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## Understanding Narcotic Challenge In Nigeria, Conflict Dynamics And Youth Bulge

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### Abstract

*Africa's population is growing and quickly, while those who are generally unaware of the happenings in the continent, will be alert to the fact that half of the world's population growth is projected to be in Africa by 2050. This strikes fear into all but an optimistic few. The link between armed conflict and the production and trafficking of illicit drugs has been much noted in the popular literature, and recent research tentatively indicates a link between narcotics and conflict duration. Yet the specific dynamics of the linkage between narcotics and conflict remain poorly understood*

*The youths constitute a critical mass in the growing population of Nigeria presently considered as the fastest growing black nation in Africa with a teeming population of over 200 million.*

*With the upsurge in violent and intractable conflict, extrajudicial killings, and a host of other societal vices, the increasing body of youth becomes a focus. The menace of drug abuse in Nigeria has reached a frightening proportion while it permeates almost all facets of the society.*

*Therefore, the paper examines the effect of youth bulge and drugs on conflict dynamics in Nigeria. What are the implications of the youth bulge and conflict dynamic in understanding the Nigerian Narcotic challenge? The paper uses secondary sources of data gathering, with archival materials and case study research design. The paper will examine many issues including the phenomenon of youth bulge and the effect of frequent abuse of drugs by the youths. The paper will also examine the various types of drugs commonly abused and measures towards preventing further mental carnage.*

**Key word:** *Drugs abuse, youth bulge, conflict dynamic, narcotic challenge, Nigeria.*

## Introduction

Gary Fuller (1985) in his study claimed that a proportion of more than 20% of young people in a population signals the possibility of political rebellion and unrest. He further reiterated that this equals large percentages of young men with an increased possibility of violence, particularly in the south, where analysts argue. According to Harry (1985), he further indicates that an increase in the percentage of youths in a population signals an up-shoot in violence which is often politically motivated. This statement can be better explained and substantiated within the context of youths not gainfully engaged and constructively involved in activities that benefit and develop the society.

Economists have foreseen that Nigeria is expected to experience a youth bulge – in an increase in the population of the youth relative to other age groups (Bloom and HumIr, 2010; Reed and Ambers, 2011). The general expectation was that the rising ratio of youth population relative to other age groups would stimulate economic growth and development, otherwise known as demographic dividend. It goes further to indicate that, in countries that provide formal education and employment for large proportions of their young people, the youth bulge is a 'demographic bonus'.

In recent years, various governments have devised new approaches to addressing the challenges facing the youth as well as harnessing their potentials. This has led to the recognition of the need to empower the youth in order to

realize the benefits of demographic dividend. Among the several challenges facing the youth in Nigeria include unemployment, drugs, crimes etc. while youths are supposed to be the major agent of change and development, some of them have been destroyed by drug abuse (rendering them unproductive). Drug abuse has become a global concern in Nigeria because of its effects on youth and the nation as a whole (Okafor, 2020). The overall health of the user is affected negatively and behaviors associated with drug abuse predispose the abuser to crime and contagious diseases including HIV/AIDS (Center for Disease Control, 2000).

The use of narcotic and other substance abuse constitute one of the most important risk-taking behavior among adolescent and young adults in secondary school (Oshodi, Aina, Onajole, 2009). Substance use among youths and adolescent is a global problem. In an American study, substance use rate increased with a prevalence rate of 19.6% between the age of 18-20 years. In the United Kingdom, cross-sectional studies have shown that among students aged 15-16 years, at least 40% had used illicit drugs – mainly cannabis – at some time in their lives. Also among age 16-24 years, 38% of males and 5% of females regularly drink twice the recommended safe level of alcohol (Miller P, Plant M. 1996).

According to Okafor (2000), many justifications have been attributed to the use of drugs especially among undergraduate students. In line with this, Olatunde (2000) and Akunyiki

(2003) in their own views, stated that people use drugs for a variety of reasons which include 1) their need to belong to a social group or class; 2) pressures from friends and peers; 3) for self medication; 4) because of parental deprivation at various levels; 5) for pleasure; 6) to overcome illness; 7) to gain confidence; 7) to overcome shyness; 8) to be able to facilitate communication; 9) to overcome many other social problems; and 11) to induce themselves to work above their physical capacity.

