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# The Effect of Drug Abuse on Youths in Portloko Town, Northern Sierra Leone

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**Abstract-** Drug abuse and addiction have been part of youths in this part of the community in their existing social systems, affecting crime rates, hospitalizations, child abuse, and child neglect, frustration, insane, and disability, HIV /AIDS, Scabies and skin diseases, anaemia, pale in colour. those who take intra venous injections suffer from HIV/aids. Youth nowadays try various drugs so that they feel different from normal, Drugs has become a fashion amongst youth nowadays, both boys and girls are greatly involved in this habit. This paper is presenting the results of the causes, types, effects on the individuals, families, and community as a whole. The different types of drugs taken by youth in these communities were tramadol, pampas, Evostick-, super glue, marijuana, tobacco, pounded tobacco with bicarbonate of soda (snuff), cocaine, petrol, Araldite, kola nut, and alcohol. The factors that lead to the intake of these drugs are as follows, unemployment, lack of effective mentorship, lack of family values, poor parenting guidance, and loss of hope easily assessable, and affordable, peer group influence, cults, secret societies in contributed to youths going into drug This study.

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# The Effect of Drug Abuse on Youths in Portloko Town, Northern Sierra Leone

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**Abstract-** Drug abuse and addiction have been part of youths in this part of the community in their existing social systems, affecting crime rates, hospitalizations, child abuse, and child neglect, frustration, insane, and disability, HIV/AIDS, Scabies and skin diseases, anaemia, pale in colour. those who take intra venous injections suffer from HIV/aids. Youth nowadays try various drugs so that they feel different from normal, Drugs has become a fashion amongst youth nowadays, both boys and girls are greatly involved in this habit. This paper is presenting the results of the causes, types, effects on the individuals, families, and community as a whole. The different types of drugs taken by youth in these communities were tramadol, pampas, Evostick-, super glue, marijuana, tobacco, pounded tobacco with bicarbonate of soda (snuff), cocaine, petrol, Araldite, kola nut, and alcohol. The factors that lead to the intake of these drugs are as follows, unemployment, lack of effective mentorship, lack of family values, poor parenting guidance, and loss of hope easily assessable, and affordable, peer group influence, cults, secret societies in contributed to youths going into drug This study. The main objective of this study was to investigate the causes and effects of drug abuse on the youths in portloko township, forty (40) participants were investigated in this study, thirty (30) youths and ten (10) young adults /adults, the investigation focused on the different types, causes and effect of the abuse of these drugs Questionnaire was analysed statistically using tables, frequencies, and percentages, while qualitative data from the interview was analysed and presented recommendations were made on how to minimize or prevent our youths from drugs, the conclusion was made on the cause and prevention of these drugs taken by youths in these community.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**A** drug is any chemical substance that causes a change in an organism's physiology or psychology when consumed, Drug abuse is defined herein as illicit production, trafficking, and consumption.

Drug abuse can affect several aspects of a person's physical and psychological health. Certain drugs *can lead to drowsiness and slow breathing*, while others may cause insomnia, paranoia, or hallucinations. Chronic drug use is associated with cardiovascular, kidney, and liver disease.

Drug addiction is one of the major problems in this community. Since these communities have young populations, they are at greater risks of addiction. The

young population is exposed to higher risk as a major and the most vulnerable group. Problems of puberty, adolescents and youth identity crisis, and mental conditions can be considered as important factors for the tendency of this age group towards addiction (Petraitis J, Flay BR, Miller 2011). The use of drugs in adolescents who their friends have a positive attitude towards drugs is higher, even up to two-thirds of the causes for using the drugs is how much close friends talk about the drugs, and a friend suggests them to accept the use of drugs (Petraitis J, Flay BR, Miller 2019). As well as pleasure, curiosity and escape of from home. Addiction has engaged all industrial and nonindustrial societies along with malnutrition and environmental pollution; so that addiction had a growing trend during the recent years in Sierra Leone (Heidari H, Sharif Malmir M 2013). close friends talk about the drugs, and a friend suggests them to accept the use of drugs (Ghoreishi Zadeh SMA 2001) As well as pleasure, curiosity, and escape of psycho-social problems are the major causes of early drug use for the first time (Ghoreishi Zadeh SMA 2002).

