



## THE IMPLICATIONS OF YOUTHS SUBSTANCE ABUSE ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF MBAYION RURAL COMMUNITY IN GBOKO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

Abuse of substances has become very common among Nigerians especially the youths, with the rural youths not been spared. This study examines the implications of youth's substance abuse on the socio-economic development of rural Mbayion Community. The objectives pursued includes: identification of the most commonly abused substances in the study area, reasons for engaging into the habit, problems associated with substance abuse in Mbayion community, the social and economic implications of youths substance abuse on the development of the study area. The population of the study was the youths into substance abuse and all adult members of Mbayion community, from where stratified purposive sampling was used to select a sample of 175 respondents for study. Anchoring the research on the social learning theory, qualitative research design was applied, using structured and in-depth interview to collect data from 50 adults and 125 youths in substance abuse. Data were analysed through qualitative interpretive analysis, simple percentages and tables. Findings revealed that, marijuana and Alcohol (*ogogolo*), were the most commonly abused substances in the study area by youths of 13years and above, while smoking of Grey hair was discovered as a new substance used by some youths within the study area. Reasons for engaging into abuse of substances includes, peer influence, family problems, extra energy among others. Problems associated with this menace include, stealing, violence, gang formation, impaired performance among others. The socio-economic implications of these on rural community of Mbayion includes, complete takeover of the community by hoodlums, low, agricultural production and food scarcity, poverty and rural insecurity. It is the position of the paper that, youths substance abuse has negative implications on the socio-economic development of Mbayion. It was recommended among other things that, parental training be encouraged, rehabilitation facilities be made available in the rural areas and serious community policing be ensured to curb substance abuse in the rural areas giving room for rural development and by extension, national development.

**Key Words:** Substance Abuse, Youths, Rural Community.

### INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse indicates the illicit use of substances for undue reasons to modify mood or behaviour. This act date back to many centuries with an ever increasing array of newly synthesized chemicals, patterns of use nature of effects and social reactions of societies, which differ from time to time and from one culture to the other. However, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed a tremendous increase in substance abuse among the youths in Nigeria perhaps due to wide spread information technology and transportation which has turned the world into a global village. Access to different kinds of substances has increased with increase in knowledge about several ways of abusing such substances in the country. Substances are said to be abused when used in a manner or purposes not medically or



socially approved. Ahile as in Agba and Kyernum (2015) view drug abuse as self-administration of drugs which has primary action on the brain or the central nervous system contrary to the approval of medical and social expectations. Danbazau (2011) identifies Marijuana as the most abused drug in Nigeria since it is cheap and easily available. Despites efforts by the Federal Government through the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) operatives against this act, it seems much impact is yet to be made in restricting substance abuse especially among the youths in Nigeria and the rural youths in particular. This situation is quite disturbing since, the youths constitutes the strength, worth and future of every society, they are the force that drive every aspect of human development and innovation, the youths sustains the values and customs of the society, they serve as a bridge connecting the traditional and the modern aspects of the society. With this whatever distorts the livelihood of the youths in any society distorts its future and is capable of bringing such a society into extinct.

Odok and Usman (2017), Aronson et al., as in Isaac, Rhew, and Osterley (2011) discovered that, there is an increased likelihood of the use of alcohol, smokeless tobacco, and cigarettes among rural youth compared to urban youth, this is worrisome since we have so many youths in the rural areas. A study carried out by Olater & Adejide (2010) also revealed that, substance abuse has permeated the rural areas as a dominant activity very pervasive among the youths due to the communal life style of the rural people. Rural youths constitutes the rural work force charged with the responsibility of producing food and other raw materials needed for the survival of the society, they are the engine of human resources required for productivity in all areas of socio - economic endeavour in the rural sector. The worth of rural youths therefore determines the state of the nation. Since majority of Benue people and by extension Benue youths reside in the rural areas, a study on substance abuse and its implication on the socio-economic development of Mbayion community of Gboko Local Government Area become very critical. Mbayion is a District within Gboko local Government Area of Benue State in Nigeria. Comprising seven (7) council wards which includes Mbatyu, Mbatser, Mbatan, Ukpekpe, Gboko North, Gboko West, Gboko Central. However, the study was concentrated within the rural settlement of the district which includes; Mbatser, Mbatyu, Mbatan and Ukpekpe council wards. Mbayion Community is predominantly an agrarian community where its source of income and food for the survival of the people is accessed through agricultural production. The most commonly produced crops in this community includes: yams, soya beans, rice, cassava, tomatoes, pepper and okra.

