge.

Most communities do not allow us to carry out raid operations and make subsequent arrests. In fact there was a day our officers were nearly mobbed if not for the intervention of the Nigerian army. And I thank God for the men; they were so professional in their conduct. They didn't fire any shot, otherwise it would have been something else. (In-depth Interview with NDLEA operative).

Lack of standard rehabilitation centre for addicts was also identified as a challenge. This had made it impossible to adequately rehabilitate those who voluntarily give up the behaviour or those who became sober in detention and undergo counseling. It was revealed that some addicts who undergo the process of rehabilitation usually show positive signs of change. But due to the absence of a standard facility for rehabilitation, they usually relapse into addiction when they return home.

RQ1: What is the drug abuse situation like in Calabar south?

According to the in-depth interview respondents, drug abuse constitutes a major problem for the society at large. The issue is endemic in Calabar south owing to the fact that the area appears to have the features of a slum neighborhood. And most criminal elements usually hide in such environment to commit all sorts of crimes.

The FGD participants also commented on the activities of *Agaba boys* in Calabar south, a group noted for insatiable appetite for drinking, smoking of Indian hemp, thuggery, violence, pick-pocketing, assaults and rape. These groups were said to be the ones whose members continue to operate with so much confidence and deep seated disrespect for law and order in the area. "Their activities seem to be exacerbated by hemp smoking and uncontrollable drug use". (FGD Participant).

Calabar south was also described as being notorious for illicit drug activities and that there was a high prevalence rate of drug abuse in the area. Indian hemp smoking and drinking excessive alcohol were said to be a significant behaviour among most youths in Calabar south. Indeed as one FGD participant puts it; "At the Hawkins Cemetery where the boys often hang out or relax, marijuana is not only smoked, but mixed with the locally distilled gin called *akai kai* to produce a more intoxicating liquid called *combine*, which most of the boys take delight in drinking". It was also established that the nearness of Calabar south to the creeks engendered the cultivation of marijuana for the brewing of '*combine*', some quantity of which they sell to members of the public as well as other drug users.

Findings from the FGDs and In-depth Interviews had sufficiently established the prevalence of drug abuse in Calabar south. According to them, this situation requires urgent attention from government and relevant stakeholders.

RQ2: Is crime in Calabar south a consequence of drug abuse?

Calabar south was identified as a notorious area for crime and criminality. Most of the crimes committed by deviant youths in the area were drug induced. Most participants

confirmed that drugs enabled the youths to do what they may not ordinarily have the ability to do. Issues of rape, burglary, phone snatching, assault and other vices that are peculiar to Calabar south residents were said to be caused by addiction to hard drugs. Three (3) of the participants recalled their ugly experiences with criminal elements in Calabar south. "I have been a victim of phone snatching once. That day God saved me because they were ready to die or I die. And from the way they spoke, you could smell the odour of alcohol in their breath". (FGD Participant). The experience of the *agaba boys* is again focused here. They are noted for their involvements in excessive alcohol drinking, Indian hemp smoking, gang fighting, theft, assault, burglary, extortion and thuggery.

For the Boys, possession of thuggery skills appears to be resourceful especially during electioneering campaigns /elections. Politicians recruit them as body guards. They intimidate and assault political opponents. Although thuggery continues to be a service needed by the Political Godfather, many of the Boys tend to employ their thuggery skills in intimidating and extorting money and other valuables from unsuspecting members of the public after elections. In the absence of politicians' protections, many of them are easily picked up by the police. (In-depth Interview with NDLEA Operative).

The interviews and FGDs further revealed that alcohol consumption and marijuana smoking makes them comfortable in such habits. As one participant phrased it; "The incessant blocking of roads to collect illegal toll from unsuspecting members of the public cannot be devoid of marijuana influence".

An operative of the NDLEA described drug as a major way to crime. Saying that it was impossible for anybody to carry out certain criminal acts without enhancement from certain drugs, especially Indian hemp or what "they call *skunk*".

It was also established that criminals found succor in drug dens, as most of them visit such places during the day to take these illegal substances thereby preparing them for nefarious activities in the night.

On the whole, both the views from the respondents in the FGDs and the In-depth Interviews sufficiently identified drug use and abuse as a major cause of crime in Calabar south.

RQ 3: How effective has the NDLEA's efforts and campaign strategies been in the fight against drug abuse?

This last research question appears to be the fulcrum upon which the essence of this work can be ascertained. Essentially, this question sought to find out what is currently being done in the fight, the results and successes so far recorded, and the challenges encountered.

Participants at the FGDs expressed awareness of the NDLEA's campaign against drug abuse using communication media such as radio and television jingles, TV programmes as well as public service messages on flyers/handbills were also used by the agency and some organizations to deliver messages about a drug free society. Drug Free Clubs was also known to most of the participants who also indicated that they joined such clubs during their

secondary school days. They also said they had attended lectures and seminars organized by the agency within the same time.