Heidari et al. concluded that low self-esteem, successive failures in life, and observational learning from addicted family members were the most common causes of a tendency towards drugs (Heidari H, Sharif Malmir M 2013). Yuki Maehara et al. investigated the factors influencing relapse of drug usage in Bangladesh during 5 months after drug withdrawal and concluded that the relapse rate is higher in women. In the male population, the most common factors influencing relapse included unstable housing, living alone, and high income. In the female population, the most common factors of relapse included having no child for emotional support and working as a sex worker (Maehira Y, Chowdhury El 2013) Mir Lotfi et al. evaluated the attitudes of students in the dormitory of Zahedan City towards the drug abuse and they concluded that there are different causes for a tendency towards the drugs while staying in a dormitory is one of the most critical periods in people's lives and necessary and appropriate measures should be performed to solve social and mental problems in this period (Mir Lotfi P, Javadimehr 2015) Kilpatrick et al. also reported that the age of first use is obviously related to the future consumption patterns. As the drug usage is started sooner, it is correlated with the greater and more widespread use of other drugs (Kilpatrick DG, Acierno R 2013).

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Illegal drugs are defined as chemical formulas, but underground chemists can modify the molecular structure of certain illegal drugs to produce analogs known as designer drugs, which do not meet these definitions. These drugs can be stronger than the drugs they are designed to imitate.

- Marijuana remains the most commonly used illegal drug: Approximately 80 percent of current illicit drug users are marijuana or hashish users. ...
- Cocaine Use. ...
- Heroin Use. ...
- Methamphetamine Use. ...
- Nicotine Use (Cigarettes and Smokeless Tobacco)...
- Inhalant Use. ...
- Hallucinogen Use. ...
- Anabolic Steroid Use

Drug abuse may lead to social, physical, emotional, and job-related problems.

### *Marijuana*

It's still the most-used illegal drug in Sierra Leone, despite it recently earning legal status for medical purposes in many countries.

Marijuana refers to the dried leaves, flowers, stems, and seeds of the hemp (*Cannabis sativa*) plant, all parts of it can be used. Most people smoke marijuana, but it can also be added to foods and eaten.

It can act as both a stimulant and a depressant, and even a hallucinogen.

Marijuana contains the chemical which acts on different parts of the brain to create the "high" that users experience, such as changes in sensations, mood, body movements, thinking, and memory.

When used regularly, marijuana can affect brain development and lead to cognitive problems. It can become addictive for some people, and also cause serious health problems such as breathing problems, increased heart rate, palpitation and a higher risk of heart attacks, depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts for some people. Among young people, heavy marijuana use has been associated with cognitive impairment and mental illness, like schizophrenia. However, in adults, chronic use of marijuana has been associated with serious medical conditions.

### *Inhalants*

Inhalants are mood-altering substances that are voluntarily inhaled. Most substances used are commercial and household products, such as solvents and aerosols, which are easily obtained and are not harmful, if used for the purpose intended and as directed. Because they are common products, inhalants often are a young person's first attempt at "getting high". Inhalants can severely impair judgment and driving ability. They also cause severe disorientation, visual distortion and confusion. There is evidence that tolerance to the effects of inhalants develops with

continued use so, users need to increase use to obtain the same high. Studies have shown that dependence on inhalants continues even when the user goes on to use other drugs. Inhalants include: Nitrous Oxide, laughing gas, propellant aerosol cans, Amyl Nitrite, poppers, snappers in ampules, Butyl Nitrite, rush, bullet, climax (Kilpatrick 2018).

## II. STIMULANTS

Stimulants are drugs that stimulate the central nervous system and excite bodily activity. Methamphetamine is one of the fastest-growing drugs of abuse. These drugs create less intense and less expensive cocaine-like effects in the body.

Persons who use large amounts of amphetamines over a long period of time can develop an amphetamine psychosis that includes hallucinations, delusions, and paranoia. These symptoms usually disappear when drug use ceases.