The growing culture of drug abuse and narcotic among many Nigerian youths dates back many years. As often argued, some of the causes are believed to derive from peer pressure, parental negligence and government's inability to stem the tide through potent legislation, control and enforcement. Sadly and over the years, the list of drugs susceptible to abuse has increased, thus transcending the control, reach and even the understanding of orthodox medicine. The common names that many are familiar with include Tramadol, Codeine, Rohypnol, cocaine, crack and marijuana or weed. But how much do you know of this ones: Storm, skonk, Molly, ecstasy, soda, gum, gutter dust, colorado, soakaway sniffing, monkey tail, stew, dongoyaro et al (Abimbola, 2018). The list is eternally endless therefore complicating the fight against substance abuse and making it a lot easier for the recruitment of new intakes. Generally, substance abuse is known to induce social vices, civil disturbance and other forms of criminality. It is indeed the very reason many

youths have landed in different prisons across the land and abroad. The crux of the study is to examine the effect of youth bulge and drugs on conflict dynamics in Nigeria. The paper will also try to examine other issues including the phenomenon of youth bulge and the effect of frequent abuse of drugs by youths. The paper will also take painstaking efforts to identify the various types of drugs commonly abused and measures towards preventing further mental carnage.

### Basic terms

Many of the widely-used terms nowadays require a precise definition of their meaning and connotations to establish good social awareness of those terms. The usage of those terms without realizing their proper significance distorts their content and renders them suitable for narrow ideological employment. In this study, careful application of the definition of terms will be taken into consideration for an in-depth exegesis. This will be done in order to draw attention to key concepts or terms that needs to be understood relating to the topic of investigation.

1. **Drug abuse:** For a better understanding of the concept of drug abuse, there is the need to clarify the concept of drug itself. The World health organization defines drug as substance which, introduced into the living organism can modify one or more of the its function. The presence of drugs in many civilizations goes back

to time immemorial. Greeks and Roman deified wine with the figure of Dionysus and Bacchus respectively. Historically, drugs have been linked to magical-religious rituals, celebrations and social events. Gradually, their use backs widespread in other contexts. Some of these substances are natural in origin, as in the case with tobacco and cannabis. Others are the result of chemical processes carried out using natural products, like what occurs with alcohol beverages which are obtained from the fermentation or distillation of grain or fruit juice. Drugs are also produced artificially. This is the case for psychiatric use or for synthetic drugs.

Moreover, many people interchangeably use the concept of 'drugs', 'drug misuse' and 'drug abuse', but there are definite differences between the concepts. Drug misuse is to use a drug for a purpose which it should not be used for. The misuse of drug means following the medical instructions, but the person may not necessarily be looking to 'get high' from the use. While drug abuse typically refers to those who do not have a prescription for what they are taking. Not only do they use it in a way other than it is prescribed but they also use it to experience the feelings associated with the drug. Euphoria, relaxation, the general feeling of 'getting high' is always

associated with drug abuse. The abuse of drugs always result in unavoidable side effects, including dependency and addiction.

Substances abuse also known as drug abuse, is a patterned use of a drug in which the user consumes the substance in amounts or with methods which are harmful to themselves or others, and is a form of substance related disorder. Widely differing definitions of drug abuse are used in public health, medical and criminal justice context.

2. **Youth bulge** :The United Nations General Assembly has defined 'youth' as the age between 15 and 24. However, there is no single agreed definition of whom and what constitute 'youth' and definitions vary among countries and organizations. Karim (2011) is of the opinion that the word 'youth' means different things to different people. To Abhuere (2000), youth is a social creation. The Oxford English Dictionary (1995), defines youth as a state of being young, the period between childhood and adult age. Age has also been used to define youths; for instance, according to the United Nations, youths are those between the age of fifteen and thirty-five (UNICEF, 1972). Likewise, the lowest range of youth 13 up in Jordan and the upper range is 35 in a number of African countries including Sierra Leone

and Rwanda. The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF use the term 'adolescent' for those aged 10 and 19, and 'youths' for those 15 – 24. There is also a degree of overlap between international definitions of 'youth' and 'children', with the convention of the Rights of the child (CRC) defining a child as anyone under the age of 18 "unless under the law applicable to the child, maturity is attained earlier".