### **The Problem**

There is wide spread practice of substance abuse in Nigeria today which has permeated the rural areas. This is an act capable of distorting the reasoning, rational judgement and coordination of perpetrators, weakening the physical body, rendering victims incapable of physical and mental balance. Despite the efforts of government agents to control abuse of substances, it seems the operations of Drug law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in checking substance abuse has not yielded much fruits, hence the problem persist. This



attracted the attention of many researchers who have laboured on drugs and substance abuse among urban dwellers with little attention given to the rural areas and none has been carried out in Mbayion community which is a district in the suburb of Gboko local Government Area. However, this act has become very common among rural youths in Mbayion, who are expected to bear the burden of crop production for rural income and food security with the strength of youthfulness. This research therefore emanate from the desire to find out the socio-economic implications of this menace on the development of rural Mbayion community and by extension national development.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study focussed on investigating into the socio-economic implications of substance abuse on the development of rural Mbayion community. Specifically therefore, the work was designed to:

- i. Identify the common substances abused by youths in Mbayion community in Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State.
- ii. Investigates into the reasons why rural youths in Mbayion community get involved in substance abuse.
- iii. Examine the problems associated with abuse of substances among the youths in Mbayion community.
- iv. Verify into the socio-economic implications of youths substance abuse on the development of rural Mbayion community.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This work has adopted a social learning theory as a foundation for its analysis. The theory is explained with its underlining assumptions and applied adequately to the explanation of issues in this study.

### **Social Learning Theory**

The Social learning theory by Albert Bandura states that, mediating processes occur between stimuli and responses while behaviour is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning. The theory is based on the assumption that, a similar learning process can produce both deviance and conformity to social norms and values, (McLeod 2016). To this theory, social behaviour is influenced by four different variables including identification, differential association, modelling and reinforcement. The interaction of these variables predisposes one to either conformity or deviance. Deviance acts are therefore influenced by interaction with peers which are reinforced by either rewards or punishments. (Aker & Seller 2009). The theory maintains that, human beings imitate behaviours observed around them especially when such behaviours are rewarding and are carried out by social models or people who are cherished by members of the society. Applying the theory to the research in question, rural youths easily copy from their peers, models and heroes who seem to be more exposed than them. Rural youths in Mbayion community find it very easy to learn the abuse of different kinds of substances as they relate with those from other tribes, ethnic groups and towns within Gboko town



and pass same to others in the community. This makes them vulnerable to the use of drugs and other substances.

## METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research design was adopted for this study using a survey method which allowed for selection and study of a portion of the population for generalization. The population of the study was drawn from all the youths in substance abuse within Mbayion community and all adults in the community. A stratified purposive sample of 175 youths and adults comprising male and female was studied, out of which, 125 were youths in to substance abuse while 50 respondents were drawn from the adults within the community to cross check the views of the youths against theirs on substance abuse in the community. The sample cut across rural council wards which includes, Mbatan, Mbatyu, Mbatser and Ukpekpe council wards within Mbayion community 43 respondents were drawn from each of the three council wards and 45 from Mbatyu which is the biggest among them. Structured interview was used to illicit information from the respondents, while in-depth interview was used to gather further information from some of the respondents who had more knowledge on the issue under study, these includes, two elderly women , 2 traders of abused substances and two (2) community leaders. Close associates of these youths were used to contact them for interview in other to illicit reliable information. Simple percentage calculations, descriptive interpretive analysis and frequency tables were used to analyse the data for this work.

