

Radio Drama for Community Dialogue on Substance Abuse among Youths in Kano Metropolis

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Abstract:

The study explains how a radio drama, *Gardo Gardo*, was used as a forum for community dialogue on the pervading challenges of substance abuse among the youth in Kano Metropolis. Since 2013, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has continued to rank Kano State top among states with highest number of drug abusers and addicts in Nigeria. This is equally affirmed in the 2018 NDLEA report that an estimated 3 million bottles of codeine among other psychoactive drugs were being consumed (without official medical prescription) daily by adolescents in Kano. Using in-depth interview and focus group discussion for collection of data that were analysed within the frame of the reader response theory which emphasises individual interpretations of creative texts, the study discovered that unguarded passion, peer pressure, and lack of parental guidance as primary drivers of substance abuse in Kano. It also revealed that stigmatisation exacerbates the problem, while love, care and support possess the potentials to mitigate the prevalence of substance abuse among young people in Kano Metropolis.

Keywords: Radio Drama, Community Dialogue, Youth, Substance Abuse, Kano

Introduction:

Substance abuse, also called drug abuse, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), is the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs. In other words, substance abuse is the excessive consumption of psychoactive substances that are highly detrimental to healthy living. These substances include, but are not limited to marijuana, alcohol, cannabis, heroin, cocaine, sedative tablets, tobacco, and many others. Substances are abused when they are used on the basis that deflects medical prescription and in a

quantity or frequency that affects the mental state of an individual.

In Nigeria, substance abuse has become an issue of concern not only to the government but also to members of the society who constantly encounter family members or friends who engage in abusing psychoactive substances. Statistics on this worrisome situation is provided in the 2018 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) survey report on narcotic and other hard drug use in Nigeria. According to the report, there is a high

prevalence of psychoactive substance use with the fact that about 14.4 % or 14.3 million Nigerians between 15 to 64 years were into banned and hard substance use and abuse (UNODC).

The survey revealed in statistics the prevalence of drug use and abuse across the six geo-political zones of the country. In northern Nigeria, the North-West had a 12% prevalence rate equaling 3 million users; the North-Central got a 10% prevalence rate totaling 1.5 million users, and the North-East reported a 13.6% prevalence rate amounting to 2.09 million users. For the southern part of Nigeria, the survey revealed that the South-West had a 22.4% prevalence rate translating to 4.3 million users; the South-South showed a 16.6% prevalence rate making up some 2.1 million users while the South-East recorded a 13.8% prevalence rate resulting to some 1.5 million users. This statistics, therefore, indicates a serious development jeopardising not only the drug abusers, but also the Nigerian community at large.

Nigeria is one of the African countries where family values and the livelihood of every individual are deeply rooted in community philosophy and wellness. With a behaviour-related crisis like substance abuse which interferes with the mood, thought, perception and social relationship of people, users often engage in endangering behaviours outside community values which may attract legal or social sanctions. In many instances, drug abusers exhibit violence, inability to subdue the urge to steal to procure substances. In other instances, they abstain from essential duties and even personal hygiene routines; they show aggressive sex drive while they sometimes cannot coordinate normal social discourses (Abasiubong; Yunusa). Each of the highlighted negative behavioural patterns are associated with substance abuse, thus, they form the nucleus of the social problems hampering sustainable development in the Nigerian society (UNODC 17). Further, the UNODC established that 1-in-8 people had suffered consequences of the behaviours of drug abusers either in their home, workplace or communities (UNODC 17). The effects of such misbehaviour from drug addicts on social

relationship are beyond imagining. Hence, it is not unusual for many Nigerians to stigmatise and maintain social distance with drug users as preventive measures (Armiyau, 3).

With this, it is apparent that there is a need to devise an approach for generating community dialogue towards sustainable action for addressing the identified challenges aggravating the prevalence of substance in Kano Metropolis. This research adopted qualitative methodology to examine and accentuate the active participation of community people in the radio drama intervention. As a participatory drama, it engaged the populace of Kano Metropolis in dialogues and conversations about their understanding, involvement and treatment of substance abuse menace in the community, and then allowed them chart a course for sustainable action in dealing with the social problem. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and Interviews were adopted at both pre-production and post-production stages of the radio drama to reflect a true account and real life perception of the phenomenon.