The term 'youth bulge' was coined by a German social scientist Gunnar Heinsohn in mid-1990s but has gained greater currency in recent years. Examining the works of the political scientist Gary Fuller and Jack A. Goldstone, they argued that developing countries undergoing "demographic-transition" - or those moving from high to low mortality and fertility rates - are especially vulnerable to civil conflict.

Lyndsay McLean and Erika Fraser 2009 believes that it is critical to recognize that 'youth' is not a homogeneous construct, but encapsulates several different experiences and diversities, for example according to gender, class, disability, ethnicity, education and provenance (e.g. region, rural/urban). In some of the literature, 'youth' is used as shorthand for young men and the potential 'threat' posed by male youth.

Hendrixson (2003) says that 'youth bulges' tend to be personified as a discontented, angry young man, almost always a person of color, living in huge numbers in Africa, the Middle East and part of Asia and Latin America forming and 'unprecedented, out-of-control force'. These perception is perceived to be on the negative and subjective point of view while it disregards the benefits and objectives identified in the youth bulge. Others argue that there is a risk that 'youth bulge' alarmism may lead to the drawing of simplistic conclusions and the design of poorly-informed policies and program approaches, which overlook the complexity of factors in specific contexts and the fact that the majority of young people do not get involved in violence (Sommers, 2007; Barker, 2005).

Personified as a discontented, angry young man, almost always a person of color, the youth bulge is seen as unpredictable, out-of-control force South generally, with Africa the Middle East, and parts of Asia and Latin America, all considered hotspot.

3. **Conflict dynamics:** conflict is not like water and oil. There is always a difference in conflict. Conflict is a dynamic human experience. Conflict dynamics can be described as the resulting interaction between the

conflict profile, the actors, and causes. Understanding conflict dynamics will help identify Windows of opportunity, in particular through the use of scenario building, which aims to assess different possible developments and think through appropriate responses.

If history is the key to understanding conflict dynamics, it may be relevant to use the timeline to identify its main phases. Temporal patterns (e.g the four-year rotation of presidents or climate changes) may be important in understanding the conflict dynamics. In understanding and analyzing conflict dynamics, one pertinent question is to be asked. What are current co flirt trends? E.g escalation, or de-escalation, changes in important framework conditions. What are the windows of opportunity?

#### **Understanding Narcotic Challenge In Nigeria**

No society is insulated from illicit drug consumption and its negative consequences. It is not clear when and how the drug abuse started in Nigeria, but available evidence suggest that alcohol abuse was common in the colonial era (NAI, CSO 26). Research conducted by Professor Adeoye Lambo shows that the use of cannabis had begun in Nigeria before independence in 1960 (Kehinde, 1991;36). Some criminal lunatics arrested and brought for trials for various offenses including murder during the colonial era exhibited signs of drugs related retardation (NAI, CSO 26). This shows the

history of drug abuse in Nigeria. The problem was compounded by the political crises in Nigeria in the mid 1960s and the Nigerian Civil War. During the political upheaval in the Southwest in 1964-66 for example, thugs smoked Indian hemp freely. It was found that the hemp impaired the cognitive functions of thugs temporarily which enables them to perform in a callous and dastardly manner (Kehinde, 1991;36). At the end of the civil war in 1970, many Nigerian especially in the eastern part of the country were already used to alcohol and cannabis abuse (Olojede, 1985). The effect of alcohol abuse during the colonial era was nevertheless minimal until after 1945 when African contingents and members of the Royal West Frontier force began to return from Burma and other war front where they served during the Second World War. Marijuana is the most commonly abused drug in Nigeria. It is the common drug made from dry leaves and flowering top of the Indian hemp plant cannabis sativa. It is either smoked, chew or eaten by addicts for hallucinogenic and intoxicatingly effects. According to Musbau (2012) It is known by a number of slangs including Indian hemp, 'pot', 'grass', weed, 'igbo' (in Yoruba), 'wiwi' (in Hausa) among others. Some of the soldiers who returned from the Second World War, it would be recalled, were introduced to lifestyle such as drinking of alcohol especially rum and smoking of marijuana or Indian hemp. Drug abuse in contemporary Nigeria is common among young people and the youth, especially those between

the ages of 15 and 40 years old (Abudu, 2008). Other commonly consumed illicit drug in Nigeria include cocaine, heroine, morphine. Reports have also shown that undergraduate students of the Nigerian Universities and secondary school students use illicit drugs (Okoza, 2009; 85-92. Oshkosh and Ali

