Abstract
Consumption of substances constitutes a health problem, especially among youth globally. Substances become a problem when they are consumed against professionals’ advice. Thus, this study analyses youth involvement in the consumption of psychotropic substances in Apapa Local Government, Lagos State. The study focused on the following objectives: to determine the predisposing factors to the harmful consumption of psychotropic substances; find out the types of psychotropic substances commonly consumed; examine the health problems associated with harmful consumption of psychotropic substances by the youths in Apapa Local Government Area of Lagos State. The Edwin Sutherland’s Differential Association theory was adopted as the theoretical framework for the subject matter. A qualitative narrative research design with the use of an in-depth interview guide was employed to gain insight and understanding about the experiences of thirty-two (32) psychotropic users, who were selected from across six wards of the study area through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Findings revealed that lack of parental supervision; availability of drugs; and the need to gather extra energy to work for long hours, among others were largely responsible for harmful consumption of the substances. The various types of psychotropic substances consumed by youths in the study area include cannabis [popularly known as Indian hemp], alcohol, tramadol and codeine. The study further reveals that the youth involvement in harmful consumption of psychotropic substances had made them suffer health challenges, such as chronic cough, weight loss, tooth decay, bad breath, dry mouth and throat and headache. The study concludes that harmful consumption of psychotropic substances exposes youth to terminal illnesses and premature deaths. The study therefore recommends that treatment programs such as counselling, medication and other behavioural therapies should be readily available and be effective in attending to the multiple needs of addicted psychotropic users’ problems to mitigate their involvement in the consumption of the psychotropic substances.

Keywords: Behavioural therapy, Consumption, Death, Ill health and Interventions

1.0 Introduction
Youth involvement in consumption of psychotropic substances is a global problem with significant mental, social and financial costs to the individual, community, and society. The World Health Organisation [WHO] (2014) described psychotropic substances as substances that affect mental processes when taken in or administered into the body system. They can be
either licit or illicit and are of interest to drug policy. Within the context of this study, psychotropic substances are conceived as chemical substances that act primarily upon the central nervous system, alter brain function, and result in changes in perception, mood, consciousness and behaviour (Muazu & Aliyu, 2008). Psychotropic substances differ from other substances because they are addictive in nature, hence, capable of leading to substance use disorders. This condition predisposes a user to health issues or problems at work, school, or home. Thus, harmful consumption of psychotropic substances is broad and encompasses the consumption of alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, relaxants, amphetamines, barbiturates, opiates, among several other substances that alter brain functioning (Volkow, Baler, Compton & Weiss, 2014).

The world drug report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC] (2019) estimated that 271 million (5.5%) of the global population (aged between 15 and 64 years), had used drugs in the previous year. Similarly, WHO (2019) reported that the harmful consumption of psychotropic substances e.g. alcohol results in ‘3.3 million deaths annually, 31 million persons living with substance use disorders, 11 million people inject drugs, of which 1.3 million are living with HIV, 5.5 million with hepatitis C, and 1 million with both HIV and hepatitis C’. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2017) corroborated that the consumption of psychotropic substances is related to one type of physical, social, employment or legal problem among the population aged 15 years and above.

Consumption of psychotropic substances is therefore a global phenomenon and remains one of the major health problems in the world, with millions of people especially the youth engaging in the act (Faro, 2012). Youth in Africa (Nigeria inclusive) are not spared of this development, as it is common to see them engage in the acts of buying and consumption of the substances and subsequently become addicted. According to Awoyinfa (2012), several factors are responsible for youth involvement in the consumption of psychotropic substances. The factors include experimental curiosity, peer group influence, lack of parental supervision, energy to work for a lengthy period, personality problems triggered by socio-economic conditions, drugs availability and the need to prevent the experience of withdrawal symptoms. Thus, indiscriminate consumption of substances exposes youths to various health challenges. For instance, consumption of alcohol and other psychotropic substances have significant effects on public health and threaten the development of healthy societies. To this end, Faoro (2012) opined that the consumption of psychotropic substances by youth is a social problem, causing serious health concerns to individuals, the Nigerian governments and the entire world.