## RESULT

Information was presented on the demographic data of the respondents. This was needful to assess the age at which rural youths engage in substance abuse, level of education sex, and occupation as presented on table 1

**Table 1** Demographic Data of the Respondents

	Respondents	Frequency	Percentages
<b>Age</b>	13-17	10	5.7
	18-22	33	18.9
	23-27	65	37.1
	28-32	17	9.7
	33 above	50	28.6
<b>Total</b>		175	100
<b>Education</b>	Primary education	55	31.4
	Secondary education	63	36.1
	Tertiary education	20	11.4
	No formal Education	37	21.1
<b>Total</b>		175	100
<b>Sex</b>	Male	169	96.6
	Female	6	3.4
<b>Total</b>		175	100
<b>Occupation</b>	Farming		154



Schooling	110
Apprentice	37
Trading	25
Civil servant	7
Handcraft	25
Teaching	15
Nothing	30

#### Multiple choices Table

Information from the demographic table shows that, substance abuse was carried out by youths of different age categories including young people between the age of 13 to 17 however, majority of the rural youths in substance abuse were between 23 to 27 years. By implication most of them were in the prime of their energetic years expected to take definite decisions guiding their lives, and to occupy other economic activities in the rural communities. With respect to education, many of the respondents had one level of education or the other, only 37 of them had no formal education which means they were literate. Data presented on the occupation of the respondents was however continues since most respondents belong to more than one occupation at a time. For instance, almost all the respondents were farmers but still indicate their involvement in other areas like, teaching, civil service, trading, schooling etc indicating that all of them were into multiple occupations. However up to 30 respondent were idle without an occupation which is worrisome since such still need to eat and meet other basic need of life.

Data were presented on the types of substances commonly abused, it was discovered that, the youths in Mbayion community were into abuse of multiple substances, and most prominent among them were marijuana and alcohol (*ogogoro*) however some also engage in other different types of substances as indicated in table two

**Table 2.** Most commonly abused substances by youth in Mbayion Community.

Substances	Frequency of intake
Marijuana	123
Tramadol	47
Grey hair	25
Cigarettes	68
Sedatives (codeine)	30
Tobacco (cokes)	25
Alcohol (gin ogogoro ginger drink, monkey tail,)	134

#### Multiple Choice Tables

Data from the table two (2) shows that, youths in the study area abused more than one substance, all of them combine several substances for abuse. However, data indicates that, marijuana and alcohol (gin, ogogoro) were the most commonly abused substances in



the study area. Strange enough, it was discovered that smoking of grey hair from elderly people was becoming popular among youths in Mbayion, this has become threatening to the security of the grey headed people in the rural areas. 68 respondents were into cigarettes smoking, 47 were into tramadol, 30 were into codeine and 25 abused tobacco named (cokes). This name is given to a substances realised by the combination of marijuana and tobacco for smoking. The choice of these substances by the rural youths in this area was due to its availability and affordable nature.

Information was gathered on reasons why youths in rural Mbayion community take to substance abuse, each respondent had several reasons for engaging into the act such that the information on the table is not exclusive but continues, the same respondents mentioned more than one reasons for abuse of substances, such includes: peer influence, to gain sexual power, to manage frustration, desire for courage and boldness, to forget family problems, parents influence, to correct moods extra energy on farm and for curiosity as presented on table 3

**Table 3** Respondent's Reasons for Substance Abuse

Responses	Frequency
Peer influence	119
Increased sexual performance	67
To manage frustration	70
Desire for courage and boldness	98
To forget family problems	100
Parental influence	12
To correct moods	70
To Boast extra energy on farm	110
Curiosity	67