Amphetamines can be swallowed in pills or capsules, smoked as "crank" and "ice" or injected. An amphetamine injection creates a sudden increase in blood pressure that can result in stroke, very high fever or heart failure. Stimulants are drugs that stimulate the central nervous system and excite bodily activity abuse.

### *Signs and Symptoms*

Mood changes, Impaired concentration, Impaired mental functioning, Mood swings between apathy and alertness, Restless. Anxious and moody behaviour, Increased heart and respiratory rates, High blood pressure, Profuse sweating, Loss of appetite, Dizziness, Blurred vision, Anxiety and sleeplessness.

A depressant is a drug that depresses the central nervous system, resulting in sedation and a decrease in bodily activity. Depressants, taken as prescribed by physicians, can be beneficial for the relief of anxiety, irritability, stress and tension. The main classes of medical depressants are barbiturates and benzodiazepines. When regular users suddenly stop taking large doses, they can develop withdrawal symptoms ranging from restlessness, insomnia and anxiety to convulsions and death. Babies born to mothers who abuse depressants during pregnancy may be physically dependent on the drugs and show withdrawal symptoms shortly after they are born. Birth defects and behavioural problems also may result. Depressants are known as S barbiturates, downers, and tranquilizers, such as Valium, Librium, Equanil, Serax, Tranxene, and Xanax.

The effect of depressants are in many ways similar to the effect of alcohol. Small amounts can produce calmness and relaxed muscles. But somewhat larger doses can cause slurred speech.

### *Hallucinogens*

Hallucinogenic drugs distort the senses and often produce hallucinations—experiences that depart

from reality. Some negative health effects may last six months to a year following prolonged daily use. Phencyclidine (PCP) interrupts the function of the neocortex, the section of the brain that controls the intellect and keeps instincts in check because the drug blocks pain receptors. Violent PCP episodes may result in self-inflicted injuries. Lysergic acid (LSD), mescaline, and psilocybin also are hallucinogens that cause illusions and hallucinations. It is common to have a bad psychological reaction to LSD, mescaline, and psilocybin. The user may experience panic, confusion, suspicion, anxiety and loss of control. Delayed effects or flashbacks can occur even after use has ceased.

#### *Signs and Symptoms*

Impaired concentration, Confusion and agitation, Muscles rigidity, Profuse sweating, A sense of distance and estrangement, Muscular coordination, Blocked and incoherent speech, Dilated pupils Health Effect, Raised in body temperature, Increased heart rate and blood pressure, Loss of appetite, Sleeplessness, Tremors, Frequent memory loss, Speech difficulties, Change of mood such as depression' anxiety and violent behaviour, Hallucination, Convulsion and coma, Heart and lung failure.

Narcotic analgesics are the most effective compounds used for pain relief. Narcotic analgesics include Opium, Opiates (morphine, codeine, Percodan, heroin, and Dilaudid), and Opioids (synthetic substitutes such as Vicodin, Darvon, Demerol, and methadone).

Narcotics can be smoked or eaten (opium), injected, taken orally or smoked (morphine), inhaled, injected, or smoked (heroin). Opiates also are known as heroin, smack, horse, brown sugar, and black tar.

Designer drugs are also related to amphetamines and have a mild stimulant property but are mostly euphoricants. They can cause brain damage and can produce symptoms such as severe Parkinson's disease. paralysis and irreversible brain damage, nausea and vomiting. impaired speech. Chill's faintness, shock and blurred vision 'impaired perception, illusion

#### *Signs and Symptoms*

Drowsiness Nausea and vomiting, Constricted pupils, Watery eyes and itching, Low and shallow breathing, Cold and clammy skin, Difficulty in breathing, Tramadol is a *strong painkiller*. It's used to treat moderate to severe pain, for example after an operation or a serious injury. It's also used to treat long-standing pain when weaker painkillers no longer work. It also has side effect tramadol can slow or stop breathing, and may be habit-forming, misuse of drugs can lead to *addiction and over dose can lead to death*.

Sleepiness. headache. Nervousness. Uncontrollable shaking of a part of, the body. Muscle tightness. Changes in mood. heartburn or indigestion. Dry mouth.