It should be noted that the choice of radio as a medium is obviously because of its large listenership and wide coverage. Apart from social media platforms, radio is the most preferred source of information and education in Kano (Ibrahim et al., 6). Equally, drama is a playful means which reflects daily lives in a manner that enlightens and entertains. It is also a medium for representing man and his society, thus, its deployment as a tool for addressing social issues. Therefore, radio drama is the most appropriate channel for devising and inciting community dialogue against substance abuse among the people of Kano Metropolis.

Radio Drama and Social Issues:

Radio drama is also called audio play or audio drama which incorporates dramatic representations into the acoustic mode of radio. This theatre form, according to Okigbo cited in Nda (305), requires no visual accompaniment as it only basks in dialogue, sound effects, and music to tell stories, while making the listener imagine the characters. Albeit radio drama is largely based on audio, it has the

capacity to create visuals from the perspective of the listener who create pictures in their mind while listening to the radio drama piece. Olivia, Julius and Chinwe explicate that radio drama is designed thus:

...the producer renounces the visual aspects of the drama scene and replaces them with sound elements: sound effects for the narration of scenes or dialogue between the actors, a background music that serves as an atmosphere and a greater emphasis on the vocals by actors (129)

The term radio drama emanates from the amalgam of radio and theatre, and despite the inability of the listeners to see the actors, they can grasp the concept being communicated. Hence, the theatre essence as mirror of society still materializes in the context of radio drama. Apparently, theatrical performances only have the tendency to reach the limited audience in the theatre auditorium to pass on its messages, but the advent of radio drama around early 20th century jettisoned the class disparity of conventional theatre plays. The power of radio drama is so phenomenal that Moemeka (12) presents it as having the wherewithal to propel social change. This is so because radio drama shares many qualities of the theatre especially in regard to its sociological implications. The major reason a listener is able to create relatable pictures in their mind while listening to a radio drama is that the issues being portrayed resonate well with them.

In the beginning, what was recognized as radio drama was broadcast theatre spectacle where radios transmit shows by mounting their microphones in the theatre. Meanwhile, in the 1930s, a stable body of writers and actors professionalized radio drama, writing stories, social dramas and mysteries (Rodriguez, 45). This helped consolidate the social value of radio drama, and Godinez explains the social relevance of radio drama by stating that:

The social use of radio drama implies not only a fun and effective way to disseminate content and information, but also a way to raise awareness and questions, by showing everyday situations close to the listener,

while also giving visibility to common problems, which in the end means giving visibility to the community, outside and in, being a mirror of itself that strengthens it (55).

Extrapolating from the foregoing, one can affirm that radio drama draws extensively from issues abounding in society. These social issues are the materials scriptwriters adopt in the construction of radio dramas. According to Klappler (57), radio drama plays invariably draw on the social issues associated to particular individuals within a community such that the society is educated by creating contexts for action and reflection and sharing experiences.

Hence, radio drama has proven to be virile and instrumental with its social relevance, owing to the diffusive propensity of the radio and the inexpensiveness of radio set that heightens its popularity across the board. The didactic and communicative essence of drama is, hence, appropriated in the context of radio, dwelling on its diverse audience, to address social issues in a radio drama programme (Nda, 309). Essentially, social issues which include marriage problems, hooliganism, parenthood, substance abuse and many others, form expedient materials utilised by the radio drama producer and the scriptwriter to create appealing and resonating plays. The major essence of this is to sustain the role of drama in reflecting the society in the bid to conscientise the people towards better and sustainable existence.

Dynamics of Substance Abuse in Kano:

Kano Metropolis is comprised of eight of the forty-four local government areas of Kano State, and they are Dala, Fagge, Gwale, Kano Municipal, Nassarawa, Tarauni, Kumbotso and Ungogo. These local government areas represent the urban community of the state, and perhaps that is why it has the highest concentration of the state population which is put at 10 million – the highest population in Nigeria. Since 2013, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has continuously ranked Kano State first among states with the highest number of drug abusers and

addicts in Nigeria. This is equally averred in the 2018 NDLEA report that an estimated 3 million bottles of codeine among other psychoactive drugs were being consumed (without official medical prescription) daily by young people in Kano.