#### Multiple Choice Tables

The above table indicates that, peer influence {119}, quest for extra energy on farm (110), family problems (100), and search for courage and boldness (98), were dominant among the several reasons given for engaging into substance abuse in the study area. Most respondents were introduced into the habit by age mates, class mates and friends, few by their parents at the time they had problems, but coming out of it had become difficult since the habit is formed, managing the craving seems impossible. It was therefore observed that, greater number of the youths in substance abuse within Mbayion community was influenced by social and psychological problems; the substances were therefore used as a way of evasion from reality of life. Influence of these substances makes the youths to forget about challenges and unfulfilled responsibilities, it gives them false excitement and a delusion which according to them, keeps life going. Some youths who compete with their peers on farm abuse substances for more energy to work harder and for long hours. Strangely, a negligible number (twelve) of respondents were introduced into



substance abuse by their parents, who supposed to bring them up in a proper way. It then indicates that, the problem is multidimensional in nature.

Data collected from 50 adult members of Mbayion community on the perceived problems associated with rural youths substance abuse shows that, the habit had a lot of problems associated with it including stealing, breaking of cultural taboos, rape/ incest, communal crises, addiction, domestic violence and several other problems. The information is continues since multiple answers were given by the respondents as indicated on table 4.

**Table 4** Community Members on Problems Associated with Substance Abuse among Youths in Mbayion Community.

Stealing	46
Breaking of cultural taboos	40
Rape / incest	15
They trigger community crises	42
Addiction	30
Domestic violence	41
Impaired Performance	45
Mental disorder	16
School dropouts	35
Gang formation	40
Divorce/Separations	38

#### Multiple Choice Table

From the table above, stealing, impaired performance, community crises, domestic violence and breaking of cultural taboos were identified by most respondents as problems associated with substance abuse in Mbayion community. It was discovered that, most of the rural youths addicted to abuse of substances do all within their reach including stealing to access money for it since it becomes difficult for them to live without the substance. More so, most of such youths lack the concentration needed to do well on farm, in School and other areas of life due to mental imbalance. With influence of substances, little agitations do trigger conflicts among the youths which sometimes bring community crises. Most of such youths were reported to have engaged in domestic violence, others end up in divorce. It was also observed by a negligible number of the respondents that, most cases of rape and incest in the community were carried out by youths who engage in substance abuse. It was also reported that, customs and sacred areas like streams and forests restricted by the customs of Mbayion people were usually defiled by the youths into substance abuse. The most disturbing problem associated with this act was that, such youths formed gangs within Mbayion which terrorise members of the community by fighting at any slightest provocation, they borrow without paying and intimidate people especially women to succumb to their demands and expectations. Some of such youths cause riots in Schools and end as drop outs. It is therefore clear that,



substance abuse generates a lot of problems in Mbayion community. Surprisingly, the rural youths into substance abuse claimed that the act has no problem associated with it, rather it's a solution to many problems, it makes them forget about life challenges and feel calm and comfortable. In an interview with a dealer of substances he confessed that, substances enhanced their vision, reasoning and strength to work for long hours on farm, to be very humble and quite. It is rather the inability to access such substances that makes such youths agitated. Those of them who produced and market marijuana admitted making their earnings from it as means of livelihood and therefore saw no problem with abuse of substances. Their views however contradicted the submissions of other members of the community who saw victims of substance abuse as a serious threat to the existence of the rural community. This claim could be substantiated since their looks and speech shows clear evidence of instability and psychological disorder. Most of the youths even expressed willingness to quite the use of substances provided they had an alternatives to curb their cravings.