#### *Alcohol*

drink, booze, liquor, beverage, bevy, plonk, vino

Alcohol (chemical name *ethanol*) is usually found as a beverage and is a colourless liquid in its pure form.

It acts by slowing down the body's reactions in many different ways.

There are three main forms of alcoholic drink, divided by strength:

- Beers - up to 7-8% ABV (alcohol by volume)
- Wines - up to 20% ABV
- Spirits - up to 40% ABV (in the UK)

ABV: Alcohol by volume (abbreviated as ABV, abv, or alc/vol) is a standard measure of how much alcohol (ethanol) is contained in an alcoholic beverage (Mir Lotfi P, Javadimehr M, 2015)

#### *Inhalants*

- Inhalants are mood-altering substances that are voluntarily inhaled. Most substances used are commercial and household products, such as solvents and aerosols, which are easily obtained and are not harmful, if used for the purpose intended and as directed. Because they are common products, inhalants often are a young person's first attempt at "getting high". Inhalants can severely impair judgment and driving ability. They also cause severe disorientation, visual distortion and confusion. There is evidence that tolerance to the effects of inhalants develops with continued use so, users need to increase use to obtain the same high. Inhalants include: Nitrous Oxide, laughing gas, propellant aerosol cans, aerosol sprays, aerosol paint cans, containers of cleaning fluid, ((Hojati H, Alvestany (2020) parental divorce or high genetic susceptibility is the main causes of addiction in the high risk youth Sundquist K,) Heidari et al.(2019).

### III. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

#### a) *Aims*

The aim of the study is to investigate the effect of drugs on the youth of Port Loko township.

#### b) *The Objectives of the Study are Follows*

1. To find out reasons why youth take drugs
2. To identify the types of Drugs taken by youths
3. To find out the different route of Administration
4. to find out the effect of drugs on; 1 self 11 Home 111 community/Nation
5. To find solutions and recommendation on how to minimize, rehabilitate and prevent the use of illegal drugs

#### c) *Research Questions*

What are the reasons why youth take drugs?

List the different type of drugs taken

What are the route of taken these drugs?

What are the e effect of these drugs on 1 oneself, 2 families 3 community/ Nation?

#### d) Statement of the Problem

Drugs have become the order of the day in port loko township, most youth are involve in the taken of drugs, as they believe that it is part of their diet, drug addiction is so peculiar amongst them as there are a lot of hidden places that are known to them that are in the habit of selling drugs at affordable price, and it can be assessable and affordable most drugs are not bought with pricription, so can easily buy tranquilizers and sedatives and pain relieving drugs at any pharmacist or drug stores to quench there desires, even thogh these drugs stores are monitored by bphamacist board they sell behind counters, and because these youths been addicted with drugs, most of them are found in the street mad, insane, frustrated, thieves, gamblers, prostitute, teenage pregnancy, infections like HIV/AIDS. hapatitis .pneumonia, tuberculosis. cough, anaemia, fisto vagina futularchild mother and suicidal etc, all these have incur a lot on the Government and community in building rehabilitation centres, recruitment of staffs, and medicines, unrest on the part of the communit and drop out etc.

#### IV. METHOD OF DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The quantifiable data from the questionnaire was analysed statistically using tables with frequencies and percentages while the qualitative data from the interview was analysed qualitatively using simple description or narration. That is data collected from the

interview and questionnaire were presented and analysed separately. The raw data directly collected by the researcher from sources such as questionnaire, oral interview, observation and case study. Questionnaire and person-to-person interview were the primary sources of data collection in this study. Journals, the internet and newspapers, especially those that have important information pertaining the uses and effect of drugs were also of great used in this sturdy.

#### V. SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

The sample was selected randomly and purposively. The random technique gave every member equal opportunity and was used to guide the selection of appropriate samples to ensure that generalization of sample finding are representative of the population. The other technique used was purposive sampling as Bryman, (2008) pointed out that it is used to select subjects based on their relationship with the research questions. This technique was employed to identify key respondents in the various categories of people in the study area.