Regrettably, adolescents who are very much active in social relations constitute the majority of substance abusers and addicts, and they are often found wanting in this drug-related or influenced crimes in several communities in Nigeria, and Kano Metropolis is not an exception (Adenugba & Okeshola; Yahaya; Yunusa). As a measure, whereas the federal government banned the production and sale of codeine and other related drugs on the abuse list in Nigeria, the Kano State government tries to control the menace by carrying out massive rehabilitation and treatment of substance abusers, who are equally provided job opportunities afterwards.

With the actions taken by both levels of government, one would believe that substance abuse crisis in Kano Metropolis is abated, however, the reverse is the case (UNODC; Yahaya). This therefore, underlines the significance of the findings of some studies that poor and inconsistent awareness, lack of education against substance abuse, stigmatisation and discrimination of substance abusers, misinformed policies, and access to treatment, are some of the reasons for the proliferation of substance abuse and addiction in Nigeria (Abasiubong et. al; Yahaya; Yunusa et. al).

Equally, several other studies have substantiated the NDLEA claims of the prevalence of drug abuse and addiction in Kano State (with more insights into) reasons for substance abuse, and the types of the substances being abused (Abasiubong et. al; Yahaya). Basically, the agency's position was informed by the number of seized illicit drugs, arrest of addicts, and conviction of arrested dealers. Most of the people involved in all these were usually among young males and females of rich and poor backgrounds, and are largely apprehended within Kano Metropolis. This, therefore, implies that the community is the focal point of substance abuse in Kano State, and as such, there is a need for communal conversation aimed

at sustainable dialogue and action for addressing the high prevalence of substance abuse in Kano Metropolis.

Theoretical Implication:

This research work is anchored on the reader response theory which amplifies the perceptions of the reader in a literary discourse, such that there is a symbiotic relationship between the reader and the text. Before the advent of the reader response theory, there were the romantic and new-critical approaches which focused on author and text respectively to derive meaning. Eagleton (24) underscored "a marked shift of attention to the reader over recent years" which underscores the relevance of reader response in the parlance of modern literary theory. In reader response, it is noteworthy that the mutual relationship of the reader and the text is evinced through the reader's literary demystification facilitated by their personal experiences. Mart (1993) explained the act of reading as such that the reader ascribes meaning to a text through textual response, then the reader is acculturated into meaning creation, and the reader's responses are propelled by context. In other words, the context and the reader are also relevant just like the text. As one of the influential adherents of the reader response theory, Rosenblatt (32) stressed that a text may not be deemed complete until the reader partakes in the critical reading (interpretation) of it basking in their experience, knowledge and background to generate meanings. Essentially, the theory counteracts New Criticism that limits the reader solely to the text where literary critics deploy their analytical dexterity to uncover meanings.

Meanwhile, Scheible (378) points out that the reader uses either efferent or aesthetic modes to create meaning. Aesthetic responses offer readers a continuum for attending to the experience of reading. The readers are expected to explore a range of possible meanings (Purves, 352). However, the creation of meaning occurs in continuum through efferent responses. In this case, the reader gives clear-cut responses to the text. Purves explains further that, "the term efferent ... designates the kind of reading in which attention is

centered predominantly on what is to be extracted and retained after the reading event ..." (353).

In other words, meaning derives from the readers' structuring of ideas and conclusions as a result of the reading exercise. In essence, the aesthetic mode stresses the reader's experience with the text, while efferent mode underscores the reader's inferences during the course of reading. The paper hence dwells largely on the efferent reading which allows the reader to infer from the reading event relevant conclusions which could have impacts on them and the society. Importantly, the reader is availed the capacity to establish meanings through exclusive interrogations about critical events in the radio drama presentation which bordered on the prevalence of substance abuse in Kano Metropolis.

***Gardo Gardo* for Community Dialogue on Substance Abuse in Kano Metropolis:**

The radio drama programme, *Gardo Gardo*, is focused especially on the characters of Labaran, Jamila, and Dr. Butulu who are caught in the acts of drug use and abuse, stigmatisation and harassment. While in her bed in the school hostel, Jamila reminisces her encounters with her lecturer, Dr. Butulu, and Labaran, her toaster, whose behaviours she finds exceedingly irritating. Her lecturer, Dr. Butulu interrupts her rehearsal session during the day to castigate her creative expressions onstage. The condemnation appears to her as an irrational comment from a substance abuser.