As drug abuse became aggravated and localized in the country, more Nigerians became addicted to the consumption of illicit drugs like cocaine and heroine. Evidence in support of this is that in 1983, the Yaba Psychiatric Hospital handled only one hard drug case. In 1989, the hospital treated more than 160 hard drug related case (Olojede, 1985). This figure however, did not reflect the actual number of people with drug abuse problem that year. Dr. O. Orija maintained that the hospital statistics is not an absolute indicator of the drug problem in Nigeria. He claimed that the statistics can only be used as relative indicator. Several factors were responsible for the rise in drug abuse in Nigeria. The failure of governments' efforts to control the drug problem in Nigeria was a major factor. The repeal of decree 20 and its replacement with decree 22 in July 1986, relaxed government efforts at prosecuting the drug war in a drastic manner. Nevertheless, the government instituted other measures to arrest the menace. One of such measures was the establishment of National drug law enforcement agency (initially referred to as NDEA without L) in 1989. The promulgation of decree 20 which led to the trial, conviction and execution of

some drug traffickers did not ameliorate the drug problem in Nigeria.

In the last couple of years, the non-medical use of pharmaceutical drugs has been like an epidemic among Nigerian youths. Psychiatrists have expressed worry over the increase in the number of patients with drug-related cases seen at the hospital in recent times. "The drug" business is massive in Nigeria as drug peddlers make billions of Naira by profiting off the bulge of Nigeria youths, paying no attention to the growing population of medically untreated adults with no meaningful contribution to the nation.

Aduloju (2018) stressed that, with the high rate of unemployment and dwindling economy, the typical frustrated Nigerian youth, just wants to get "HIGH", so they make do with any substance that can get them to that state of euphoria either as a stimulant or depressant (Aduloju, 2018). The shift has gone from the abuse of legal substance like alcohol, corrosive substance like super-glue, Gum, Methylated spirits, Balms, gasoline etc. and illegal substances like cocaine, marijuana, Indian hemp etc. to the use of pharmaceutical drugs like codeine and Tramadol which are easily gotten off the counter. Reports from NDLEA has shown that youths age 15-36 especially in the Northern-west is quite alarming. For many Nigerians, the revelation of the BBC undercover documentary in an article titled 'sweet sweet codeine' published on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2018, on the illegal sale and distribution of codeine cough

syrup by officials of pharmaceutical company, though shocking, did not really come as a surprise. The investigation by BBC pidgin graphically highlighted how criminals have taken advantage of leakages in the pharmaceutical regulatory system to fuel the addiction.

According to the Nigeria Senate, an estimate of 3million bottles of codeine are consumed daily in two states in Nigeria, Jigawa and Kano while the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) has concerns over the uncontrolled intakes of codeine in the country. This Day live newspaper of November 1, 2017, in an article titled 'Rising Drug Abuse', over 500,000 bottles of codeine are consumed daily by young Nigerians between the ages of 12 to 35 years. Codeine is imported but it is used by over 20 pharmaceutical companies in Nigeria to produce cough syrup. It is not illegal to drink or manufacture the medicine – but it is against the law to sell it to people without a doctor's prescription or those who don't have a pharmaceutical license. It was reported by BBC that many of the sales representatives of the pharmaceutical companies target schools and sell to students. The representatives are not licensed pharmacists and are not expected to do so but they know that once individuals are addicted they come back to them for more which equals to meeting and sometimes exceeding their sales target.

This scourge of drug abuse is not peculiar to the substance codeine alone, rather most drugs abused also take the same route; it sometimes starts from peer pressure, curiosity, socio-economic conditions to the need for energy to work long hours and for those in the street to maintain 'street' credibility. Aduloju (2018) posits that, 'this critical situation has brought about an increase in crime rate; rape cases by teenagers has increased in an alarming rate, reckless killings like the cases in Ikorudu of Lagos state, cultism, armed robbery, banditry, militancy and even insurgency are all fueled by drug abuse (Aduloju, 2018). The incursion of several vices and criminal tendencies may not be directly as a result of drug abuse, but often have affiliated and induced influence.