Folorunsho-Francis (2020) reported several health problems associated with the consumption of psychotropic substances by youth in Lagos State where youth are seen in various streets and joints clutching their chest, screaming and plunging into gutters, creating unnecessary crowds from passers-by, and being unable to breathe properly, unconscious or hallucinating. The study documented that consumption of psychotropic substances such as cannabis (weed) by youth is
more rampant in highly populated, resource-poor areas such as Mushin, Ajegunle and other slums in Lagos State.

Several studies (Awoyinfa, 2012; Volkow et al., 2014; Nutt, King, Saulsbury & Blakemore, 2017) have been conducted on substance abuse among different categories of population. However, little is known on the attendant danger associated with youth involvement in the consumption of psychotropic substances in the study area. More importantly, most of the research conducted so far, have also been carried out in schools while neglecting street consumption and meeting the actual users. The need to sensitize the youth, their family members and the public of the risks (such as health and inability to participate in routine social activities) associated with harmful consumption of psychotropic substances cannot be overemphasized. Arising from the foregoing, this study, therefore empirically examined the side effects of youth consumption of psychotropic substances in Apapa Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. Unique to this study is that the researchers had on the spot conversations with individuals who consumed psychotropic substances in the study area.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

Given the above background and problem statement, the following objectives formed the basis for this study:

i. To determine the types of psychotropic substances commonly consumed by youth in Apapa Local Government Area of Lagos State
ii. To describe the predisposing factors responsible for youth involvement in consumption of psychotropic substances in Apapa Local Government Area of Lagos State
iii. To understand health problems associated with the consumption of psychotropic substances by youth in Apapa Local Government Area of Lagos State

2.0 Theoretical Framework: Differential Association Theory

Differential Association Theory, propounded by Edwin Sutherland in 1939 but revised in 1947, is adopted as theoretical orientation to explain youth involvement in consumption of psychotropic substances in Apapa Local Government Area, Lagos State. Burgess and Akers (1966:145) submitted that ‘Sutherland’s theory has had an enduring effect upon the thinking of students of criminal behaviour’. For some scholars, differential association is ‘one of the most outstanding sociological formulations of a general theory of crime causation’ (Cressey, 1952: 43).

Sutherland (1947) observed about the process by which a person turns to criminal and deviant behaviours, for instance, youth involvement in consumption of psychotropic substances. Accordingly, deviant behaviour, like any other form of human behaviour, is learned. The learning of deviant conduct involves the same type of learning mechanisms as any other
behaviours, where learning takes place where there is an interaction, particularly, with intimate personal groups such as friends and family. The interaction is made possible by a direct association of an individual with others. In the course of interacting and associating with others, actors engage in certain conduct that exposes them to different sets of values and norms. Both the specific techniques for committing a deviant offense, as well as the “mind-set” for engaging in deviant (e.g., attitudes and values) are learnt in the course of association and interaction.

The theory assumes that every deviant behaviour such as youth involvement in the consumption of psychotropic substances, affects both individual and community wellbeing. The theory predicts that before a particular psychotropic substance is harmfully used, there are existing users including the youths and the elderly who may be casual users or addicts. Therefore, non-users who consistently have contacts with the existing users as friends, colleagues, neighbours or family members, are exposed to information on substances and the techniques for their consumption. The consumption of these substances becomes persistent as long as the newly initiated users associate or interact with the habitual users, particularly, through ceremonies, parties or other social events. The theory argues that a nonuser whose associates are regular smokers, drinkers or abusers of one psychotropic substance or the other, is more likely to join the clique if the interaction becomes intense and persistent.

This theory is of the view that psychotropic users in the study area might have learnt the act from their parents and any other close allies or their neighbourhoods. The learning may take place in picnics, social gatherings and other activities within the environment. The theory also posits that the behaviour is learnt through picture display and newspapers but they play a relatively unimportant part in the genesis of delinquent behaviour compared to peer or family groups. Both habitual and potential users are taught the techniques for using the substances, although, the former perpetually convince the latter of the need to consume the substances. The techniques for committing it, which are sometimes complicated, and sometimes very simple; the specific direction of motives and drives, rationalizations and attitude are all learnt. The habitual psychotropic users make the potential or prospective users aware of the erroneously perceived advantages of the act by emphasising its benefits in terms of giving them strength, making them forget their sorrows, relieving them of pains accumulated from work-related stress, boosting their low self-esteem and adding values to their chosen lifestyles.