Labaran also puts in efforts to ensure he wins Jamila's heart, and he meets her after the ugly experience with Dr. Butulu. Labaran tries to impress Jamila with his love antics, but Jamila will not fall prey as she utters her disinterest in fraternising with drug addicts. This statement leaves Labaran highly depressed and dejected.

While at home, during an industrial action, Labaran is dejected and tries to avoid his father who always wants him to turn a new leaf. He only makes himself available for his mother, Hajia Hajjo, who will show him due respect and motherly care. Meanwhile, Labaran's sisters, A'i and Mariya always tease and mock their brother for his addiction to substance. Yet, Labaran

accommodates his friends when they visit him at home and even instructs them on how to comport themselves when confronted by the NDLEA personnel.

Incidentally, while Jamila is chattering with Malam Habib, the gatekeeper of Alhaji Sambo, Labaran's father, not knowing that she is at the frontage of Labaran's house. Labaran and his sisters meet her and she leaves the scene immediately which reveals to his sisters that Labaran is in love with Jamila. Labaran's sister, A'i, concludes that he is only hiding his love for the lady, Jamila. When they report to Hajia Hajjo, she develops an unswerving interest to confirm Labaran is actually in love but the report appears baseless to her.

Extrapolating from this synopsis, it is crystal clear that apart from Labaran's use and abuse of substance, harassment and stigmatisation hold sway throughout the radio drama, as Jamila portrays the two males—who directly or indirectly profess their love for her—as drug addicts, and because she believes their psychological states might have been affected, she revokes their romantic bids at all cost. Therefore, after the radio drama, the facilitators moderated an exclusive dialogue where some audience members (listeners) contributed their perspectives to the issue portrayed in the intervention. During the dialogue, it was uncovered that some triggers might have pushed the characters Labaran and Dr. Butulu in the radio drama towards substance abuse.

The discussants in the focus group posited different rationales, and according to Nura Ahmad, a newlywed and a graduate of Mathematics from Aliko Dangote University of Science and Technology, Wudil, substance abuse is caused by three factors namely passion, joblessness and peer influence. He adds that Labaran engaged in the behaviour thanks to either peer influence, passion or joblessness (00:16-00:49). Nura was obviously prompted by Labaran's tender attitude towards Jamila, such that the listener may not know about his addiction to drugs until she mentioned it. Another discussant, Adamu Abdulkadir Usman, who is a graduate of Economics from Bayero University, Kano, unlike Nura, restricts the causes

of substance abuse to poor upbringing, illiteracy and negligence on the part of society and government. He also, like Nura Ahmad, identified peer influence and joblessness as causative factors. He adds that Labaran might have indulged in substance abuse because of either poor upbringing or peer influence (03:42-04:30).

Contrary to Nura and Adamu, Abdulgaffar Sani Garba, an unmarried young man in his early thirties, and a member of League for Societal Protection Against Drug Abuse (LESPADA), with a degree in Quantity Survey from Bells University, Ota, holds that substance abuse springs from mental or physical distress. He maintains that majority, if not all of the substance abusers, engage in the behaviour as a result of pressure. He adds that the abusers resort to substances to palliate the tribulations they are experiencing. That is why, according to him, there exists an obvious difference between the substances the children of the rich and those of the poor abuse (05:21-07:06). Concluding, the respondent, unlike Adamu, asserts that Labaran might have indulged in this behaviour owing to, among other factors, distress, peer influence and probably, family negligence (07:40-08:01).

As much as other discussants established the inevitable influence of peer group as a causative factor for substance abuse in the radio drama, Musa Ibrahim, a budding footballer in his mid-thirties, partly disagrees by maintaining that interacting with substance users does not automatically delude one into the behaviour, inasmuch as one is dispassionate about it (00:15-01:14). Here, Musa points to how Labaran has advertently allowed his friends to influence him wrongly. In this case, Labaran's rapport with Jamila would have been a different, positive one without any mortification whatsoever. Also, another discussant, Hashimu Salihu Kachako, a married man in his late thirties and a staff of Radio Kano, states that different substance users have various reasons for their behaviour, but then, he blames parents especially for not giving their children appropriate guidance and education so they avoid such inimical acts. He also adds that curiosity motivated him to, at a point, try smoking for three consecutive days. As it did

not affect him, he denounced the idea that wealth motivates some youth to indulge in drug use and abuse.

