
The Rapid Expansion of Synthetic Drugs: A focus on possible responses to synthetic drugs manufacturing, marketing, trafficking, and consumption in Nigeria

Presenter: Dr. Sa'adatu Adamu.



Outline

Today, we will be exploring in depths the rapid expansion of synthetic drugs and possible responses to its manufacturing, trafficking and consumption in Nigeria. Here's an overview of what we will cover:

1. Introduction: definition of synthetic drugs.
2. Effects and risk associated with the use of synthetic drugs.
3. Impact of synthetic drug use on mental health.
4. Statistics on the prevalence of drug use in Nigeria.
5. Approaches to combating Synthetic drug manufacturing, trafficking, marketing and consumption.

Projected Outcome

Projected presentation outcomes:

1. Increased awareness about the detrimental effects of synthetic drug use on both individuals and society's well-being.
2. Participants will gain the ability to identify key factors driving the manufacturing, trafficking, and usage of synthetic drugs.
3. Understanding of the multifaceted nature of the synthetic drug epidemic, motivating individuals to take proactive steps towards resolving the issue in Nigeria.

Ultimately, the presentation aims to inform, educate, and mobilize the audience to tackle the pressing issue of synthetic drug proliferation in Nigeria.



Introduction: What are Synthetic Drugs?

- Synthetic drugs are chemically produced substances designed to mimic the effects of natural drugs, such as cannabis, cocaine, or opioids. They are created in laboratories using chemical processes and are often engineered to be more potent or to produce specific effects.
- Synthetic drugs can have unpredictable and potentially harmful effects on users, as their chemical compositions may vary widely and can be altered easily to evade legal regulations.
- In recent years, Nigeria has experienced a significant surge in synthetic drug manufacturing, driven by several key factors. One of the primary drivers behind this surge is the advances in synthesis techniques, which have enabled manufacturers to produce a wide range of synthetic drugs more efficiently and cost-effectively than ever before.
- Additionally, the availability of precursor chemicals has played a crucial role in facilitating the expansion of synthetic drug manufacturing in Nigeria.
- Finally increase in drug use and drug culture amongst youth and a need for more potent yet affordable means to fuel addiction.



Effects and Risk Associated with the use of Synthetic Drugs.

- The effects of synthetic drugs range from short term effects to long term effects.
- Short term effects include; euphoria, altered perception of reality, increased heart rate and blood pressure, anxiety and paranoia, hallucinations and delusions, nausea and vomiting, agitation and aggressive behavior, seizures.
- Long term effects include; Addiction and dependence, cognitive impairment and memory loss. Psychiatric disorders, such as depression and psychosis. Cardiovascular problems, including heart attacks and strokes, Respiratory issues such as respiratory depression, Liver and kidney damage, Impaired judgment and decision-making abilities.



Con't

- The risk associated with both long and short term use of synthetic drugs include:
- Overdose: Synthetic drugs can be much more potent than natural drugs, increasing the risk of overdose and death.
- Contamination: Synthetic drugs are often manufactured in clandestine labs with little quality control, leading to the risk of contamination with harmful substances.
- Legal consequences: Many synthetic drugs are illegal or fall into legal gray areas, leading to potential legal repercussions for users.
- Unknown long-term effects: Due to the relatively recent emergence of many synthetic drugs, the long-term health consequences of their use are not yet fully understood.



Impact of Synthetic Drug use on Mental Health.

- The impact of synthetic drugs on mental health can be profound and often unpredictable due to the diverse range of substances and their varying chemical compositions. Some potential effects include: psychosis, anxiety and panic attacks, depression, cognitive impairment, increased risk of suicide, psychiatric disorders and withdrawal symptoms.



Prevalence of Synthetic Drugs in Nigeria.

- Statistics have shown that in Nigeria 1 in 7 people between the ages of 15 and 63 is a drug user and 1 in every 4 drug user is a woman.
- In the past year drug use has grown to 14.4 percent of population that means at least 14.3 million people within the ages 15-63 are drug users with 4.7 percent of that population using synthetic drugs.
- In Nigeria, several synthetic drugs are produced, trafficked, and consumed. Some of that include; Synthetic Cannabinoids (Spice, K2), Synthetic Cathinones (Bath Salts), tramadol, Codeine-based Cough Syrups, Methamphetamine etc.



Multifaceted Approach to Combating Synthetic Drugs.

- As we confront this challenge, it is crucial to recognize the multifaceted nature of the problem and adopt a comprehensive approach to address it. Here are some possible responses to combat the rapid expansion of synthetic drugs:
- 1. Enhanced Law Enforcement: Strengthening law enforcement efforts to crack down on the manufacturing, trafficking, and distribution of synthetic drugs is paramount. This includes increased surveillance, intelligence gathering, and cooperation with international agencies to dismantle criminal networks
- 2. Implementing stricter legislation and penalties for those involved in the production, trafficking, and sale of synthetic drugs can act as a deterrent. Additionally, regulations should be updated to keep pace with emerging synthetic substances.



Con't

- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launching extensive public awareness campaigns to educate communities about the dangers of synthetic drugs is essential. This includes school programs, community outreach initiatives, and media campaigns to inform citizens about the risks associated with these substances.
- **Treatment and Rehabilitation:** Investing in treatment and rehabilitation programs for individuals struggling with synthetic drug addiction is crucial. Accessible and affordable healthcare services, counseling, and support networks can help individuals overcome addiction and lead productive lives.
- **Border Control Measures:** Strengthening border control measures to intercept the smuggling of precursor chemicals and finished synthetic drugs into the country is vital. This requires collaboration with neighboring countries and international partners to monitor and secure our borders effectively.



Con't

- Community Engagement: Engaging communities in the fight against synthetic drugs through grassroots initiatives, neighborhood watch programs, and community policing can foster a sense of ownership and collective responsibility in combating drug abuse.
- International Cooperation: Collaboration with international partners, including neighboring countries, regional organizations, and global agencies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), is essential to tackle the transnational nature of synthetic drug trafficking.
- we must address the root causes of drug abuse, including poverty, unemployment, and social inequality. We must invest in programs that promote economic empowerment, education, and social inclusion.



Conclusion

- Addressing the rapid expansion of synthetic drug activities in Nigeria requires a multifaceted response encompassing comprehensive strategies in law enforcement, public health interventions, and community engagement. By strengthening regulatory frameworks, enhancing surveillance systems, promoting drug education and rehabilitation programs, and fostering collaboration between governmental agencies, law enforcement bodies, and community stakeholders, we can effectively mitigate the impact of synthetic drug proliferation on public health and social stability.




Questions

- Question
- Call to action for stakeholders to take active part to tackle drug problems in Nigeria.

References

- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2019). World drug report 2019. Available at: <https://wdr.unodc.org/wdr2019/en/exsum.html> (Accessed March 18, 2020).
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018). Drug use in Nigeria. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/Drugs/Drug_Use_Survey_Nigeria_2019_BOOK.pdf (Accessed March 18, 2020).

- 
- Jatau AI, Sha'aban A, Gulma KA, Shitu Z, Khalid GM, Isa A, Wada AS, Mustapha M. The Burden of Drug Abuse in Nigeria: A Scoping Review of Epidemiological Studies and Drug Laws. *Public Health Rev.* 2021 Jan 29;42:1603960. doi: 10.3389/phrs.2021.1603960. PMID: 33796340; PMCID: PMC7904248.



Thank you.

- Thank you for listening.