From the theoretical lens, it could be established that harmful consumption of psychotropic substances is a deviant act and detrimental to the wellbeing of both individuals and the community. Differential association theory sees deviant acts as pathological and counter-productive to the development of society. Therefore, the use of the substances is assumed to affect the health of the users and the community where the act is perpetrated. The theory also provides the coping strategies to avert the indulgence of youth in harmful consumption of psychotropic substances through sanitising the environment against all sorts of habitual users, separating the habitual users from the nonusers, locating the spots for consumption of psychotropic substances from the reach of children and other young members in the society.
2.1 Empirical Review

In Nigeria, the trend of youth involvement in the consumption of psychotropic substances is on the increase and becoming a public concern. A nationwide drug use survey in Nigeria conducted by the UNODC (2018) revealed that one in seven persons (aged 15–64 years) had used a drug in the past year. No single factor is responsible for this trend. For instance, Agbonghale and Okaka (2014) reported that substances are taken by the youth to find out their effectiveness and if found that they are effective, the users continue using them. Maithya (2009) also found out that the common reason for harmful use of psychotropic substances among the youth is mostly acceptance by friends (peer pressure) to stimulate appetite for food. Studies have also shown that peer group influence (Ellickson, Bird, & Orlando, 2003), sibling substance use (D’Amico & Fromme, 1997), parent substance use (Beal, Ausiello, & Perrin, 2001) have influenced youth initiation of psychotropic substance use.

Studies by Kypri, Cronin and Wright (2005); Melchior, Chastang, Goldberg and Fombonne (2008) submitted that across many countries of the world, consumption of psychotropic substances tends to be common among youngsters between the ages of 18 and 25 years. In terms of distribution, study by Nyki (2015) revealed that male children from unstable families were associated with a high risk of substance abuse. The study showed further that most cannabis users were young men who have been deprived of parental supervision and warmth from infancy. Similarly, study conducted by Makanjuola, Daramola and Obembe (2017) established that stress and frustration are associated with academic achievement among University students, which also explain the reason for students’ involvement in the consumption of psychotropic substances. Haladu (2013) noted that people use illicit psychotropic substances because they are readily available while promoting the interests of those who are in a position to benefit financially from their sale.

In the environment in which social occasions such as weddings, anniversaries, carnivals, parties, among others, take place, there is a possibility of a substance being harmfully consumed. Jibril et al. (2018) reported that the esteem that most societies associate with taking alcohol at party time is high and therefore, makes social occasions account for 35.4% of the reasons for taking alcohol. Social occasions also explain reasons for taking other psychotropic substances that are abused at a lower magnitude especially among the youth. The increased economic deterioration in Nigeria has resulted in poverty and the disempowerment of many people. Such experience has forced several parents to send their wards out to search for a means of earning and to contribute to the family income (Fareo, 2012). In this case, children are encouraged or forced to hawk, do bus conductors, head load, scavenge, serve in food canteens etc. In the course of carrying out these activities, they become prone to taking psychotropic substances to energize themselves and to work for long hours. Discontinuing the use of these substances can make the user experience what is termed “withdrawal symptoms” which are characterised by anxiety, pain, excessive sweating and shaking. The inability of the psychotropic users to tolerate the symptoms motivates them to continue (Namadi, 2016).
Harmful consumption of psychotropic substances has long been a source of major concern for the physical well-being of the users. WHO (2019) reported that harmful consumption of psychotropic substances is responsible for 28% of injuries from self-harm, violence and traffic crashes; 21% digestive disorders; and 19% cardiovascular diseases. These problems can also create other infectious diseases, mental disorders, cancers, among others. In a study conducted by Eneh and Stanley (2014), on pattern of substance abuse among secondary school students in Rivers State, using a self-administered questionnaire on 1049 secondary students. The study found out that alcohol contributes to traumatic outcomes that sometimes kill or disable the user at a relatively young age thereby resulting in loss of many years of life to death or disability. The consumption of psychotropic substances repeatedly over time has chronic physical consequences and compounded by the method of administration. Merck (2009) also submitted that negligent use of any substance, especially those that have effects on one’s consciousness (such as alcohol, cocaine, codeine and methamphetamines) results in discomfort and malfunction.