Commenting on their efforts in the on-going war against drug abuse and illicit drug activities, the NDLEA operatives said they frequently embark on patrols and raids of suspected drug spots, for which subsequent arrests are made and illegal drugs confiscated. Such exercises are usually informed by intelligence gathering from officers and men of the agency. Beyond raids and arrests, the agency is also involved in border checks and patrols to effectively cut off supply and reduce the demand for illegal drugs by consumers.

The operatives of the agency also hinted that they occasionally organize workshops, lectures, and seminars to educate members of the public on the dangers of drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking. Both secondary and tertiary institutions are considered as significant locations for workshops and seminars.

Drug free clubs formed in schools and among the national youth service corps members also was considered a useful tool in their current campaign in creating awareness on the dangers of drug abuse. Such clubs allow members to interact directly with other peers through regular meetings and shows.

Other tools used in the campaign according to the agency includes; radio jingles, regular radio and TV talk shows, fliers/handbills, posters, and road shows.

The agency officials hinted that the United Nations General Assembly has set aside June 26 each year as International Day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking. Their observance of that day is usually marked with several activities including road walks, lectures, distribution of fliers and handbills, as well as counseling for drug addicts. Television talk shows are usually held to signal the beginning of events and activities marking the day.

The operatives of the agency generally described their successes in terms of the records of arrests made, convictions and jail terms secured, counseling and rehabilitation of some addicts who voluntarily show up or are volunteered by their parents or guardians. "Most times when we visit schools for lectures and seminars, students who are users usually come out to ask for help". (Assistant Superintendent of narcotics).

Although the awareness on the anti –drug campaign of the NDLEA had been well established, sixty percent (60%) of the participants expressed worries over the effectiveness of the campaign against drug abuse. Some of the participants opined that the agency has not achieved remarkable success in the fight against drug abuse owing to the issue of corruption in Nigeria. This is largely due to lack of sufficient financial motivation from the government. As one participant puts it;

Any agency in Nigeria today is prone to bribery and corruption due to the fact that they are not well paid. The Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency is usually compromised as a result of this issue of bribery and corruption making them ineffective in the fight against illicit drugs and substances. (FGD Participant).

Another participant who also expressed dissatisfaction with the agency's campaign efforts said Nigeria is a country

where we talk more than we do. He observed that there has been wide spread campaigns, but without any positive action on the part of the government.

We see these things on television, don't do this! And so on. The Nigerian broadcasting commission had to shift the time for advertising alcohol to 10pm. good! But look at the people we idolize today in their music videos, smoking weed and drinking. It feels cool. We have Wizkid, Davido, Burna Boy, Olamide, name them. These guys model this behaviour that we are talking about. The government must match words with action. (FGD Participant).

To some of the participants, the programme content of most television stations were seen to encourage this behaviour. Most participants queried how and why the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission should allow some music videos to air, when clearly some of them encouraged deviant behaviour. One participant remarked that the government was merely paying lip service to the fight against illicit drugs, a situation he described as "do what I say, not what I do". To drive home his point, he narrated his personal experience as a secondary school student where he attended one of the NDLEA sponsored anti-drug lectures. At the said seminar, he recounted how the facilitator, a lady kept harping on the dangers of tobacco smoking. To his utter amazement, few weeks later, he met this same 'teacher' at a joint smoking, who upon seeing him showed no sign of remorse but rather said; "my job is my job, my life is my life".

Most of the participants averred that the campaign of the NDLEA has not really been successful owing to the fact that the number of drug related crimes keep increasing in the area. Corruption in the agency resulting to the release of arrested offenders was also considered a huge issue impeding the success of the fight against drug abuse.

On their part, the NDLEA operatives revealed during the in-depth interview that a number of challenges mitigated the agency's efforts in combating drug abuse in the area in particular and Nigeria in general.

Logistics and adequate funding was identified as the major problem faced by the agency. The Assistant Commandant (Admin/Logistics) lamented the plight of the agency having to cope with one vehicle for operations in the whole state. "The federal government has not really appreciated drug problem. Maybe it's because most of the politicians are involved in the trade". (In-depth Interview with NDLEA operative).

The other challenge was that occasioned by the legal framework as well as the judicial system. The agency complained of their inability to secure prompt convictions and jail terms for those charged to court. In the event where judgment is given, the punishment does not match the crime committed. He narrated a case where a particular drug baron was arrested somewhere in Ikom and charged to court. Delivering judgment on the case, the presiding judge sentenced the accused to 6 months imprisonment with an option of two hundred thousand naira fine. He noted that this accused person, a lady, had offered his men a bribe of two million naira which they turned down. He described the sentence as a "slap on the wrist". Scenarios like this usually do not serve as deterrent to other people in the trade, he added.