### **Youth Bulge And Conflict Dynamics In Nigeria**

In Africa, young people constitute the majority of the population and are at the center of societal interactions and transformations. Omobolaji (2012) identified that children and youth are often placed at the margins of the public sphere and major political, social-economic, and cultural processes. In other words, 'youth' ordinarily is a category of early childhood, emerging in activity and involvement in society but somewhat limited by social values and some levels of dependency, and perhaps agency.

In recent years, there has been a gradual shift from discussions about children as the

victims of violence (Michael, 1996;2001;2006) to youth as a threat to security and stability. These paradigm shift is an important focus in the paper. There have been multiple assertions that a surging youth population or youth bulge – combined with unemployment, urbanization and other factors – leads to violence (Kaplan, 1994; Huntingdon, 1996; UN, 2004). In contempt, where young people are increasing in number (both absolutely and relative to other age groups) have fewer opportunities for education and income generation and increasing insecurity, there is mounting concerns that these youths will get involved in violence and therefore threaten local and global peace, stability and development.

While we know that young people make up a large proportion of combatants and perpetrators of violence and there is a statistical evidence of a connection between high relative youth population and armed conflict.

There has been a growing literature on issues relating to youth and development. The underlying argument has been that youths can be used for good or bad. As positive instruments of change in the society, youths can use their vibrancy and creative minds to enhance

productivity. Unfortunately, either for lack of opportunity, or positive encouragement, youths have often misused their potentials. Ironically, most countries with youth bulge instead of enjoying demographic dividend have to contend with youth restiveness and radicalism. Nigeria is not exempted from the scan aria painted above. There is a consensus of opinion that countries with young age structure are prone to conflict(Urdal&Sciubba,2007 and Population Action International, 2007).

Statistics from the Population Bureau confirms the problem of youth bulge in Africa. Fig 1 shows that as at 2010, the proportion of the young people in Africa is higher than in developed and several developing countries. As at 2010, the proportion of child population (0-14) and young population (15-29) in the total population in the developed region stood at 15% and 20% respectively. In the developing regions, the proportion of child and youth population was 29% and 27% in 2010. In the case of Africa, child and youth population accounts for 40% and 28% respectively. In effect, the proportion of young population in Africa's total population is about 70%.

Fig. 1.

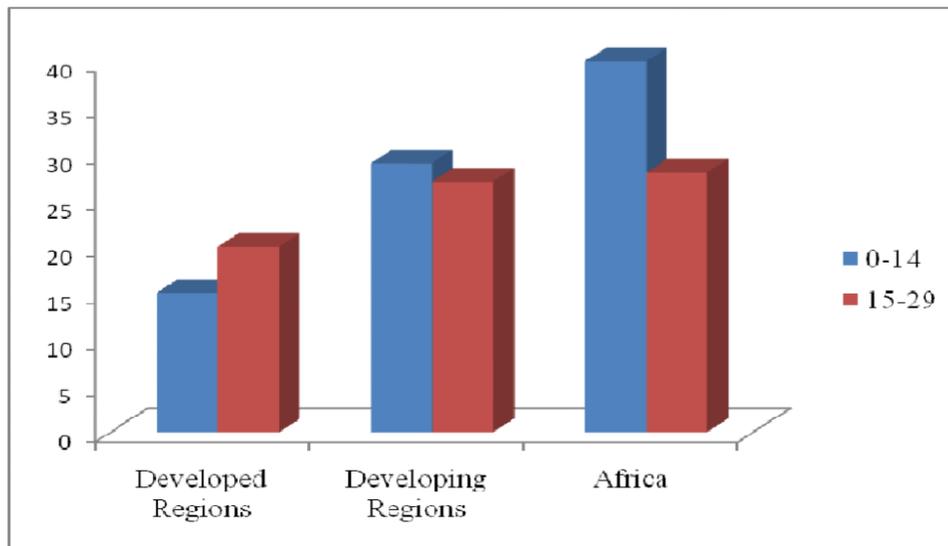


Fig. 1 Proportion of young population as % of total population, 2010

*Source:* Omoju O.E. & Terfa W.A. (2014) calculations based on data from the UN, department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population division (2011), World Population Prospects.

Given the paradox of youth bulge and radicalism most literature underscores highly the importance of harnessing the potentials of youths effectively and efficiently. But unfortunately, the youths often fail to develop a sense of responsibility necessary for their effective participation. Many factors have been identified for this among which are general apathy, wrong perception of the role of the youth, youth unemployment, abuse of technology, drug abuse among others.