Study by Nutt, King, Saulsbury and Blakemore (2017), on the ‘development of a rational scale to assess the harm of drugs of potential misuse’, using a self-developed nine-category matrix of harm, with an expert Delphi procedure, observed that marijuana ingested by smoking put users at increased risk of chronic cough, bronchitis, and lung and upper airway cancers. In a study conducted by Volkow, Baler, Compton and Weiss (2014), on ‘adverse Health effects of Marijuana use’, it was reported that cigarette smoking reduces life expectancy by an average of ten years and street heroin is addictive which does not fully dissolve and results in further damage to blood vessels.

A study conducted by Eric (2017), entitled ‘socioeconomic effects of drug abuse among Nigerian youths’ using secondary data, found out that psychotropic substances alter the normal biological and psychological functioning of the body, especially the central nervous system. In a similar vein, Sambo (2008) reported that chronic use of harmful substances could lead to serious damage, sometimes irreversible (either temporarily or for a long period). Internal damage could result as well. Pagliaro and Pagliaro (2014), in their book titled ‘Comprehensive Guide to Drugs and Substances of Abuse’, the authors documented that psychotropic substances were responsible for insomnia, prolonged loss of appetite, increased body temperature, greater risk of hepatitis and HIV/AIDS infection, death, various forms of cancers, ulcers and brain damage.

In essence, the literature reviewed shown that the harmful consumption of psychotropic substances greatly interferes with the physical well-being of the users, families, kids and even their unborn babies. It has shown that harmful consumption of psychotropic substances hurts the body and the brain and also results in addiction, a long-lasting brain disorder. People with an addiction cannot stop taking psychotropic substances on their own. They continue to use these substances even when they know that bad things can happen.
It is to be noted that substance abuse hurts all parts of the body, causing health problems that do not go away. Such problems can be liver disease, kidney disease, among others. When the kidneys are hurt due to psychotropic substances such as cocaine and heroin, they stop working and result in the death of the users. It is a known fact that psychotropic substances like cocaine can cause problems like heart attacks and high blood pressure. Lung and breathing problems could be experienced due to psychotropic abuse. Smoking cigarettes and marijuana can cause diseases such as cancer and emphysema (a painful lung disease), lung infections and coughing.

3.0 Methodology
The study adopted a qualitative narrative research design to obtain and understand the true experience of the research participants and their involvement in the consumption of psychotropic substances. The study was carried out between the year 2020 and 2021 in Apapa Local Government Area, located in the southeastern part of Lagos State. Surulere, Ajeromi LGAs and Lagos Lagoon border the local government with its headquarters at 37, Burma Road, Apapa. The study area was chosen based on the series of campaigns carried out there by the Lagos State Government and the NDLEA on the dangers of psychotropic substances.

The research participants were users of psychotropic substances, selected from the study area. The selection of the psychotropic users was done using the multistage sampling technique ranging from a random selection of five wards out of the existing eleven wards. The selected wards are Afolabi Alasia and Environs, Gaskiya and Environs, Ijora-Oloye and Environs, Olodan, Environs and Sari and Environs. Thereafter, some streets were randomly selected (Daramola, Adeboye, Karimu, Onigemo, and Ladipo) upon which gatekeepers were identified. The gatekeepers provided an opportunity to identify and select thirty-two (32) participants who were involved in the consumption of psychotropic substances, with their consent to participate in the study.

The study adopted a qualitative method of data collection via the use of a structured in-depth interview guide (IDI) as an instrument of data collection. Responses from the participants were tape-recorded and were later transcribed with NVIVO to generate themes and in accordance with the study objectives.