Reacting on the causative factor of substance abuse, during an interview moderated by the radio drama facilitators, Milano Madaki, a Professor of Criminology at Bayero University, Kano, maintains that whenever a person engages in a misbehaviour such as substance abuse, his physical traits dramatically change. His attitudes and behaviours also change. To avoid this misbehaviour, parents should ensure they bring up and educate their children well. Alhaji Sambo, Hajiya Hajjo and their daughters, Mariya and A'i, are aware of Labaran's substance use behaviour, given the way his attitudes and behaviour have changed as well as his keeping of bad company. It is unfortunate that despite their knowledge of his current situation, Labaran's parents have failed to take a serious action against his misbehaviour. It is important to understand that good morals are an end product of good upbringing and vice versa. Parents have to keep a close watch on their children. However, Labaran's parents have failed to do so. His parents are very negligent for allowing Labaran's bad friends to abuse drugs in their own house. The respondent stresses the failure of most parents in the community to educate, enlighten and look after their children, and makes it easy for the children to go astray and find it difficult to quit their misbehaviour. To buttress this, a caller, during the interview session, states that the radio drama programme fascinates us for educating people to abstain from substance use. The caller suggests that Dr. Butulu should finally be represented as a changed person. This will probably discourage students and the community members from engaging in such misdemeanour.

Abdulmalik Harisu Alkasim, a young man in his early thirties and a diploma holder in Mass Communication, unlike Musbahu Musa, describes the relationship between Labaran and his parents as loose. He blames his family for being negligent that they fail to understand that their house serves as a shelter to Labaran and his friends. The negligence, according to Abdulmalik, emboldens Labaran and

his gang to be abusing substances in the latter's room. He laments that Labaran's friends might not risk abusing substances in their respective houses. This indicates that their parents, unlike Labaran's, keep a watchful eye on them (10:52-11:25).

In furtherance, the discussants were propelled to bare their minds on stigmatising and harassing substance abusers which was echoed through the scene between Labaran and Jamila where she labels him a drug addict whom she cannot associate with, and through Labaran's sister's attitude towards him at home. The discussants were, therefore, indulged to express their viewpoints on whether stigmatisation and harassment could help stop drug abusers from the illicit acts. Responding to this, a discussant, Nura Ahmad, strongly disapproves of stigmatisation as a tool for fighting substance abuse. Often, people affix a social stigma to substance abuse, consequently, this motivates them to stigmatise abusers. According to Nura, substance abuse is stereotyped because, to many people, the behaviour bears the stigma of ungodliness and Satanism. He understands that many people perceive substance abuse as negative, however, one cannot combat substance abuse via harassment and stigmatisation as that will only aggravate the situation. He reiterates that once the abuser realises that people are segregating him, his heart will harden (01:48-02:06). In other words, the discussant relates this to Jamila's act of labeling Labaran which could aggravate his condition.

More so, Abdulgaffar Sani affirms that in all religions, both ancient and new, nowhere around the world have othering and stigmatisation yielded positive results. As the saying goes "violence begets violence", so also bad relationship, harassment and stigmatisation beget negative results. He adds that if Jamila truly abhorred substance use behaviour, she would not have harassed or ill-treated Labaran. Because, by maltreating him, the love he has for her may vanish. Seemingly, Jamila fails to realise that she can use love to control Labaran. Moreover, Labaran is stigmatised by the public but adored by his fellow substance abusers. This, according to Abdulgaffar, may provoke Labaran to attach himself more to his

fellow substance users. Furthermore, being a member of LESPADA, Abdulgaffar states that the association had once paid a sensitisation visit to certain substance abusers. Due to the good manners they exhibited, they succeeded at convincing majority of the substance abusers. Closing his argument, Abdulgaffar denounces Jamila and her friends as stigmatisers, for ridiculing Dr. Butulu (09:11-14:55). The discussant understands the students were not comfortable with how Dr. Butulu condemned their rehearsal, however, ridiculing and labeling the lecturer would not in any way solve his problem, as he should be shown love and compassion instead.