### **The Implications of Rural Youths Substance Abuse on Socio-Economic Development of Mbayion Community**

The nature and magnitude of substance abuse among youths in Mbayion community, with its associated problems suggest that, this cannot be without implications on the economic development and social life of the community. In-depth interview with one of the elders in the study area he lamented that: *it has become very difficult to get labour force on farm because, most of the youths in substance abuse now lack concentration and are only interested in the wages but not ready to work, they may collect money with the promise of coming to work for you on farm and never turn up, if you insist on service before pay, they will give you names like over sabi (claiming to be wiser) and vow with their gangs not to near your farm*

The implication of this is inadequate labour force on farm, low agricultural production, food scarcity, low income, low living standard and poverty since the rural community of Mbayion is majorly an agrarian community. On individual level, it was revealed that, youths into substance abuse within the community compared by the passion and craving for the substances, they spend money on daily basis even if it means starving their families to access the substance, some even sell their personal belongings like clothes and mobile phones to purchase substances when there is no other means, this helps in draining the merger income in the hands of rural youths leading to poverty which affect the economic development of Mbayion community and by extension national development. Substance abuse was also discovered to have had social implications on the development of Mbayion Community in terms of insecurity. In another in-depth-interview with a community leader in the study areas shows that, there is a multiplication of rural youths gangs due to influence of substances which is so threatening to the peace and security of the rural community because, such youths are prone to violence, arrogance and lawlessness, some of the gangs extort illegal moneys from traders who come to buy tomatoes and pepper from the village, they also demand and collect money from even





indigenes coming to build houses in the village which is tagged “youth fee.” They call themselves ‘Youths’ and operate contrary to the customs of the land and even the constitution of Nigeria.

This is liable to create crises, conflict and tension within the community making it unsafe for human existence this affects community as well as national development. Education which is inevitable in rural development is disregarded by rural youths in Mbayion due to abuse of substances; they easily drop out of school for inability to comply with the school rules and regulations. This imply that, as the situation continues educated people needed to champion development in Mbayion community will be lacking, leading to backwardness. Interview with one of the women in the study area she laments that: “the family institution is at stake in this community due to substance abuse. Most of the youths manhandle their wives causing separation or divorce.” More so, the youths who are expected to imbed and transmit the values, norms and traditional practices of the community were rather deviants due to influence of substances. Such youths had no respect for customs of the land, had boldness to take laws into their hands confront elders and disrupt any restriction that do not favour their demands. A community leader even commented saying:

*It has become so bad that sighting these youths alone is enough to send fears into the members of the community including the elders. Parents have also become so afraid of the youths, everybody avoids saying or doing anything that could trigger their violence. No one could confront them to even let them know that what they are doing is not correct, they have no respect for traditional values or morals, it is really worrisome*

The implication of this is that, the culture of the community will soon be eroded without transmission; the upcoming generation will soon become adults with no morality to teach the children, there will be a state of anomie with its attendant consequences on the development of Mbayion community and the nation at large.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

A study on the implications of rural youth’s substance abuse on the socio-economic development of Mbayion community, Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State shows that. Various kinds of substances are abused in the study area as indicated on table two (2). Prominent among them were marijuana and ogogoro. This is due to availability and accessibility of the two substances. Marijuana is cultivated within the community while ogogoro is cheaply sold even for as low as 50 naira, these is taken in different forms .i.e Marijuana juices mixed with ogogoro (monkey tail) and ginger juices mixed with ogogoro (ginger). Grey hair smoking was discovered as a newly introduced substance abused in Mbayion community. This new discovery has put the grey headed members at risk since such youths forcefully barb their hair for smoking, the gentle ones entices them by paying for the barbing fee in order to obtain the grey hair. Many of the youths were influenced into the act through friends and acquaintances. This information confirms the views of Eze and Omega (1999) who observed that the youths in Nigeria are in the habit of constantly eventing new ways of abusing substances. Several reasons were advanced by the youths for engaging into substance abuse in Mbayion Community including