4.0 Data Presentation and Analysis
Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Psychotropic Users
This section presents and analyses the socio-demographic characteristics of psychotropic users who participated in the study. The socio-demographic characteristics investigated include sex, age, marital status, occupation and highest educational attainment.
Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Response/Options</th>
<th>Frequency (32)</th>
<th>Percentage (100.0)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-25</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-33</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34-43</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>56.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 years and above</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced/Separated</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisan</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trader</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Worker</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Formal Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary School</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the psychotropic users that participated in the study. The sex distribution shows that 22(69.8%) male and 10(32.2%) female psychotropic users respectively participated in the study. This implies that the selection of the respondents for the interview sessions acknowledged the issue of gender equality by accommodating the views of both sexes. The age distribution of respondents shows that more than 50% of the psychotropic users were between 26-33 years, representing 56.3% of the research participants. This implies that youth are more involved in the consumption of psychotropic substances in the study area. This helped to uncover the substance behaviours of the youths and their implications. The marital distribution shows that 43.8% of the respondents were single while 34.4% were either divorced or separated. The high numbers of the single and divorced/separated were respectively associated with the age category of the respondents in which many of them were youth and possibly the inability of substances users to manage their marital relationships.

The occupational distribution of the participants shows traders (21.9%), industrial workers (25.0%), drivers (15.6%), participated in the study, although, the majority of them were artisans (37.5%). The significant number of the artisans was due to the low-level academic qualifications of the participants, where many were not above secondary schools. The socio-demographic profile of the participants on education shows that 3 (9.4%) had no formal education, 13(40.6%) were primary school certificate holders, and 16(50%) were holders of secondary school certificates. Findings show that majority of the users had low education which was associated with poverty, truancy, the will to make money as quick as possible, the need to learn skills, and unwillingness and nonchalant attitudes on the part of the respondents.
Types of Psychotropic Substances Commonly Consumed by the Youths in the Study Area

This section examines the perception of psychotropic users on the types of psychotropic substances commonly used and abused in the study area. The substances include cigarettes, codeine, cannabis, among others. The findings are presented in the bar chart below:

**Figure: Bar Chart Showing the Types of Substances Commonly Consumed by the Youth**

Figure 1 shows the graphical presentation of the types of psychotropic substances mostly consumed by the respondents as reported during the interactive sessions. Findings show that more than 50% of the users consumed cannabis [Indian hemp] (100.0%); alcohol (90.5%); tramadol (85.7%); codeine (81.0%) while those who consumed cigarettes constitute 23.8%. An interviewee (male) from Shobodu Street in ward five, affirmed that the use of Indian hemp (*igbo*) was frequently consumed, expressed thus;

*Sincerely, *igbo* (Indian hemp) is mostly smoked in this area. If you can observe that while entering this place, the smell of the smoke is perceived everywhere and every resident here is already used to the smell. Weed that you see is consumed by both adults and the young. Getting used to smoking weed is like taking a balanced diet. You feel uncomfortable when you fail to take it in a day especially for some of us that are already used to it.*

The response of another informant (female) from Onigemo in ward four, who claimed to be regularly taking weed in large quantities and aware of several weed dealers and users in the study area, asserted that:
The use of Indian hemp is common because there is no street or community without a dealer. And as such, it is seen as normal behaviour. The NDLEA officials are sometimes tired of arresting because users are increasing day by day and smugglers are devising different means to get it to the final consumers.

Another informant (male) from Matiminu in ward two, who insisted that marijuana was mostly taken and its use has taken over from cigarettes, said:

I often take it immediately after I wake up from sleep in the morning without recourse to worship and can hardly sleep without taking it at night. I take it from time to time and most of my friends do the same. When we were growing up, the smoking of cigarettes was common but as it is, marijuana has taken over. The use and possession are illegal but we the youth still find our ways to get the substance. When you take a walk from here down to many places in this Lagos, you will see guys revelling weed and alcohol in the sun.

An interviewee (male) from ward one, who extensively discussed the use of alcohol along with other substances, reported that:

Alcohol is highly consumed here especially alomo bitters, trophy drink, shepe, skushi (probed on this). It is commonly taken along with other substances like weed. It is rare to see someone who smokes weed without taking alcohol. There is a type of alcohol called Skushi (scoochies), which is a type of drink brewed, packaged, branded and served in red plastic cups. We often take it when we go to clubs, parties or any events organised by happening guys. It is also called omi gutter (gutter water) (probed on how it is made). The drink is a mixture of boiled weed, alcohol, cough syrups (codeine), tramadol, flavour, and other substances which I cannot remember. Guys are gingered whenever we set our eyes on the red cups.