A new study by Population Action International (PAI), a Washington-based private advocacy group, suggests a strong correlation between countries prone to civil conflict and those with burgeoning youth

population. This goes a long way to buttress the argument that links between a growing population of youths and the predisposition to conflict. This further explains a twist and understanding of the Nigerian conflict dynamics. Social scientists label this demographic profile 'youth bulge', and it's potential to destabilize countries in the developing world is gaining wider acceptance among American foreign policy community. The theory contends that societies with rapidly growing youth population often end up with rampant unemployment and large pools of disaffected youths who are more susceptible to recruitment into rebel or terrorist youths. It can also be further stressed that countries with

weak political institutions are more vulnerable to youth bulge related violence and social unrest. Between 1970 and 1999, 80% of civil conflict occurred in countries where 60% of the population or more were under the age of thirty according to Population Action International (PAI).

### **Global view on Youth bulge**

From an historical point of view, in the eighteenth century France, a spike in population boosted demands for food, which in turn drove up inflation, reduced the purchasing power of most citizens, and sparked social unrest. Some are also of the belief that the World War I and II were due to large amounts of young people (particularly in the Balkans circa 1914). Some even suggests Japan's invasion of China in 1930s can be particularly explained by its large number of youths, while others attribute Marxist insurrection in Latin America during the 1970s and 80s to the swelling population of the region's unemployed youths (guerrilla-related violence quelled as the number of young people diminish).

Societies where youth bulge is more likely to take place are societies like the sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia, the Middle East and the Pacific Islands. Sixty-two countries are considered, "very young" according to PAI, which means that two-third of their population are under the age of thirty (and less than six percent are above the age of sixty). Countries that fit this profile include Nigeria, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Middle East where sixty

percent of the population is under twenty-five is also susceptible to youth-bulge-related civil strife. "The pandemic", according to January 2006 CFR Task Force Report on Africa, "has reversed a generation of gains in human development, hitting young and middle-aged adults, of all socio-economic classes and leaving a dangerous youth bulge." The implication of this dangerous youth bulge is such that positions Africa and Nigeria in the hands of the youth as either agents of peace or agents of imminent crises.

### **Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT)**

Relative deprivation theory (RTD) is fundamentally embedded in the psychological theory of frustration-aggression hypothesis. Retrospectively, early psychological theories of crime believed that the cause of crime lies in the individual's psychology. They argued that individuals with personality disorder are more likely to commit crimes than those within the borderline of neurotypical personalities. This line of thinking may have influenced the development of RDT. However, RDT moved beyond the individual psychology to understand collective psychology that aggravates crime, violence and conflict. The idea of relative deprivation specifically measures individual's subjective evaluation of their financial and political position or other measurement of social examination. Relative deprivation is more critical when predicting individual's conduct, compared with 'objective' measures of hardship such as, poverty and inequality. Scholars

contended that individuals will encounter relative deprivation when they need X, or see that comparatively others have X and feel qualified to have X (Davies, 1959), and individuals must think it is attainable to get X (Runciman, 1966), while people do not have an awareness of other's expectation for their inability to have X (Crosby, 1976). RDT refers to the disenchantment people feel when they compare their positions to others and realize that others in the group possess something that they do not (Chen, 2015). When this feeling persists, it may lead to frustration, stress, and aggression which may result to violent conflict. The energy and tendencies for violent conflict can be seen in young people who feel deprived and frustrated about their enormous skills, training and yet underutilized or dormant. The theory explains a connection between a teeming and growing population of unengaged youths and a predisposition to conflict.

Gurr (1970), one of the pioneers of RDT, contends that relative deprivation is the distinction between one's value expectation and value capabilities. Value expectations alludes to merchandise and opportunities that the individual needs and feels qualified for, evaluated, taking into account correlations with others. Farrow (1998) is of the opinion that there is the requirement for mass social movement for structured and organized youth violence in human society. In spite of the scholarly augment for and against relative deprivation, the concept and theory is still

relevant to the understanding of youth bulge, narcotic among youths and conflict dynamics in Nigeria.