However, Musbahu Musa, a young unmarried man in his mid-thirties, parallel to Nura Ahmad, Abdulgaffar Sani, Musa Ibrahim and Rabi'u Dahiru Muhammad, firmly believes that harassment can help mitigate substance use behaviour. To him, substance abusers are notorious, thus, they deserve nothing but stigmatisation (16:00-17:30). In other words, this discussant is in support of the students and Jamila who labelled Dr. Butulu and Labaran respectively for being substance abusers, and Labaran's sisters for mocking him at home. Hashimu Kachako does not support this as he believes that, not only with respect to substance abuse but also in every aspect of life, one should not harass substance users. According to him, "you cannot change them through abomination". He stresses that, "unless Jamila does not want Labaran to turn a new leaf, she should not have detested him for announcing his love for her." He too believes that it is only through consolation, enlightenment and caring that one can change a substance abuser (04:35-05:48). Hashimu, like Musa Ibrahim, pardons Jamila's attitude towards Labaran and Dr. Butulu. He describes her as immature. The implication of this, as noted by one of the discussants, Abdulgaffar, is that it worsens the situation by making the abuser attach himself more to his fellow substance abusers.

Resulting from the love Dr. Butulu and Labaran have for Jamila, the facilitators raised debatable questions about the power of love in this context. Abdulgaffar asserts that love plays a vital role in a

substance abuser's life, most especially, when the girl he loves dissuades him or stipulates that he must quit substance abuse before she loves him. He emphasises that many substance abusers engage in the behaviour because of passion. Hence, if they can gain what surpasses that, like love, they will undoubtedly quit the habit (02:31-03:10). In the same vein, Maikano believes that, generally, parents should educate and raise their children well. They should also know their friends. Labaran's parents have been negligent, but this does not mean things are out of hand. First and foremost, Labaran's parents should try to restrict his movement to reduce his substance use proclivities. Secondly, they should know the friends that seek his audience at home. Thirdly, they should reorient him. A child like this should be enrolled in school, vocational training centre or market. Parents should monitor the places their children go to and the time they spend there. They should always enquire about their late return home. This enquiry restrains children from staying late outside. Bad friends should be chased away.

Unlike the other respondents, Hashimu considers love as a double-edged sword. According to him, love can right an immoral person. He observes that, notwithstanding the fact that it is a public knowledge that some substance abusers do not often have penchant for women, it is possible that Dr. Butulu, though an alcoholic, loves Jamila honestly. However, he believes Dr. Butulu abuses substances to purge himself of grief (13:24-13:48). One may infer that as a lecturer with a PhD qualification, Dr. Batulu must have been grappling with some emotional problems which pushed him to taking alcohol. Musbahu Ya Sayyadi, opines that the society should team up to help substance abusers. He affirms that helping a substance abuser cannot be overstressed. Before helping substance users, the factors responsible for their indulgence in the behaviour should be checked. If it is as a result of bad company, they should be distanced from them (00:15-2:36). Musbahu adds that helping an abuser is synonymous with helping the society. Aminu buttresses that if Labaran's parents fail to proffer him the right help he needs, it will get to a point where they will have to reach out to

professionals for help on the issue, because substance abuse is a problem that worsens on a daily basis (04:06 - 04:57). However, in order to avoid aggravating the implications of substance abuse, the radio drama participants believe that help should be offered as early as possible. The discussants, in the post radio drama dialogue, therefore, provided multifarious viewpoints on the subject of substance abuse without allowing another person's contribution to affect their own submission on the issue.

Conclusion:

The study highlights the effectiveness of radio drama in initiating community dialogue to address substance abuse in Kano Metropolis. It emphasises the negative impacts of substance abuse on individuals and the society and how radio drama was used to discuss triggers, such as lack of parental guidance and peer influence, and the role of stigmatisation. The dialogue also underpinned the importance of love, care, and enlightenment in rehabilitating substance abusers. The study suggests that more radio drama interventions should be implemented to educate and enlighten both perpetrators and victims of substance abuse for sustainable action against the menace.

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