The researcher observed that the consumption of alcoholic drinks and weed was common and users were seen asking for more bottles of the drinks after exhausting one and kept demanding more wraps of weed. The researcher observed that marijuana which is cheaply sold at two hundred naira and above and has different street names and variants (Colorado, Arizona, Loud), though, are costlier. The substances are abused daily, influenced by their cheapness, availability and users’ choice. Tramadol, which is purposely used for surgeries, to alleviate severe pain, was also found to be prevalently used by the youth and the rates of its smuggling and interception by law enforcement agencies are alarming. Tramadol is sold as the counter medication, usually in green capsules between 50 to 400mg, mostly used in high doses. Its harmful consumption is influenced by the euphoria it produces after a high dose of it is consumed.
Predisposing Factors for Youth Involvement in Consumption of Psychotropic Substances in the Study Location

This section presents the perception of the psychotropic users on the various factors that influenced them and other community members into the consumption of psychotropic substances. The predisposing factors examined include experimental curiosity, peer influence, type of environment, social occasions and events, among others. Thus, the factors are presented in the bar chart below:

**Figure 2: Factors Predisposing Youth to Consumption of Psychotropic Substances**

Figure 2 presents a bar chart on the responses of the research participants on the factors that predisposed them to be involved in the consumption of psychotropic substances. The bar chart indicates that more than 50% of the participants identified experimental curiosity, lack of parental supervision, stress, promotion and drugs availability, the need for energy to work for long hours, the type of environment where one lives, peer group influence and social occasions/ceremonies as factors predisposing them to consume psychotropic substances. The responses of some of the research participants are captured below.

A male psychotropic user from Gaskiya and Environs in ward two of the study area, who shared his thought on the reasons for consuming weed and other substances, said that:

*Right from time, I have never thought I would be a smoker. I was influenced by my friends who would always claim that smoking weed was beneficial to the body system and could help one to fight his...*
fears. I was taught how to hold the wraps until I became a professional.

A female research participant from Afolabi Alasia and Environs in ward one of the study area who became a psychotropic user through her boyfriend said that:

I was taking alcohol before meeting my ex-boyfriend who introduced me to weed and other psychotropic substances. He would always castigate me for being ignorant and unexposed while I rejected some substances, he introduced to me. Unfortunately, for us to blend based on the love I had for him, I became an expert.

A male participant, who associated the use of some psychotropic substances such as tramadol to the nature of his work, affirmed that:

I work in the factory and the number of goods you package, offload from or upload into a truck, trailer, determines the amount you are paid. I started taking some tablets including tramadol to energise myself during work hours to make more money. Later, I saw some of my colleagues combining ‘tramol’ with weed and other substances, which I reluctantly applied and adopted. I was told taking tramadol would help to reduce the pain of the work and I confirmed it when I used it.

Another research participant from Ijora-Oloye and Environs in ward three in the study area reported that occasions organised by ‘big boys’ in town do encourage the use and abuse of some psychotropic substances, averred that:

It is common to see alcohol in large quantities during events such as naming ceremonies, street carnivals, get to gather parties to the extent that legal drinks become scarce. Therefore, if you are a type who does not drink alcohol, you will have nothing to drink during such events. It could be that you have contributed financially or by other physical efforts to the success of such events. If care were not taken, one would be tempted to take the available drinks which are often alcoholic in nature. I know some friends who became smokers and drinkers of all sorts of substances due to their party-going nature.

The reports gathered by the researcher shows that the environment had many spots, joints and various outlets that could encourage the use of psychotropic substances. During evening hours, young people were seen organising parties and going to hotels and clubhouses, where the use of substances was allowed. It was also observed that in many kiosks where alcoholic drinks were being sold, both young boys and girls were seen engaging in the acts of buying and consuming alcohol. It was further observed that many of the users were usually in groups. The responses from the psychotropic users interviewed show clearly that many of today's users became one due to their association with the category of friends who were perpetual users of
psychotropic substances. In a type of environment where many of one’s age group, friends or colleagues use one substance or the other, a nonuser can easily be influenced as he constantly relates with and sees such users. It is also possible for those who engage in energy-demanding activities such as those working in the factories, industries, driving, among others to be influenced by the nature of the work.