efforts to escape from the reality of poverty, misery, family problems, frustration and life challenges. The effects of substances take them into delusion at least for some time. Another group of youths in Mbayion claim to use this to acquire more strength for sex and physical labour, courage and boldness to speak and act among adults and their peers. It was strange to discover that, some of the youths were introduced into the habit by their fathers who were also into substance abuse. This agrees with the views of Iorvaa (2013) who consider parent's attitude as influencing their participation into substance abuse. Involvement of youths into substance abuse has a lot of social and economic implications on the development of Mbayion community. Socially, such youths suffer mental disorder that is manifested in form of domestic and community violence, rape and incest, stealing and many other criminal acts which terrify members of the community. The social implications of this on Mbayion community are that of social insecurity, lawlessness and social instability which is capable of hampering the development of the community and the nation at large. The findings are in line with the views of Oluwole, Habibat, and Babatunde. (2018) that associated substance abuse with crime, because of the fact that, some perpetrators of this habit finance it through stealing while the influence of the drugs leads to unaccepted behaviours like fighting and violence.

Economically, agricultural production which is the life wire of Mbayion community income is decreasing, hence the major work force which is the youths have taken to substance abuse, while they claim to use such substances for more strength on farm, they lack the concentration and diligence needed for farm work. Moreover continued use of the substances weakens them after sometime. This is capable of impoverishing the rural community of Mbayion. These views however contradict the findings of Rhew and Osterley (2011) which shows that cultivation of marijuana enhances the income of the rural societies. This could be as a result of the fact that marijuana is not produced in large quantities in Mbayion Community hence is prohibited and those cultivating have to do so under strict cover. In Mbayion Community therefore, economic value was not so much attached to the practice of substance neither did the substances contribute to the income of the community. Educational wise, Some of the youths in substance abuse dropout of school due to drugs related problems Most of them become woozy, idle and lazy. These findings corroborate the study carried out by Iorvaa (2010) who asserts that, substance abuse is one of the major problems confronting rural education, since the youths take to such habits and become uncontrollable. It then means that, the problem is still ongoing. Since the rural youths form the greater part of the working population on farm, their absence from work has great implications of food scarcity and dwindling income on the rural populace of Mbayion community. This is because the greater part of the community income is dependent on agriculture; therefore low agricultural production has implications on income and living standard of the entire community affecting national development.

## CONCLUSION

Substance abuse is no more an exclusive urban life style since rural youths in Mbayion community were discovered to have being into abuse of different types of substances



including marijuana, codeine, ogogoro, Tramadol, cokes and several others. These youths were influenced into substance abuse through friends and acquaintances. However, this habit has socio-economic implications on the rural community of Mbayion. As an agrarian community, much of its income is realised from farm work with the youth as the major work force expected to facilitate agricultural production. The absence of youths on farm due to influence of substances means total impoverishment of the community since its food security and source of income is dependent on crops production. Socially it was discovered that, there is a gradual takeover and domination of the community by youth gangs in substance abuse, who are courageous, and bold to shut up parents and adults without any confrontation. Domestic violence stealing and breakdown of customs and norms of the community have become common characteristic of rural youths into substance abuse. The implication of which is insecurity, violence and social instability leading to backwardness. Hence the rural community produces food and raw materials used in the nation, the present condition of the rural Mbayion Community pose as a threat to socio-economic development of Gboko local Government Area, Benue State and Nigeria in general. Something has to be done for the rural community of Mbayion to safe guide and sustain its socio-economic progress for national development.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Combating substance abuse in Mbayion Community should involve collaborative efforts of the parents, relations, traditional leaders, security agents and the government to help the rural youths out of this menace.

- i. Parents should watch over their children and wards to dissuade them from substance abuse
- ii. Traditional rulers to prohibit abuse of substances in the community and fine those cultivating and trading in such substances.
- iii Security agents should penetrate Mbayion Community with their patrol to scare the Youths from the habit of substance abuse
- iv The government to set up a Rehabilitation Centre in Mbayion to work on addict of substance abuse in the Community. With these done, substance abuse will be reduced giving room for the development of Mbayion and national development in general.

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