Considering the gender sensitivity, gender equality and equity aspects implicated in the study equal numbers of male (20) and Female (20) respondents were selected- which give a total of forty (40) persons interviewed. Amongst these were ten (10) adults (5) five women and five (5) men and thirty (30) youths and young adults.

#### VI. RESULTS. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Responded Interviewed and Age Bracket

SEX	AGE IN YEARS					
	12-19 YRS		20-28 YRS		30 yrs and Above	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
MALE	10	25	5	12.5	5	12.5
FEMALE	8	20	7	17.5	5	12.5
TOTAL	18	45	12	30	10	25

The table above explain the sex and ages of those interviewed, there are a total of twenty (20) males and twenty (20) female, 25% of males are within the ages of 12-19 years,12.5% 20-28 years,12.5% .30 years and above female 20% within the ages 12-19 years .17.5% 20-28 years,12.5% 30 years and above'

Figure 1: Reasons Why People Take Drugs

- **Emotional:** Feeling they need drugs to fill a void in their lives (whether it's stress, trauma, relationship issues or more)
- **Physical:** Feeling like they need the physical effects of a high or low to physically feel better
- **Psychological:** General feelings of inadequacy towards themselves or the world, so they use drugs to boost their confidence and self-esteem

To fit in to society, one finds himself. To feel good, to experiment Availability of drugs, Grieving a death end of a relationship, Mental illness, Environmental influences. Relaxation, Self-medication. Financial burdens. Career pressure School pressures, Family demands, Peer and Social Pressure Abuse and trauma, Boredom, to fit in, Curiosity and experimentation, Rebellion to be in control. To enhance performance, solation Misinformation or ignorance, Instant Gratification, Wide availability, actors such as unemployment, lack of effective mentorship, lack of family values, poor parenting guidance, and loss of hopes.

Table 2: Different Types of Drugs route of Administration and its effect on Youths and Young Adults in the Port Loko

Drugs	Route of Administration	Effects
Alcohol	Oral mouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Salivary gland damage.</li> <li>Gum disease and tooth decay.</li> <li>Oesophageal ulcers.</li> <li>Acid reflux and heartburn.</li> <li>Stomach ulcers and gastritis.</li> <li>Internal bleeding</li> <li>alcohol <b>interferes with the brain's communication pathway</b></li> <li>change mood and behaviour, and make it harder to think clearly and move with coordination.</li> </ul> <p>Haemorrhoids</p>
Tramadol	Oral mouth	<b>Nausea, vomiting, constipation, light-headedness, dizziness, drowsiness, or headache</b>
Cocaine	Inhalation	
Marijuana	Smoking	
Sanitary pad (pampas)	Boil with or without milk	Dizziness, weakness ,fatigue nausea, vomiting
Kush	Smoking	Weakness .fatigue. .sleeps a lot, nervousness, increased energy, increased appetite. hyper reactive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rapid heart rate</li> <li>Excessive worrying</li> <li>Sweating</li> <li>An impending sense of doom</li> <li>Mood swings</li> <li>Restlessness and agitation</li> <li>Tension</li> <li>Insomnia</li> </ul>
Kolanut	Oral mouth,	Nervousness. loss aplite, palpitation, increased heartbeat,
Ataya	Drinking	Hyperactive, nervousness, increases appetite, increase heartbeat, palpitation,
Evostick	Inhalation	Drowsiness, dizziness, drowsiness weakness
Tobacco	Smoking	Palpitation, hyperactive, dizziness
Aridite	Inhalation	Hyperactive, dizziness, palpitation,
petrol/paint	Inhalation	Dizziness. palpitation, heartbeat, weakness.
Super glue /bleach/aerosol can	Inhalation	Dizziness. weakness. heartbeat drowsiness hyperactive
Snuff (Pounded tobacco mix with bicarbonate of soda)	Underneath the tongue	Black and decay teeth, coughing. sneezing, palpitation. Drowsiness