Responses from the respondents show that joints for smoking and drinking existed in the study area and their availability also encouraged their use and both potential and persistent users could easily access them. Some of the users warned that it would be important and beneficial if parents could constantly engage their wards by properly monitoring their movements, the kinds of friends they keep, the types of places they visit and find time to know what the children are facing on a day-to-day activities. These findings imply that some parents are negligent in their role as the agents of socialisation by leaving their wards to other members of society who may take advantage of their parents’ negligence and the children’s gullibility.

Health Problems Associated with Harmful Consumption of Psychotropic Substances by Youth in Apapa Local Government Area of Lagos State

This section examines the perception of psychotropic users on the physical health problems associated with harmful consumption of psychotropic substances.

Figure 3: Physiological Problems Experienced by Psychotropic Users

Figure 3 presents a bar chart on questions asked to determine the type of physical health problems experienced by psychotropic users due to harmful consumption of psychotropic substances. More than 50% of the respondents reported having experienced chronic cough
(84.4%), weight loss (71.9%), tooth decay (56.3%), bad breath (78.1%), dry mouth and throat (68.8%) and headache (53.1%). However, findings show that only a few of them had bloodshot eyes (46.9%) and kidney damage (3.1%). An interviewee who highlighted that the use of weed has resulted in cough for him and a number of his friends asserted that:

*The use of weed causes persistent cough particularly for new users although common among old users too. Like me now, I have a cough and still take weed. My heart is heavy but I cannot do without it. I know more than three of my friends who consistently cough and still smoke.*

The experience of one of the interviewees shows that combining alcohol with weed was common but not too good for the body system. The reaction of the interviewee is expressed below:

*Combining alcohol and marijuana is not too good for the body system. The reason is that I experienced sedation, looked too dull, lacked the energy to do anything. Although, individuals have different experiences. For instance, I have stopped combining both at a time. Whenever I take both weed and alcohol in excess, people do tell me that my eyes become red and that my eyeballs become large and scary. At that time, my family members get scared of talking to me anyhow because I could hurt anyone at that time.*

The consumption of psychotropic substances was linked to weight loss by most of the interviewees. Hence, a female interviewee who claimed that consuming psychotropic substances without adequate meals is dangerous to health explained thus:

*Losing weight is common with those who do not feed well. Taking these substances requires adequate eating of a balanced diet and where such is absent, the person involved may start losing weight. From my own experience, I started losing weight when I was initially involved in the consumption of substances to the extent that my parents would ask what was wrong. Whenever I take weed, my stomach becomes empty and I become hungry. However, there are times when the money to buy the food is not available, although, I still prioritise the consumption of weed against anything.*

From the study, it was observed that the mouths of the psychotropic users were full of foul smells of the types of substances consumed before the interviews and some of them were still taking some bottles of drinks during the interviews. While the interviews were going on, some of the users who had cough could not hold it as they kept pleading for excuses. The truth remains that the reaction of individual users to different substances varies among users but is more negative among first-time users. Exploration from the findings indicates that consumption of psychotropic substances makes the users vulnerable to respiratory organs related diseases, coupled with their antecedent complications.
4.1 Results and Implications of Findings

Examining the drivers for youth involvement in the consumption of psychotropic substances, the study found that experimental curiosity (56.3%), lack of parental supervision (84.4%), stress (87.5%), promotion and drugs availability (71.9%), the need for energy to work for long hours (65.6%), peer group influence (100.0%), social occasions and events (90.6%) and type of environment resided (59.6%) constitute the major factors. These findings build on the existing evidence by Namadi (2016) who reported that some Nigerian youth repeatedly experiment with substances because of curiosity and desire for an adventure, which makes the discontinuance difficult. Findings from this study were also in harmony with Maithya (2009) who discovered that when an adolescent relates with other adolescents who abuse a particular psychotropic substance, the risk of involvement with other substances is further increased. The findings are also in consonance with Jibril, Olayinka, Omeiza and Babatunde (2018) who reported that social occasions account for 35.4% of the reasons for taking alcohol. It is therefore affirmed that people engage in the consumption of psychotropic substances by the category of friends they keep to learn the techniques of consumption, particularly, during social occasions and the type of environment they reside in.