Resistance from the communities harbouring drug users and abusers was also seen as another challenge.

Most communities do not allow us to carry out raid operations and make subsequent arrests. In fact there was a day our officers were nearly mobbed if not for the intervention of the Nigerian army. And I thank God for the men; they were so professional in their conduct. They didn't fire any shot, otherwise it would have been something else. (In-depth Interview with NDLEA operative).

Lack of a standard rehabilitation centre for addicts was also identified as a challenge. This had made it impossible to adequately rehabilitate those who voluntarily give up the behaviour or those who became sober in detention and undergo counseling. It was revealed that some addicts who undergo the process of rehabilitation usually show positive signs of change. But due to the absence of a standard facility for rehabilitation, they usually relapse into addiction when they return home.

These findings are in line with the stages of change theory used in this work. The theory postulates that behaviour change is not a dichotomous “on-off switch” or an “event” that happens quickly when motivation strikes; it rather emphasizes a temporal dimension and assume that change involves a transition through a set of discrete stages (Sutton, 2007). It starts with a pre-contemplation stage, moves through a motivation stage, and comes to fruition with the initiation and maintenance of a recommended behaviour. Within this theory, it is implied that different cognitive factors are important at different stages and that these subsequently become the foci in stage-matched interventions that are designed to transition people from one stage to the next (Sutton, 2007)^[11].

The first three stages—precontemplation, contemplation, preparation—are all pre-action stages and are generally conceptualised as temporal variations of an individual’s intention to carry out the behaviour. The remaining stages—action, maintenance, termination—are post-action stages, and are conceptualised in terms of the duration of the behaviour change. Individuals are hypothesised to move through the stages in order, but they may relapse and revert back to an earlier stage. Individuals might also cycle through the stages several times before achieving long-term behaviour change.

Based on the findings arising from this study, it is apparent that the NDLEA’s campaign recorded low success for not taking into cognizance the fact that change is not an event but rather a process as premised by this theory. As such messages were not particularly tailored to evoke the expected results. This researcher is convinced that the absence of social and behaviour change communication strategies contributed to the ineffectiveness of the campaign against drug abuse in Calabar south.

As earlier stated, social and behaviour change communication is the systematic application of interactive, theory-based, and research-driven communication processes and strategies to address *tipping points* for change at the individual, community, and social levels (C-Change, 2012). A tipping point refers to the dynamics of social change, where trends rapidly evolve into permanent changes. It can be driven by a naturally occurring event or a strong determinant for change—such as political will that provides

the final push to “tip over” barriers to change. Tipping points describe how momentum builds up to a point where change gains strength and becomes unstoppable.

SBCC employs three key strategies: *advocacy*- to generate and reinforce political and social leadership commitment and raise resources in direct support to development actions and goals; *social mobilization*, for wider participation, coalition building, and ownership, including community mobilization; and *behaviour change communication* for changes in knowledge, attitudes, and practices among specific “audiences”. Apparently, these strategies were clearly missing in the NDLEA’s campaign efforts.

Conclusion

Findings from the study revealed that the drug war as it is currently being prosecuted by the NDLEA has not been effective due to a number of challenges mitigating the agency’s efforts. The major challenge as discovered in the study was the lack of political will by the government to effectively nib the issue in the bud. This was evidenced in the lack of adequate financial motivation as well as the legal framework upon which the agency operates. Both the FGDs participants and the operatives of the NDLEA were together on this view.

Other challenges identified are; bribery and corruption, logistics, resistance from communities where drug abuse is prevalent, and the lack of a standard rehabilitation centre. The absence of a standard facility for rehabilitation was identified as being responsible for the inability of the agency to effectively rehabilitate victims of drug behaviours.

The relevance of social and behaviour change communication to wellbeing development is an established paradigm in development studies. It is borne out of the realisation that development is human centred and thus requires communication for its full realisation. A communication approach that is participatory and embraces the complexities of the Nigeria state is necessary to ensure that Nigeria achieves her developmental goals in health.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Communication activities must be designed with participatory processes, working with existing social and cultural platforms and networks to ascertain what the people know within their social and cultural contexts.
2. The agency saddled with the responsibility of prosecuting the drug war must as a matter of urgency inculcate the strategies and approaches of SBCC in their effort to stem the tide of drug abuse.
3. The government must also demonstrate the will to curb this menace by matching words with positive actions. One way to do this is by adequately funding and providing the needed logistics support to the NDLEA and other relevant security agencies.
4. The role of communication professionals remains paramount in the design and implementation of communication activities and programmes. Therefore, development agents, funders and policy makers should recognize and explore the potentials of these professionals to their advantage.

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