Figure III

*The Effect of Drugs on the individual*

Drug abuse is one of the *risk than nonusers for mental health problems amongst youths*, including depression, conduct problems, personality disorders, suicidal thoughts, attempted suicide, and suicide academic declining grades, absenteeism from school and other activities potential of dropping out of school substance abuse. low level of commitment to education and higher truancy rates. Cognitive and behavioural difficulties other activities potential of dropping out reined by alcohol- and drug-using youth may interfere with their academic performance Injuries due to accidents (such as car motorbike, accidents), physical disabilities, abuse. Disproportionate Disorders that affect the decision, health-related problems (cough, human lack of motivation Sleep Disturbances Irritability Weight gain or loss Rapid heart rate, Excessive worrying. Sweating, an impending sense of doom, Mood swings, Restlessness and agitation Tension Insomnia other activities potential of dropping out of school substance abuse. low level of commitment to education and idents (such as carmotorbike, accidents), physical disabilities, abuse. Disproportionate Disorders that affect decision-making. Heart disease includes high blood pressure, Psychosis, Reduced immune function, Stomach issues, Respiratory problems Liver Damage Kidney diseases, teenage pregnancy, child-mother, visto vagina fistular.

*The Effect of Drug Abuse on Family Members*

In addition to personal adversities, the abuse of alcohol and other drugs by youth may result in family crises, separation, devoice, and jeopardize many aspects of family life, sometimes resulting in family dysfunction. Both siblings and parents are profoundly affected by alcohol- and drug abuse family members would be regarded as an outcast t, irresponsible, abuse of drugs can drain a family's financial and emotional resources (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992).as money and other resources they have would spend unwisely, only to rehabilitate their child, they also leave in fear of murder from their addicted children, some even tend to kill their parents, There's a stigma attached to addiction in society, and there's a lot of guilt and shame for the individual's families who struggle with the condition. The family members become frustrated and sell all they have only to rehabilitate their children.

*The Effect of Drug Abuse on the Community*

The effect of drug abuse in the community is that most of the community members leave in fear of rubbery, thieves, peer group influence, by initiating others to take drugs, become gamblers, rapist, the incidence of murder and suicide, increase in crime cost on the community to build rehabilitation centres and to search for train personnel, rearing of unfruitful youths and the society will die out, the worst of it poverty cycle continues.

Figure 1V

*Prevention of Abuse of Drugs*

*Parental monitoring and supervision* are critical for drug abuse prevention. These skills can be enhanced with training on rule-setting; techniques for monitoring activities; praise for appropriate behaviour; and moderate, consistent discipline that enforces defined family rules.

- Avoid addiction to all these substances.
- Create awareness about the side effects and the consequences of the addiction. Of drugs
- Treatment of the people who are already addicted. With drugs
- Provide moral support and counselling for both addiction and none addicted.
- Avoid any kind of temptations and peer pressure.

*Consider other strategies to prevent teen drug abuse:*

Know your teen's activities. Pay attention to your teen's whereabouts. ...

Establish rules and consequences. For your teens ...

Parents should Know their teen's friends and the homes they come from..

Keep track of prescription drugs. ...

Parents should Provide support. ...

Parents should Set a good example.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Youth now days see drugs. as a pleasure and fashion it is a most that every youth growing in this community should be part of it if not you will not be tolerated in some gatherings, taking of drugs as part of their food on a daily bases and these have made most of the youth both boys and girls dropping out of school becoming rapist, murderers, gabblers, thieves' rubbers and making themselves unfit in the community, *addiction cause a lot of disease and disability in the community as majority of them are moto bike (okada) ridders who after taking drugs will drive or ride home, they mostly involved in an accident which lead to death or disability* 'employment, and social economy have great effect on drug users.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATION

1. The government to make rules, policies and regulations on proper used of certain drugs, eg painkiller drugs should be prescribe by a medical personnel.
2. Parents should monitor their children and the type of friends they have.
3. The used, dangers of drugs should be included in the curriculum at junior secondary school level as a compulsory module.
4. Government to take track of of possible areas drugs are sold and frequent checks.

5. Government to set up rehabilitation centres for those already addicted.
6. All other non-Governmental organizations dealing with youth and children to teach them about the dangers of drugs.

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