Findings on the types of commonly consumed psychotropic substances in the study area revealed that several psychotropic substances were consumed by the youths, however, it was established that the abusers mostly consumed cannabis [Indian hemp] (100.0%), alcohol (90.5%), tramadol (85.7%) and codeine (81.0%). The findings build on the existing evidence by WHO (2104) and UNODC (2019) where it was established that the use of cannabis is prevalent in Nigeria and its users account for 6% of the world population, although, about 14% of the world population use and misuse other psychotropic substances such as tramadol and codeine cough syrup in Nigeria.

The third objective, which examined the physical health problems associated with their consumption in the study area, findings found out majority of the users had experienced cough (84.4%), weight loss (71.9%), tooth decay (56.3%), bad breath (78.1%), dry mouth and throat (68.8%) and headache (53.1%). The ill-health arising from the consumption of the substances was found to be debilitating and detrimental, as it negatively affects victims’ engagement in eating a balanced diet, regular exercises, regular medical check-ups, healthy sexual relationships and getting an adequate amount of sleep, among others as revealed by the study. The findings of Volkow et al. (2014), strengthen the study by affirming that psychotropic substances could reduce life expectancy by an average of ten years and that the addictive nature of street heroin does not fully dissolve and results in further damage to blood vessels. Again, the findings of the study are in tandem with Nutt et al (2017), who discovered that several psychotropic substances such as marijuana, put users at increased risk of chronic cough, bronchitis, and lung and upper airway cancers.
5.0 Conclusion
Youth involvement in the consumption of psychotropic substances has reached alarming rate, and portends significant effects on youth, community members and the country at large. This study is on the premise that association with users of psychotropic substances contributes to their harmful consumption by the youth. Psychotropic substances are produced for various reasons, including those associated with ensuring a state of wellbeing, curing illness, and sustaining mental and physical stability. However, they become problem when they are consumed against the instructions by experts and when wrongly administered. Thus, misuse of substances, self-medication and use of illegal substances constitute substances abuse. The most commonly consumed psychotropic substances by youth in Apapa LGA, Lagos State as revealed by this study include alcohol, marijuana, cigarettes, codeine and tramadol. The study also established that there is association between peer group influence, availability of substances, poor parenting, satisfaction of curiosity and youth involvement in the consumption of psychotropic substances. The consumption has been found to be a threat to individuals, public health and national security, although, the nature and the seriousness of the implications depends on the types and quantities of substances consumed. This study also established that youth involvement in the consumption of psychotropic substances has exposed several users to persistent cough, headache, tooth decay, weight loss, and has considerably resulted in deaths and disabilities in some users. Addiction to these substances has discouraged and limited the engagement of the users in regular exercises, getting an adequate amount of sleep/rest and going for regular medical check-ups. This study therefore concludes that youth consumption of psychotropic substances and its attendant complications constitute a major threat to the stability and effective functioning of the Nigerian society.

5.1 Recommendations
In view of the findings from the study, the following recommendations are made towards reducing the trajectory of youth consumption of psychotropic substances:

i. Identifying the sources where those who consume psychotropic substances obtained them is paramount in preventing youth involvement in the consumption of psychotropic substances in Nigeria. Thus, strategies and interventions aimed at blocking the trade and supply of these substances from identified sources could mitigate the increasing prevalence of psychotropic abuse.

ii. Government at all levels and other stakeholders should provide more employment opportunities for the youth to deter them from consuming psychotropic substances.

iii. More funds should be allocated to drug-related agencies coupled with review of existing drug laws to incorporate stringent punishments for offenders in order to strengthen and intensify the fight against unauthorized consumption of psychotropic substances.

iv. Community involvement in the sensitization and awareness on the challenges associated with youth involvement in the consumption of psychotropic substances should be
intensified. Parents are encouraged to educate their wards, especially at formative age on the challenges associated with the consumption of psychotropic substances. Parents are also advised to keenly monitor the movement of their wards, the categories of friends they keep, occasions they attend and chastise them for other activities that could influence them into deviant behaviours such as the harmful consumption of psychotropic substances.

v. Treatment programs such as counselling, medication and other behavioural therapies should be readily available and be effective in attending to the multiple needs of addicted psychotropic users and its attendant problems.

References