### **The Effect of Youth Bulge and Drugs on Conflict Dynamics in Nigeria.**

Students especially those in secondary school tend to see the drug user as one who is tough, strong and bold. Esen (1979), stated that Nigerian secondary school adolescent under the influence of Indian hemp shed all inhibitions and produce behavior that is inconsistent with school discipline. He further asserted that the increasing incidence of drug abuse among secondary school students is a contributory factor in the ugly confrontation between school administration and students. This further explains the linkage between youth bulge and conflict.

A recent discussion with a clinical psychologists gives an eye-opener to the recent and imminent scourge and danger of drug abuse on the youth bulge in Nigeria. The scenario is unimaginable and dreaded with the input and intake of various kinds of illicit drugs and substances. Studies earlier highlighted have indicated the level of intake of drugs and corrosive substances, orchestrated by the level of economic hardship, unemployment, poverty and a lopsided society where government have failed. The imminent danger of drug abuse on the teeming idle and unemployed youths in Nigeria is not far-fetched. A country of over 180 million population where more than half are below the age of thirty, while unemployment

and underemployment are at its peak among the youths.

There is a relationship among these three factors; an increasing population of youths, narcotic/ substance abuse and conflict dynamics in Nigeria. Substance use and crime may be casually linked and mutually reinforcing, thus, drinking and drug use may lead to more criminal behavior, and criminal behavior may lead to more drinking and drugs (Ayodele et al, 2018). Youths are often the most active in any population. The growing population of youths in Nigeria which has been tagged youth bulge are either unemployed or underemployed giving room for a large number of idle youths. It is more like a vicious cycle where population increases at an alarming without being gainfully engaged, then frustration makes these youths to engage in corrosive and dangerous substance in replacement for their idleness. The end product of this continues intake of dangerous substance makes youths predisposed to conflict and violence.

It is believed that a surplus of young people, especially men, who cannot find opportunities in the society, may be forced to embark on violence. Often time, these youths fall victim of political thugs used by politicians. Even in the absence of large scale political revolt like those of the Arab Spring, mass youth unemployment could result in lost human capital and increased crime and other social vices. This pattern of thought has been further stressed by West African countries such as

Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire (Atta-Asamoah and Kewsi-Aning, 2010). The spate of terrorist activities and kidnapping in the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria respectively has also led credence to the argument of this school of thought.

The youth bulge and the increased rate of drug abuse is a frightening to the country's development.

### **Conclusion**

The increased and alarming rate at which all forms of dangerous substances are consumed presently can not be underestimated. There is geometric increase within the youthful age bracket in Africa and Nigeria in particular. The increasing rate of crime, violence and conflict is not far fetched from the increasing number of youths. Idle youths are full of energy, when this potentials and energy are not properly channeled, frustration is bound to set in which may in turn result to conflict and violence. Measures have been put in place to curb illegal sales and consumption of dangerous substances but these efforts have proved abortive over the years.

### **Recommendations**

The sudden ban of dangerous substance suggest a level of insensitivity and insincerity as well as lack of political will to tackle the rising scourge of drug abuse among Nigerian youths. The growing population of youths should not be seen as a curse but considered a blessing that needs to be properly managed. The solution to reducing youth related violent conflict is not the

enactment of policies to reduce the growing youth.

1. Instead of a ban on codeine, attention can be given to restructuring the pharmaceutical industry in Nigeria. For instance, the open market where these drugs can be gotten freely should be eliminated. An official ban does not curtail the desire for hard drugs.
2. Getting drugs over-the-counter by just anyone without a signed prescription should be discouraged and pharmacies who do not comply should face stiff penalties.
3. Pharmacy stores should be duly registered and as a matter of compulsion have a sitting pharmacist at every point in time.
4. A restructuring of NAFDAC, NDLEA with a review of policies on the importation, monitoring and evaluation of pharmaceutical companies
5. Likewise, attention should be given to strict enforcement and inspection to curb the spread of corruption within the health sector.
6. Creating more job opportunity is key to engaging the teeming and increasing Nigerian youthful population.
7. Educated youths without requisite entrepreneurial skills will soon become idle considering the technological and global nature of the world we presently live.

All These measures are in line with international best practices and can be adopted here in Nigeria while paying close and keen attention to our peculiarities. Concerted efforts will be needed from all stakeholders to crush the serpent of drug abuse among Nigeria youths which has massive implications to the Nigerian state. It is high time a comprehensive research is conducted to influence evidence-based policies that will curb the epidemic that is fast ravaging Nigerian youthful population.

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